Violence Against Women In European Politics

A Study By The European Liberal Forum

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL CENTER

elf

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Introduction

Violence Against Women in Politics: Peak of Discrimination

Gender equality in political participation and representation is one of the most important pillars of modern democracy. Underrepresentation of around 50 per cent of the population in democratic processes is not a problem that requires mere statistical fixes, since associated data clearly outlines the general status of women in society[1] and leads to a conclusion that an increase in women's participation in politics would mean increased gender equality in society.[2] It is a problem that is beyond the *quotas vs. meritocracy* ideological debate.[3] If the gender representation balance largely favours men, women are faced with a serious problem of limited opportunities to reach a meritocratically defined level of electability.[4] This is usually specific to different societies and related to masculine traits being attributed to politics and capable politicians.[5]

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1   Sapiro, V. 1981. "Research frontier essay: When are interests interesting? The problem of political representation of women." *American Political Science Review*, *75(3),* pp. 701–716.

2   Beckwith, K. and Cowell-Meyers, K. 2007. "Sheer numbers: Critical representation thresholds and women's political representation." *Perspectives on politics*, *5*(3), pp. 553–565.

3   Santos, M.H., Amâncio, L. and Alves, H. 2013. "Gender and politics: The relevance of gender on judgements about the merit of candidates and the fairness of quotas." *Portuguese Journal of Social Science*, *12*(2), pp. 133–149.

4   Besley, T., Folke, O., Persson, T. and Rickne, J. 2017. "Gender quotas and the crisis of the mediocre man: Theory and evidence from Sweden." *American Economic Review*, *107*(8), pp. 2204–42.

5   Becker, M., 1999. Patriarchy and inequality: Towards a substantive feminism. *U. Chi. Legal F.*, p. 21.

Although quotas can be a first step towards achieving representation,[6] they might not be a long-term solution if the statistical improvement of gender equality in political life becomes a goal in itself,[7] while systemic changes fall through.

Thorough systemic changes for reaching true gender equality in the political representation of women in European societies, of course, require research of reasons for women's underrepresentation when it comes to participation in politics. And even though reasons for such a complex problem are multi-layered, gender-based violence is frequently identified as one of the main issues discouraging women from engaging in politics.[8] Violence against women in politics (VAWP) is a specific form of gender-based violence that encompasses a range of attacks aiming to undermine women as political actors and exclude them as a group from public life.[9]

While gendered effects of violence[10] on women's political engagement and the research of the phenomenon of violence against women in politics (VAWP) in general are still underexplored, more and more research is becoming available. Exploring the intersectionality of gender-based violence and the political engagement of women[11] is paving the way for overcoming the challenge of encouraging women to become and remain politically engaged.

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6   O'Brien, D.Z. and Rickne, J. 2016. "Gender quotas and women's political leadership." *American Political Science Review*, *110*(1), pp. 112–126.

7   Christensen, J.F. and Muhr, S.L. 2019. "H(a)unting quotas: An empirical analysis of the uncanniness of gender quotas." *Ephemera*, *19*(1), pp. 77–105.

8   Collier, C.N. and Raney, T. 2018. "Understanding sexism and sexual harassment in politics: A comparison of Westminster parliaments in Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, *25*(3), pp. 432–455.

9   Krook, M.L. 2020. *Violence Against Women in Politics*. New York; Oxford University Press.

10   Hadzic, D. and Tavits, M. 2019. "The gendered effects of violence on political engagement." *The Journal of Politics, 81(2)*, pp. 676–680.

11   Krook, M.L. 2019. "Global Feminist Collaborations and the Concept of Violence against Women in Politics." *Journal of International Affairs*, *72*(2), pp. 77–94.

This publication aims to explore and address the nature of violence against politically engaged women in Europe, their perception of societal and institutional protection against such violence, and most importantly, potential tools for properly raising awareness and tackling the issue.

The methodology adopted in the publication was based on: 1. exploration of relevant research on the topic of violence against women in politics; 2. a Europe-wide survey of political activists on their perception of the issue; and 3. voluntary one-on-one interviews with female political activists, who shared their own experiences and those of other women in their political surroundings.

The survey[12] was sent out to political parties all over Europe, across the political spectrum. Over the course of ten weeks, we have collected 77 responses from political activists, most of them from liberal and progressive political organisations. Respondents came from 25 European countries, namely: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom. The survey aimed to examine views and experiences of women participating in different forms of party politics and to identify individuals willing to talk more about the topic and their experiences, in order to find useful tools for prevention and raising awareness.

A total of 13 individuals who filled in the survey also volunteered to participate in one-on-one interviews and were willing to go into more detail on the topic. All 13 were women. More than 16 hours of interviews were conducted in person (1) and online (10). Online interviews enabled us to reach women in different countries and ensured the implementation of COVID-19 pandemic measures. Those who lacked willingness or time to participate were given the possibility of providing written

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12   During the survey, we made sure to protect and treat the data provided responsibly and offered all participants the option to select how they would like their data to be processed. The entire process was compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679).

answers. Only two participants submitted written interviews. Although those were more convenient for some participants, oral interviews were the primary source for information gathering, since the goal was to examine the respondents' level of awareness, rather than have them do their own research prior to the interviews. Also, oral interviews allowed the researcher to go into more detail on points that emerged during the interviews. That being said, the main objective of the interviews was to explore the existing mechanisms and possibly influence future policies that might emerge after the publication of the results. Some of the answers also inspired the recommendations made here and the tools in the Toolbox (*Appendix I*).

Violence Against Women in Politics: The Conceptual Framework in Europe

Gender-based violence is the most severe manifestation of discrimination against women. And as women's equality started to become an issue of interest for international political decision-makers in the 1970s, the United Nations (UN) has taken first initiatives to also address the issue of violence against women (VAW) at the first Women's Conference in Mexico City in 1975. Although the World Plan of Action adopted at the conference did not deal explicitly with VAW, it paved the way for the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)[13] and the formation of the Council of Europe's (CoE's) first Committee for addressing women's and equality issues, both in 1979. However, at the time, CEDAW had not addressed VAW as a priority, nor had it recognised its connection to male domination in society. In 1985, VAW was finally included on the institutional agenda of the UN Third World Conference on Women and the NGO Forum which were held in Nairobi, Kenya. This was followed by the General Assembly adopting a resolution on domestic violence.[14]

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13   UN General Assembly. 1979. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, 18 December 1979, A/RES/34/180.

14   UNGA Res 40/36 (29 November 1985) UN Doc A/RES/40/36.

When it comes to VAW, in the decades that followed, there has indeed been a lot of new developments[15] [16] of institutional frameworks[17] [18] for combating violence against women and girls[19] [20], with a relatively (and rightfully) broad focus on domestic violence.[21] Over the decades, there has been a slow but steady rise in female participation in politics.[22] And although gender equality with regards to the distribution of political leadership and power is yet to be achieved, female leadership has become more prominent in recent years.[23] It was in the late 2010s when the talk of violence against women in politics gained more traction.

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15   UN Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. 1992. *General Recommendation 19: Violence against Women* UN Doc A/47/38.

16   UNGA Res 48/104 (20 December 1993) UN Doc A/RES/48/104.

17   Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (15 September 1995) UN Doc A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1 (1995) and A/Conf.177/20/Add.1 (1995).

18   Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Optional Protocol), UNGA Res 54/4, Annex (December 2000) UN Doc A/Res/54/4.

19   Council of Europe. The 3rd European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women (Rome 21–22 October 1993) Strategies for the elimination of violence against women in society: the media and other means, MEG – 3 (93) 22.

20   Explanatory Memorandum of the Recommendation No. R (2002) 5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of women against violence.

21   General Assembly Resolution on the Elimination of Domestic Violence against Women UNGA Res 58/147 (19 February 2004) UN Doc A/RES/58/147; General Assembly Resolution on the Elimination of Domestic Violence against Women UNGA Res 59/167 (22 February 2005) UN Doc A/RES/59/167; General Assembly Resolution on the Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate all Forms of Violence against Women UNGA Res 61/143 (30 January 2007) UN Doc A/RES/61/143; General Assembly Resolution regarding the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly UNGA Res 61/145 (7 February 2007) UN Doc A/RES/61/145.

22   Paxton, P., Hughes, M.M. and Green, J.L. 2006. "The international women's movement and women's political representation, 1893–2003." *American Sociological Review, 71*(6), pp. 898–920.

23   Goryunova, E., Scribner, R.T. and Madsen, S.R. 2017. "The current status of women leaders worldwide." In *Handbook of research on gender and leadership*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

The two most prominent campaigns[24] were the NDI's 2016 #NotThe-Cost[25] campaign and the 2017 turned-global #MeToo movement.[26]

European countries rank fairly well on the global scene when it comes to regional percentages of women's representation in national legislative bodies.[27] However, larger representation of women in politics revealed gender-based violence as a major challenge they have to face.

The situation in the EU has definitely shown improvement with regards to the representation of women in the European Parliament (from 16.6% in the first directly elected legislature in 1979 to 38.9% as of January 2021). The Women in Politics in the EU – State of Play briefing[28] published in March 2021 by the European Parliamentary Research Service, clearly identifies the growing concern for gender-based violence and abuse being a contributing factor in creating a toxic environment for women in politics, as they are most likely to be targeted based on their gender.[29] An important aspect to consider when it comes to the European framework on VAWP is the societal diversity among individual European countries.

There is a disparity in gender-related policies, as well as a large discrepancy in women's representation in political decision-making among

24   Krook, M.L. 2017. "Violence against women in politics." *Journal of Democracy*, *28*(1), pp. 74–88.

25   National Democratic Institute. "#NotTheCost. Stopping Violence Against Women in Politics. A Renewed Call for Action." https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NTC%20EXEC%20SUMMARY%202021%20ENGLISH%20FINAL.pdf

26   Castle, J.J. et al. 2020. "The Effect of the #MeToo Movement on Political Engagement and Ambition in 2018." *Political Research Quarterly*, *73*(4), pp. 926–941.

27   Chesser, S.G., 2019. "Women in National Governments Around the Globe: Fact Sheet." *Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service*.

28   Shreeves, R., Prpic, M. and Claros, E. 2021. "Briefing: Women in Politics in the EU-State of Play." European Parliamentary Research Service, available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2021/689345/EPRS_BRI(2021)689345_EN.pdf

29   O'Connell, S. and Ramshaw, G. 2018. "Violence Against Women in Politics: Global Perspectives of a Global Issue." Westminster Foundation for Democracy, available at: https://www.wfd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Violence-Against-Women-in-Politics-Global-Perspectives-of-a-Global-Issue.pdf

member states of the European Union[30] and other European countries.[31] This disparity is present even in legal terminology and legal definition of gender-based violence in various EU member states (2019 data still includes the United Kingdom). For example, rape in Belgium is legally defined as an act of penetration against a non-consenting person, while in Czechia rape is defined as forcing another person by violence or threat of violence or threat of other serious harm to take part in sexual intercourse, or abusing another person's inability to defend him/herself for such purpose. Also, in Sweden, the definition of rape is even more oriented towards consent, as it covers other sexual acts, besides penetration. At the same time, in Bulgaria, only sexual intercourse with a female who is unable to defend herself and without her consent (by force or threat of force or by bringing her into a helpless state) is considered rape.[32] Reports show that the issue of disparity is also present in the EU Neighbourhood[33] and other European countries[34] outside of the EU.

Another aspect to consider is how diversity amongst women relates to their experiences of gender-based violence. For example, research by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights shows that higher rates of harassment (especially harassment in person, as compared to online harassment) were found amongst people who were not born in a given EU member state (e.g. foreign and/or migrant origin).[35] Also, the risk of experiencing various forms of gender-based violence, and especially

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30   Shreeves, R., Prpic, M. and Claros, E. 2019. "Briefing: Women in Politics in the EU-State of Play." European Parliamentary Research Service, available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/635548/EPRS_BRI(2019)635548_EN.pdf

31   IPU and UN Women, *Women in Politics: 2019 map*, available at: https://www.un-women.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/women-in-politics-2019-map-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3303

32   https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/regulatory-and-legal-framework/legal-definitions-in-the-eu?ts=rape

33   https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Preliminary%20Report%20-%20Violence%20Against%20Women%20in%20Politics%20in%20Southeastern%20Europe.pdf

34   https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/2/413237_0.pdf

35   https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2021-crime-safety-victims-rights_en.pdf

sexual violence, is greater among women with disabilities.[36] This corroborates the need for inclusive policy-making regarding gender-based violence,[37] which would take into account different backgrounds and profiles of both victims and perpetrators, as well as potential political and hate motives.

The murder of British Member of Parliament Jo Cox in 2016, which shook all of Europe and the rest of the world,[38] revealed serious shortcomings in the existing prevention mechanisms and a low level of awareness regarding VAWP, leading to the conclusion that more research is necessary.[39] The increase in all of the various emerging forms of online violence especially shows how this phenomenon is still widely and relatively unregulated[40] and is pushing us to explore the issue more deeply. We also need to examine the impact the evolving forms of VAWP have on women's political participation. Most importantly, in order to prevent regression, it is crucial to acknowledge all the potential dangers of the *status quo*, the effect of the pandemic and the digital transformation on women's representation in political decision-making.

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36   Leonardi, M., Koutsogeorgou, E., Quatrini, A. and Covelli, V. 2014. "Women with Disability across Europe: Issues on Updated and Available Data."

37   Lombardo, E. and Rolandsen Agustín, L. 2016. "Intersectionality in European Union policymaking: the case of gender-based violence." *Politics*, *36*(4), pp. 364–373.

38   Jones, H. 2019. "More in common: the domestication of misogynist white supremacy and the assassination of Jo Cox." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *42*(14), pp. 2431–2449.

39   Ballington, J. 2018. "Turning the Tide on Violence against Women in Politics: How Are We Measuring Up?" *Politics & Gender*, *14*(4), pp. 695–701.

40   Barker, K. and Jurasz, O. 2020. "Online violence against women as an obstacle to gender equality: a critical view from Europe." *European Equality Law Review*, *2020*, pp. 47–60.

Presentation of Research Results

Presentation of Research Results: Survey

The survey is divided into four sections, with the first one gathering information about the demographics of the respondents (Section A), and the second dealing with the personal experience of violence against women in politics (Section B). The last two sections deal with personal and contact information (Section C) and privacy and data protection (Section D).

Since the main objective of this publication was to explore the experiences of our survey's participants, the publication focuses on the findings that were identified as the most interesting and most helpful for developing the Toolbox provided in *Appendix I*. More detailed demographic data collected from Survey Section A can be found in *Appendix II.*

Out of 77 survey respondents from 25 different European countries, 89.6% identified themselves as women, 9.1% as men and 1.3% preferred not to say.

Section B (questions 7–22) dealt more closely with the experience of Violence Against Women in Politics and contained the largest number of questions, which were also the most detailed.

When asked if they experienced violence against women in politics, the majority (64.9%) of respondents gave an affirmative answer, 19.5% responded negatively and 15.6% were not sure (Figure 1).

## 7. Have you experienced violence against women in politics?

77 responses
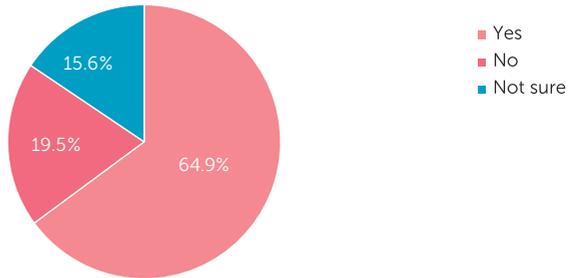
Figure 1. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

Question number 8 referred to witnessing violence against women in politics rather than experiencing it first-hand, giving more insight into whether the respondents were aware of gender-based violence and/ or discrimination being an issue in their surroundings. 76.6% of the respondents have witnessed violence against women in politics. 15.6% responded they have never witnessed violence against women in politics, whereas 7.8% were not sure (Figure 2).

## 8. Have you witnessed violence against women in politics?

77 responses
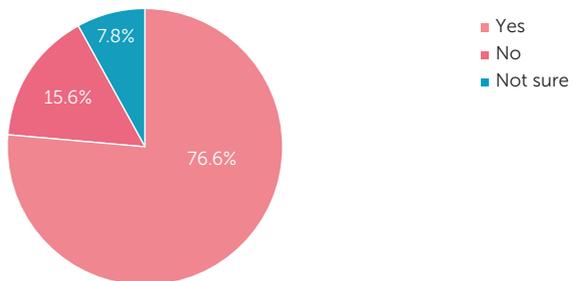
Figure 2. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

Figure 3 shows that 68.8% of respondents said they have experienced violence based on their sex or gender. All of them were female. 18.2% responded negatively and 13% were not sure.

9. Have you experienced violence based on your sex or gender?

77 responses
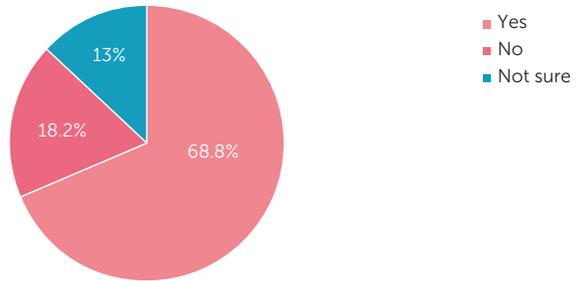
Figure 3. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

The next question dealt with the intersectionality of violence against women in politics and political engagement. 74% of the survey participants claimed to have experienced violence because of their political engagement, 16.8% said they did not have such experience, whilst 9.1% were unsure (Figure 4).

10. Have you experienced violence because of your political engagement?

77 responses
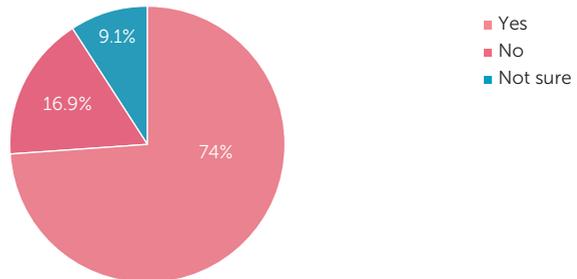
Figure 4. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

The next segment provided insight into the types of violence the respondents have experienced in their lifetime. The following forms of violence were explored: physical violence, emotional violence (including verbal violence), psychological violence (including threats, intimidation and/or 'mind games'), sexual violence (including sexual harassment and/or rape culture), online and digital violence (including cyberbullying, non-consensual sexting and/or doxing) and economic violence (including income- or job-related blackmail and/or threats). Most of the participants experienced emotional (79.2%), online (71.4%) and psychological violence (64.9%). 32.5% have experienced some kind of sexual violence, 22.1% have experienced economic and 14.3% forms of physical violence. Only two participants claimed to have never experienced any type of violence against them (Figure 5).

11. Which of the following types of violence have you experienced? (multiple choice)
77 responses
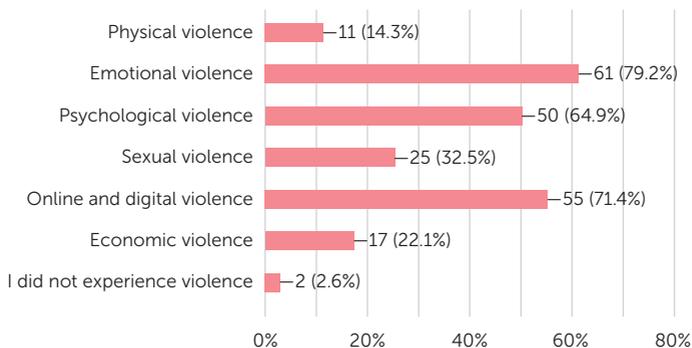
Figure 5. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

When it comes to witnessing the aforementioned forms of violence against women in politics, most of the participants witnessed emotional (83.1%), online (79.2%) and psychological violence (75.3%). Almost half (46.8%) have witnessed some kind of sexual violence and 32.5% have experience physical and economic violence (Figure 6).

12. Which of the following types of violence have you witnessed? (multiple choice)

77 responses
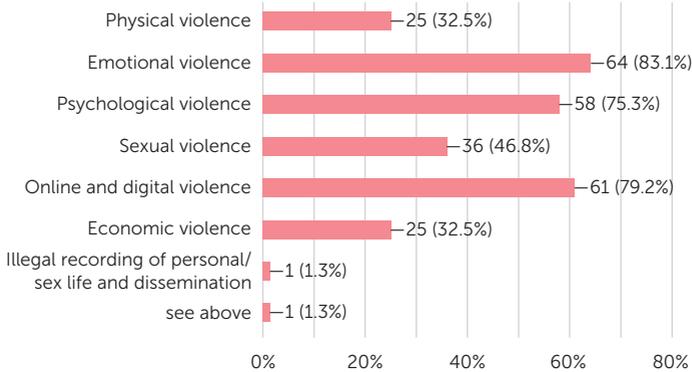
Figure 6. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

A vast majority (79.2%) of respondents were previously aware of the forms of violence mentioned in the survey (Figure 7). At the same time, economic violence, psychological violence and emotional violence were the forms that survey participants found hardest to recognise. (Figure 8).

13. Which of the following types of violence were you unaware of prior to this survey? Think of types of violence you have not heard about before. (multiple choice)
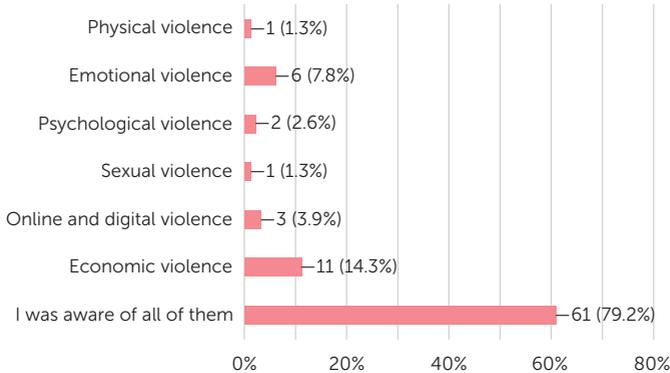
77 responses

Figure 7. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

14. Which of the following types of violence you find hard to recognise? (multiple choice)

77 responses
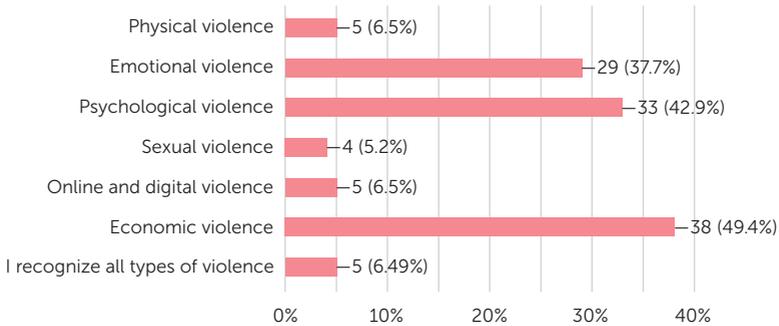
Figure 8 (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

The majority of survey participants agreed that violence against women in politics is perceived as acceptable (16.9% completely agreed and 45.5% somewhat agreed), while less than 30% disagreed (Figure 9).

15. Do you agree with the following statement? "Violence against women in politics is perceived as acceptable".

77 responses
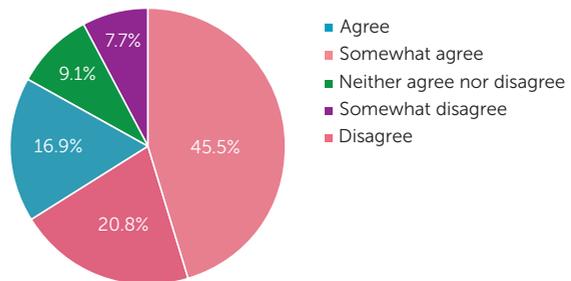
Figure 9. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

Remarkably, over 85% agreed that violence against women is widespread: 55.8% completely agreed and 22.9% somewhat agreed. Only 7.8% of the respondents disagreed with this statement to a certain degree (Figure 10). All of those disagreeing identified as female.

16. Do you agree with the following statement?
"Violence against women in politics is widespead".

77 responses
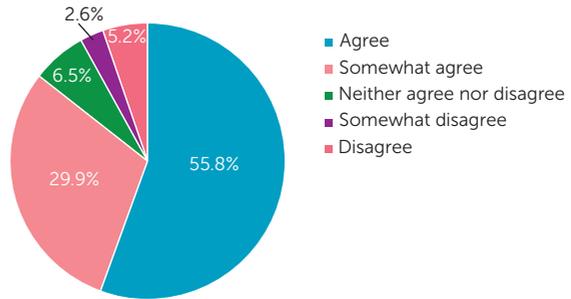
Figure 10. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

Around 83% thought that institutional protection against women in politics is non-existent and only 5.2% found that women in politics have some kind of institutional protection against gender-based violence (Figure 11).

17. Do you agree with the following statement?
"Women in politics have institutional protection against all types of gender-based violence".

77 responses
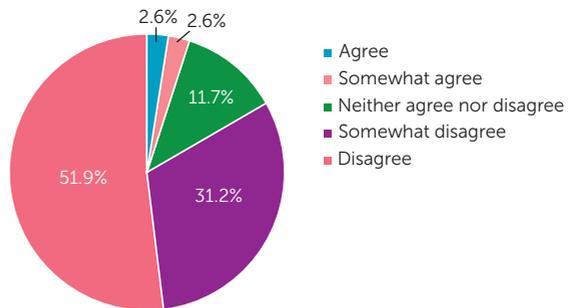
Figure 11. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

As to where violence against women in politics usually occurs, the respondents claimed that the most common place is online (96.1%), followed by other public areas (64.9%), parliamentary bodies (51.9%) and government institutions (48.1%). 41.6% agreed that violence often occurs within political parties (Figure 12).

18. Where do you feel violence against women in politics usually occurs? (multiple choice)

77 responses
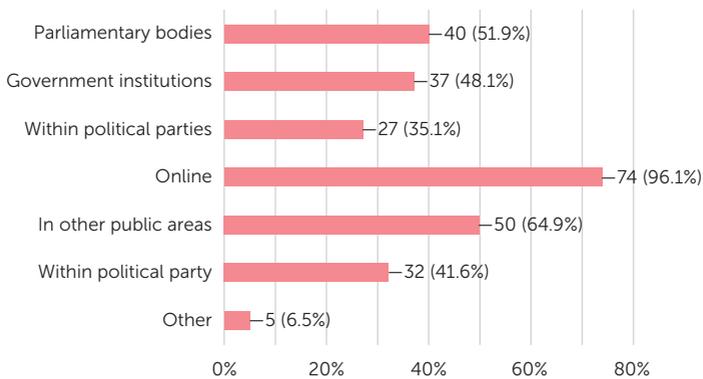
Figure 12. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

Shifting the focus from *where* to *who*, Figure 13 shows that most survey participants agreed that social media users are the most common perpetrators of VAWP (93.5%), followed by perpetrators associated with political opponents (70.1%) and citizens and/or voters (62.3%).

What is interesting, the majority also mentioned party and/or coalition colleagues as common perpetrators (57.1%).

Under 50% are representatives of the media, government officials, family members and CSO representatives.

19. Who do you feel are the most usual perpetrators of violence against women in politics?

77 responses
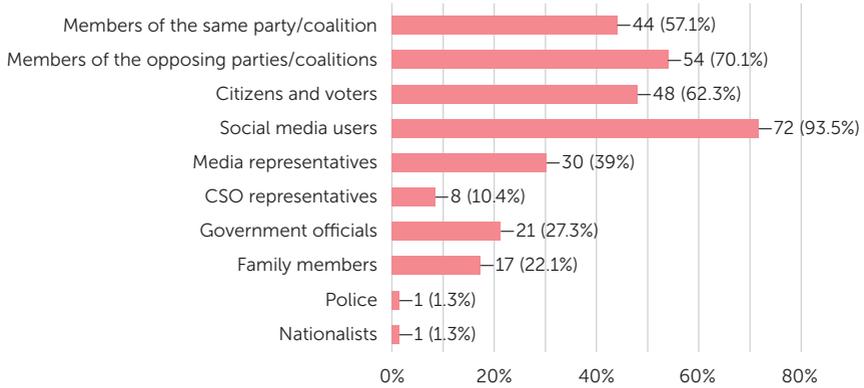
Figure 13. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

Considering the perpetrators' sex or gender, over 65% of the respondents said that it is mostly male, 31.2% said that both men and women can equally be perpetrators of violence against women in politics. None chose the 'mostly female' answer (Figure 14).

20. In your opinion, what is usually the sex or gender of the perpetrators of violence against women in politics?

77 responses
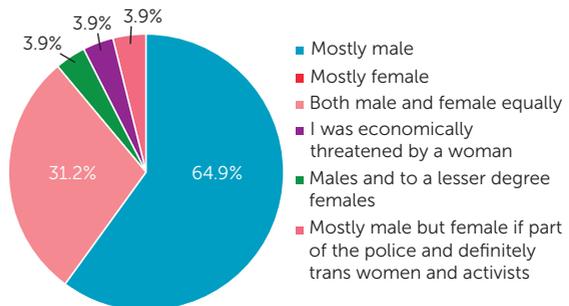
Figure 14. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

The lack of awareness of one's violent behaviour is as concerning as the behaviour itself. This question is particularly interesting in light of how some members are socially conditioned to perceive various types of violence as 'normal' or 'justified'. This is why the survey also addressed the issue of the perpetrators' perceived awareness (Figure 15). Over 67% of respondents thought the perpetrators are either always or usually aware that they are engaging in violence against women in politics, whilst 23.4% thought they were either always or usually unaware of their behaviour. 9.1% said they were not sure.

21. Do you feel that the perpetrators are usually aware of the fact that they are engaging in violence against women in politics?

77 responses

- They are always aware
- They are usually aware
- They are usually unaware
- They are always unaware
- Not sure
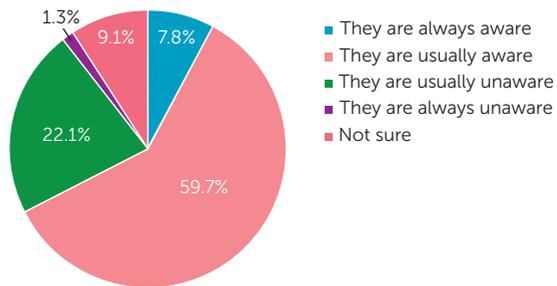
Figure 15. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

According to the data presented in Figure 16, almost 90% of respondents thought that raising awareness against the various types of violence against women in politics might help in its prevention. Only 7.8% disagreed and 3.9% were unsure.

22. Do you feel that raising awareness and learning about different types of violence against women in politics might prevent it from happening?

77 responses
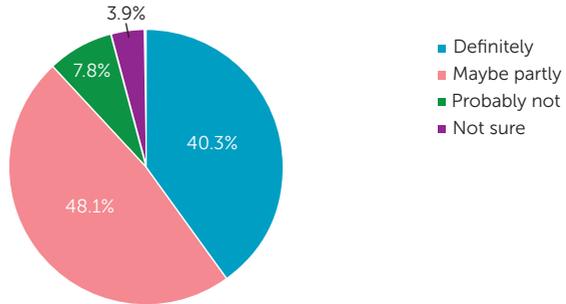
Figure 16. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

Presentation of Research Results: Interviews

All participants of the research were asked the following questions:[41]

1.	Can you think of any mechanisms (or laws) found in your country that offer protection against gender-based violence? What are they? How do they protect women?
2.	Can you think of any mechanisms (or laws) in your country that do not protect so well against gender-based violence? What are they? How can they be improved?
3.	Do you have any mechanisms for protection against gender-based violence within your political party (e.g. specific rules, commissions, etc.)? What are they? Do they work?
4.	If you were a victim of gender-based violence, do you think you would be able to get support within your own party? Would the level of support be different if it happened inside the party? If yes, why do you think that is?

41   If answers were unclear, or further explanation was needed, the researcher asked related, follow-up questions.

5. Do you think perpetrators are aware they are engaging in various types of violence against women in politics, or do you feel they are usually unaware they are doing something wrong? Please elaborate on your answer.

6. As a part of this publication, we plan to develop a toolkit to help fight the problem of violence against women in politics (e.g. a self-check questionnaires, examples of dialogues that demonstrate various types of gender-based violence, etc.). Do you feel this would be useful? What do you feel would be the most useful for you?

7. Do you have any additional comments? (Feel free to add any comments you might have that are related to the topic but were not addressed in the questions).

In regards to the protection mechanisms in the countries of the interviewees, the awareness about protection mechanisms was fairly low. Only one participant gave a detailed answer about such mechanisms in her country (Georgia) and it was one of the two participants who submitted their responses in the form of a written interview. The answers included mechanisms for protection against domestic violence, such as safe houses and helplines, the Istanbul Convention (if it was ratified in their country), the Ombudsman or special committees in the law-making/parliamentary bodies. A few interviewees from Austria claimed that their country has good laws protecting against gender-based violence and discrimination, even against stalking, but they are very often hard to implement.

Respondents considered online campaigns – local counterparts to the #MeToo movement – the most helpful for raising awareness about violence against women in the public sphere. A couple of participants also mentioned HR training, implemented according to local, regional or national regulations, as a useful mechanism for achieving gradual improvement. The general consensus, however, was that more work is still necessary. The issue of poor implementation, due to underfunding and the lack of prioritisation, was the main concern for most of the respondents. What is more, protection against online violence seems to be insufficient in all countries, while some also need improvement of their Criminal Codes.

Interestingly enough, while talking about protective mechanisms within their political parties, the majority of interviewees said that none such mechanisms existed, or they were unaware of them. Those that were aware, in most cases, mentioned ethics committees and codes of conduct. Some felt like they were sufficient, while others found that their implementation was flawed. A few participants said that their parties developed mechanisms only after cases of gender-based violence have occurred.

For some respondents, the main issue was the lack of proper support for victims and the fact that emotional and psychological violence was not addressed adequately. One participant felt that political parties lack qualified staff to deal with this issue and that she is unaware of any party that has a psychologist who could help in such cases. Some of the participants also raised the issue of violence during informal gatherings (e.g. team building activities, drinks after seminars, etc.) and that the role of alcohol in such cases is unexplored.

When it comes to receiving support from the party in the case of gender-based violence, the majority of interviewees felt that they would get it. A few were unsure, while a small number said that it depended on the situation and the outcome. One participant said that such support exists in principle, but that everything looks different in practice. Interviewees were also divided in their perception of how aware the perpetrators of gender-based violence are of the fact that they are doing something wrong and engaging in acts of discrimination. Some thought perpetrators are always or usually aware, while others thought they were unaware, mostly because of long-standing societal norms.

It is concerning that the participants agreed that cases of VAWP within their parties would become a PR issue, and as such would be treated with great caution. They felt that in many such cases the first instinct would be to protect the party, instead of protecting the victim.

Presentation of Research Results: Testimonials[42]

'In politics, there are two types of violence in my opinion, and I have experienced both. First, there is violence against women's rights to stand up, have representation and choose their life path. The second one is direct *verbal* violence, where female politicians and candidates are called names and pushed back to their 'boxes'.

'What I find most interesting is people calling female politicians things like girls. They try to make you small, to not acknowledge the fact that you are a grown-up woman. Most of these people seem to be normal people, sometimes even primary teachers with daughters of their own! I don't think they understand the impact of doing this.

'In recent years, private lives of Georgian female politicians were recorded and spread via TV/media, etc. Female politicians are often subject to verbal discrimination and abuse based on their looks, gender, etc. Due to the fact that money is mainly in the hands of male politicians, female politicians experience mistreatment based on their income when being considered for the list.'

'I was catcalled while canvassing. My daughter (14) was assaulted during a protest "because she is a pretty girl" — verbally and then physically.'

'We had one "you should be raped" message, a lot of social media insults and sexual comments against our top candidate, a young woman. I have been spat at by men, groped and told that women should be in the bedroom rather than in parliament; many women I know have been shoved aside when it came to writing the election list, there was a particularly stupid personal attack on a colleague by a competitor, there was a comedian with a hand puppet who disgustingly hit on our top candidate and said misogynist stuff through the puppet... I was given to understand that my party background would cost me my job outside

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42   Note: The following testimonials were chosen based on the provided details, as well as consent for publishing.

the political sphere at some point, there was a case of attempted rape during our campaign, both perpetrator and victim being co-workers, that ended in the perpetrator losing his job…'

'Living in the UK at the time of the EU referendum, violence against campaigners and politicians was widespread. When I was campaigning for remaining, I was approached on the street by a man who threatened to follow me home and burn down my house, and another who said that all of the female activists on the street should be raped. Although I was not physically assaulted, I was physically intimidated by men getting very close and "up in my face", and in one instance I had posters snatched from my hands and ripped into pieces. Once, approaching someone's house for canvassing, I had a dog set on me (luckily, I was able to quickly jump over the gate). Of course, no one who was involved at the time will ever forget the murder of a female MP (Jo Cox) in broad daylight – afterwards, many of the female activists and campaigners I knew were too scared to continue campaigning in the final days of the referendum.

I now live in Belgium and the political atmosphere here feels generally less tense than in the UK. It does feel that in the past decade attitudes towards women in the UK, and especially women in the public eye, have gotten worse rather than better.'

'Having worked as an advisor and assistant to Gina Miller during her Brexit campaigns, I experienced first-hand the abuse towards women in politics. From death threats, threats of physical violence, threats of sexual assault, to financial threats, she was subjected to a constant barrage of harassment and violence through text and phone calls, and this impacted our team as well.

Not only did we have to be careful of where she travelled, but also we had to be careful regarding the security arrangements for the majority of her events, had to be mindful of the safety of staff, had to regularly make reports to the police, and in general manage the threats as well as possible. There were crowd funders in order to kill Gina Miller, and the aristocrat, Viscount Rhodri Philipps, publicly offered "£5,000 for the first

person to 'accidentally' run over this bloody troublesome first-generation immigrant".'

'My photos have been shared online by an extremist far-right group along with my personal information, endangering me...'

'I experienced severe insults and violence on social networks from some-one who presents himself as "respected in society"; I was humiliated and insulted while in municipal council by male colleagues. I have also been the recipient of several inappropriate insults from representatives of the Government during my time in the Parliament as an opposition MP.'

'When I was elected as a candidate for MP, some media online portals and party members wrote very offensive things. Also, I was physically assaulted by a party member. He drove me with his car through the city and I was threatened to withdraw my candidacy.'

'I have noticed that the language used against women in politics is very violent. I have read emails sent to female politicians from my party, which were so explicitly violent that I forwarded it to parliamentary ser-vices – they were unable to do anything, as the "intention" (I will) to the violence was not voiced, but only the "desire" (I wish). I thought this was inadequate.'

'I was insulted and grabbed by my arms on the street while collecting signatures...'

'Most violence is emotional. Men treat women differently. They are not able to speak as long, and they receive more aggressive messages on the internet.'

Recommendations

Keeping in mind that 88.4% of the participants replied that they would find tools for raising awareness either partially (48.1%) or definitely (40.3%) useful for prevention, the study further explores examples of such potential tools. Based on the responses from the volunteers participating in one-on-one interviews, the study presents following recommendations:

1. Bolder awareness-raising campaigns

All participants found that prominent social media campaigns, which raised awareness about violence against women and gained national, regional, or global traction, have contributed the most to positive changes. What made the campaigns stand out was the boldness in communicating the issue. Participants call for daring, graphic, in-your-face campaigns that cannot be ignored. It is vital that these campaigns are honest, simple, and most importantly that they paint the issue clearly, leaving little room for speculation and creating a space for concrete initiatives and policy proposals.

The most impactful tools are definitely those referring to personal experiences of women in politics. A lot of women consent to sharing incidents and encounters that have made them feel discriminated against and violated on the basis of their gender. There is a need to offer them space where their voices can be heard.

A campaign with men's voices on the issue would also be very helpful. A lot of women feel that support from their male colleagues is crucial, but they also feel their male colleagues stay silent under the veil of

pragmaticism and neutralism when their reaction is needed. A campaign centred around role models who speak out against VAWP and call for other men to understand and oppose such forms of discrimination would be of great help.

2.   Legal tools without awareness-raising are unhelpful

There is always the danger with legal tools that they will become dead letters. Study participants agreed that the implementation of legal mechanisms usually stagnates if the level of awareness about the level of seriousness regarding a problem is perceived as low (or lower as compared to other issues). This leads to cases of non-physical forms of violence against women, in politics or elsewhere, to rank lower on the list of priorities within the implementing body of processes related to a certain legal solution on the issue. The study derives a conclusion that those women active in European politics, who participated in the study, discern a link between the public awareness of the issue of VAWP and limited resources for the implementation of legal mechanisms designed to protect women against certain forms of gender-based violence.

Study participants thought legal mechanisms, unaccompanied by properly developed awareness campaigns, that would at the same time promote the level of importance of violence against women as a societal issue, do not deliver good results. Therefore, the study concludes and recommends new legal mechanisms, should always be accompanied by carefully developed awareness campaigns. Such campaigns should also include training for representatives of implementing bodies of such legal mechanisms, such as police and judiciary officials. This way, the distribution of resources necessary for the proper implementation of legal mechanisms would be better.

3.   Do not reinforce gender roles and stereotypes in politics

Gender roles that are (mis)used in political campaigns have indeed imposed challenges on feminist conceptualisations of not only women's issues and interests, but also, the entire perception of women's political

activism.[43] The strength of political campaigns should never be underestimated, that is why it is important to always leave room for a quasi-disclaimer when using gender roles in political campaigns. Socially responsible campaigns make it clear that individual choices should not be imposed onto others who want to take on another type of role in their political activism.

An important example is the tendency to label women's political initiatives as extreme, radical feminist and called out for creating further rifts and division. Female politicians coming together to support each other and creating joint initiatives and advocacy campaigns are considered radical, whilst at the same time 'boys clubs' are a traditional part of political life and are often perceived normal to the extent of complete unawareness of the gender component in such decision-making groups. Also, political fights between men are perceived as legitimate, attractive, and even sensational at times, whilst political confrontations between female politicians are very often labelled as 'cat fights'. These particular gender roles and stereotypes are characteristic of certain professions and politics is one of them.

All of these examples of stereotypes and gender roles enable forms of victim blaming when cases of violence against women in politics attract public attention – the most prominent example being 'it is part of the job, you chose it', implicating how not being able to succumb to masculine dynamics in politics justifies violence against politically engaged women.

4. PR briefings and cheat sheets for preventing sexist excesses in public statements

Media sexism is another example of indirect contribution to the overall victim blaming mentality. The combination of sexism in media being perceived as acceptable and again as a 'part of the job' is one of the

43   Schreiber, R. 2016. "Gender roles, motherhood, and politics: Conservative women's organisations frame Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann." *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, *37*(1), pp. 1–23.

most demotivating factors for women in politics. It has a negative impact on women's political ambitions[44] and dissuades them from taking on leading political roles because they're afraid of how they would be portrayed in the media. Research shows the connection between everyday sexism and victim blaming,[45] leading to women refusing to speak out about gender-based violence because myths reinforced by the media silence their voices.[46] Participants in the study also confirmed that women in politics feel like their ambition and political careers are being perceived as a conscious choice to become exposed to the above-mentioned forms of gender-based discrimination.

In order to deconstruct myths about gender-based violence and curb victim blaming, participants of the political and public discourse must become mindful of how media sexism is reinforced by their statements.

Making sure members of political organisations who provide public opinions have regular PR briefings that talk about sexism in political statements and how to prevent it will reduce the risk of sexist excesses in public and, in the long run, make the public space more appealing to women in politics and less attractive to perpetrators committing violence against them. If the regularity of such briefings is an issue of human resources and time management, then the PR team can draft a simple cheat sheet that presents examples and points to keep in mind when making a public statement, ultimately leading to a more mindful public discourse.

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44   Haraldsson, A. and Wängnerud, L. 2019. "The effect of media sexism on women's political ambition: evidence from a worldwide study." *Feminist Media Studies*, *19*(4), pp. 525–541.

45   Pedersen, S.H. and Strömwall, L.A. 2013. "Victim blame, sexism and just-world beliefs: A cross-cultural comparison." *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, *20*(6), pp. 932–941.

46   Rollero, C. and Tartaglia, S. 2019. "The effect of sexism and rape myths on victim blame." *Sexuality & Culture*, *23*(1), pp. 209–219.

5. Training, some more training and open dialogue

Women should feel safe in their workplace, wherever that might be, but the reality is far from it.[47] Participants of the study have addressed the importance of HR training to improve the working environment in administration. This is why continuing to insist on HR training for the staff in politics will ultimately raise awareness of the issue inside political organisations and networks. But it is not enough to focus only on paid staff. Elected officials, political activists and experts should also have access to such training.

If we premise that politicians are professionals and that parliaments, councils, institutions and the public sphere are their working environments, then we conclude that interpersonal relations that occur in political work are subject to the same criteria as in any other working environment. The main criteria are as follows: everyone should feel safe and no one should be discriminated against. Since the scope of interpersonal relations in politics is much wider than in many other professions, it is of course harder to encompass the entire working sphere when offering training. Nevertheless, training sessions for parliamentarians on how to interact with their female colleagues and how not to cross the line towards gender-based violence, for representatives of the media on how to portray and interact with women in politics, as well as continuous training for activists in political parties and networks that nurture a violence-free political culture are all examples of long-term solutions that can be viewed as equivalent to HR training sessions in offices.[48]

Such training can be used as a basis to create platforms for dialogue on the topic of violence against women in politics, especially constructive dialogue between genders. Women in politics sharing their experience might offer a better sense of understanding why it is necessary to address the issue of gender-based discrimination and violence in political

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47   Sahgal, p. and Dang, A., 2017. "Sexual harassment at workplace." *Economic & Political Weekly, 52*(22), p. 49.

48   Lees-Marshment, J. (2021). *Political management: the dance of government and politics*. London; New York Routledge.

working environments, which might ultimately lead to rectifying certain types of behaviours.

6.   More recommendations from study participants:

- Conducting internal and external research to learn about the experience of your party colleagues and to assess the status quo when it comes to violence against women in your party is a crucial first step for raising awareness.
- After assessing the status quo, offer protection mechanisms. The best way of dealing with sexual harassment in politics is prevention. Rules need to be clear.
- Most individuals in political parties and other political organisations are usually underqualified to deal with the issue of violence against women. And this is very important for preventing attitudes towards the issue which are based on myths.[49] Usually, there is no one to offer real support. Considering the nature of political work, it is a good idea to have psychologists in political parties that are better equipped to deal with difficult situations.
- Dedicated sessions in parliamentary bodies that specifically address the issue of gender-based violence might be useful for sharing experiences. Advocating for this approach could also help raise awareness of male colleagues, the media, and the general public regarding the issue of violence against women in politics.
- Alcohol should not be underestimated as a trigger for violence against women. It is particularly important to keep in mind during less formal gatherings, seminars, cocktails, team building activities, etc. – women should feel protected even then. A briefing on sexual harassment before team building, visits, seminars, and other activities of this sort may raise awareness and curb certain behaviours that potentially lead to sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence.

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49   Goldberg, C.B., Rawski, S.L. and Perry, E.L., 2019. "The direct and indirect effects of organisational tolerance for sexual harassment on the effectiveness of sexual harassment investigation training for HR managers." *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *30*(1), pp. 81–100.

- And finally, one of the participants from the United Kingdom simply advises: 'If you would not act in a certain way towards your male colleague, then it is also unacceptable to do so towards your female colleagues. If you would not do it to a man, do not do it to a woman.'

Appendix I – Toolbox

Tool 1: Self-check your behaviour

Have you ever engaged in one of the following behaviours?[50]

☐ Deviated from the usual way to greet a person by adding uninvited physical contact (e.g. an uninvited hug or peck, caressing of any body part, a tighter hug, or a hug with additional contact between certain body parts)

☐ Turned a conversation about work and/or politics to sexual topics and jokes with sexual innuendo

☐ Asked a person repetitively to engage in any type of behaviour or activity after she/he expressed unwillingness to do so (e.g. go for drinks, engage in a dance with you, written correspondence, etc.)

☐ Made sexual comments about a person's body, clothes, or appearance in general

☐ Asked uninvited questions about a person's sexual and private life, his/her sexual preferences, fantasies and/or other intimate information

☐ Told stories and rumours (true or false) about a person's personal sex life

☐ Made uninvited comments, sexual innuendos or catcalling noises (howling, kissing sounds, smacking lips)

☐ Referred to an adult woman as a girl, honey, babe, beauty...

☐ Stared at a person or looked them up and down

☐ Followed a person or blocked their path

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50 BNA Communications, Inc. 1992. *Manual on Preventing Sexual Harassment* SDC IP .73.

- ☐ Made sexual gestures with hands and other body parts, or made sexual facial expression (winking, licking lips, throwing kisses)
- ☐ Gave uninvited personal gifts to someone that might create the sense that a favour is expected in return
- ☐ Uninvitedly touched a person's body, hair, or clothes
- ☐ Gave uninvited hugs, kisses, strokes, massages, neck rubs and/or a pats to a person
- ☐ Intentionally stood very close, brushed up, or rubbed oneself up against a person
- ☐ Uninvitedly touched oneself sexually around another person
- ☐ Made uninvited sexual and physical advances towards a person
- ☐ Pressured a person for sexual favours
- ☐ Made uninvited phone calls, sent uninvited text messages and/or materials of sexual nature
- ☐ Attempted rape or sexual assault

Tool 2: Self-check your experiences

Have you experienced any of the following behaviours?

A colleague or acquaintance or another person greeted me with a hug, and I felt his/her hand wander to other parts of my body and/or he/she pulled me closer to his/her own body.

- ☐ During a random conversation, a colleague or acquaintance or another person has made a joke of sexual nature that has made me feel uncomfortable.
- ☐ A colleague or acquaintance or another person has asked me to go for drinks or dinner with him/her after I have expressed unwillingness to do so a few times before.
- ☐ A colleague or acquaintance or another person surprised me with comments about my appearance (e.g. called me 'sexy', or 'good looking', or told me that my outfit looks good on me and this has made me uncomfortable).
- ☐ A colleague or acquaintance or another person asked me questions about my private life, about my sexual preferences, my sexual

partners or asked me to comment on someone else's private life, sexual preferences and/or sexual behaviour.

☐ A colleague or acquaintance or another person told stories, spread rumours, and talked to other people about my sexual preferences, my sexual partners.

☐ A colleague or acquaintance, or another person made uninvited comments, sexual innuendos or catcalling noises (howling, kissing sounds, smacking lips) to me and/or in my presence, which has made me uncomfortable.

☐ A colleague or acquaintance, or another person referred to me as girl, honey, babe, beauty, sexy...

☐ A colleague or acquaintance, or another person stared at me and/or looked me up and down which made me feel uncomfortable.

☐ At least one time, someone followed me and/or blocked my path (even if it seemed like a joke).

☐ A colleague or acquaintance, or another person made sexual gestures with hands and other body parts, or made sexual facial expressions (winking, licking lips, throwing kisses).

☐ A colleague or acquaintance, or another person gave me uninvited personal gifts that made me think they expected something in return.

☐ Another person surprised me by touching parts of my body, hair, or clothes.

☐ A colleague or acquaintance, or another person gave me uninvited hugs, kisses, strokes, massages, neck rubs and/or pats.

☐ At least one time, a person stood very close to me during a gathering, then they rubbed themselves up against me, which made me uncomfortable.

☐ Someone uninvitedly touched themselves sexually in my presence.

☐ Another person made sexual and physical advances towards me, after I have said 'no' and/or 'don't' at least one time.

☐ A colleague or acquaintance, or another person had pressured me (or tried to pressure me) for sexual favours.

☐ A colleague or acquaintance, or another person made unwanted phone calls to me, sent me uninvited text messages and/or materials of sexual nature, which has made me feel uncomfortable.

☐ Someone attempted to rape or sexually assault me.

Tool 3: Painting a Clear Picture — Scenario Examples

Examples of violence experienced by women in politics are provided below to raise awareness about the issue and make it clear what constitutes gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and hostile working environments.

Scenario Example 1: Sarah

Sarah is a young volunteer in a local branch of a political party. The branch is doing research, and she is working in the party's call centre, calling their constituents, and exploring their stances on an issue that is currently the centre of attention in their local community.

One day, she stays late at the party offices together with the local branch leader. They offer her dinner and a drive home. She has been working the entire day and she is hungry and tired, so she accepts. During dinner they start flirting with her and offer to drive her to their place instead of hers, to have some more drinks, telling her she could also spend the night there. She declines politely, saying that she is tired. She does not want to make the leader angry because she feels they can make her life difficult, and she has political ambitions.

The next night, a similar thing happens. This time, she rejects them more firmly. They leave her alone for a couple of days, but then they make another attempt. Sarah makes it clear she is not interested. After that, the leader tells her she will not be included in any of the party activities from now on and they will not invite her to party meetings anymore, threatening her political career is over before it even started. They tell her that they will tell everyone who asks about her how she was the one who made the sexual advances because she wanted to use sexual intercourse in order to advance in the party.

Scenario Example 2: Johanna

Johanna has been elected to a public office. She has always enjoyed fashion and likes to dress well, wear makeup, perfume and has a developed skin routine. It just makes her feel nice. For work, she chooses clothes she feels good in.

The parliament where she has a seat is mostly made up of male colleagues. Every time Johanna speaks or walks through the halls, some of her colleagues make noises, look her up and down, and exchange comments about her physical appearance. This makes her uncomfortable, but she is used to this. Nevertheless, at times she feels she is not taken seriously because of this.

One time she decided to dress in all black, unrevealing clothes, believing that it was necessary for raising awareness amongst her colleagues on an issue that was very important to her, as she did not want her looks to distract from the importance of the issue. When she stood in front of the parliament and spoke of the issue, one of the colleagues raised his hand. However, instead of making a comment on the presented issue, he said that he does not like how Johanna is dressed today and instead of 'playing with tough topics' she should go back to 'looking sexy', because this is a trait that will get her elected again and that people do not like 'loud-mouthed women'.

Scenario Example 3: Petra

Petra is an intern and a part of a minister's staff. She got the internship right after graduating with a master's degree in public policy, so she felt very lucky for the opportunity to learn more in practice. Ever since she joined the team, the minister has been very nice to her, giving her tasks and direct access to their portfolio and meetings. At first, Petra found this amazing. As the time passed, the minister started to ask her about her private life, greet her with a hug and

comment on her physical appearance. The hugs turned into pecks on the cheek, casual touches and caresses in the hallway.

One time, when she was working, the minister came to the office. They approached Petra's chair from behind, put their hands on her shoulders and started rubbing them and commenting on how well and hard she works and that she is probably exhausted. The situation was very uncomfortable for Petra, but she froze and did not know how to react. The other colleagues who were present also kept silent. Later she found out that some of them were actually talking about her behind her back, saying how she is getting special treatment and that she, in fact, enjoys this type of behaviour towards her.

Scenario Example 4: Alice

Ever since she joined her party, Alice has been very engaged with citizens. It increased her popularity with the party's voters over time. This is why her party members convinced her to run in the next local elections against the current mayor. It was a hard decision for her, but Alice said yes because she cares about the future of her local community and the mayor was already accused of corruption several times.

When her campaign launched, she knew it would be difficult, but it seemed to be going quite well. Her popularity was on the rise and polls showed a much tighter race than expected. And then the attacks against her began. Everyone told her it was because she was doing good and that this is a part of the job. But then she noticed that one Facebook user was targeting her more frequently. He was commenting on every post about her several times, creating fake profiles and sending messages to her Facebook inbox. She warned her staff about him, but they told her to ignore him, as he was just an insane person, and should not be taken seriously. Then one day, he wrote her a message threatening her with rape and murder if she did not stop her campaign. The message also contained her home address...

Scenario Example 5: Layla

Layla is a young political activist in an opposition party, hoping to get elected for the first time. She loves her team and during past campaigns she spent a lot of time with all the other members of her local branch. They grew very close over the years.

This election campaign was successful. The party won more seats and Layla was one of those who got elected. She and the other newly elected officials thought it would be a good idea if they organised a team building for all the other members and volunteers. They felt everyone deserved a good time after the campaign. They raised money and rented rooms in a resort on the beach, where they played games and had a lot of fun together.

One of the other elected councillors drank too much alcohol one night and made advances towards Layla. She got very upset and raised the issue the next morning. The councillor and some of their supporters and volunteers blamed it on the alcohol and excused their behaviour. Later, she found out that everyone talked about her being a 'party breaker'. Because she wanted to keep a good relationship with her colleagues, she did not address the issue further. After that, the councillor sent her messages with sexual innuendos at least once per week, followed by messages the next day apologising and saying they were drunk. Finally, she could not take it anymore, and she told him to stop doing it. The messages stopped for a while but then continued again. The only thing that was different was the way her parliamentary group was treating her. They alienated themselves from her and hung out more with the other councillor. She was not invited to informal gatherings or drinks with colleagues anymore.

Tool 4: Let's Talk About Consent

CONSENT IS:	CONSENT IS NOT:
Informed – always ask permission before engaging in a behaviour that is deviating from your usual relationship with a person	Flirting, smiling, silence, or dressing sexy; accepting drinks, dinner, or a ride
Freely given – if you have to coerce a person or try really hard to convince them into saying yes to engaging in any kind of interaction with you, then you do not have consent	Being dressed sexy or undressed for that matter
Ongoing – just because a person is consenting to something it does not mean they will consent to whatever comes next	Agreeing to something before, meaning that you have to agree to do it every other time
Sober – consent given under influence can be revoked afterwards	Something you do not remember giving because your judgement was clouded for whatever reason; it is not saying yes or not saying no, while under influence
Clear – anything but a clear 'yes' or other type of agreement is unclear	The mere absence of a 'no' or a rejection
Specific – make sure you both are consenting to the same behaviour	Being in a relationship or even a marriage
Based on equal power – consent becomes unclear if one person is in a position of power as compared to the other person	Gender-based – persons of any gender have the right to reject any type of behaviour with another person and it is not one gender's role to initiate things and to convince the other to give consent

Tool 5: Reporting Violence Against Women

As per one of the respondent's recommendation, I provide a list of helplines from each European country below.[51][52] Anyone who experiences any type of gender-based violence, feels threatened or needs assistance can use them.[53]

Albania	116 117 and (04) 22 33 408
Andorra	860 345
Armenia	0800 80 850
Austria	0 800 222 555
Azerbaijan	493 7039/ 498 0092
Belarus	8 801 100 8 801
Belgium	0 800 30030/1712
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1264/1265
Bulgaria	02/981 76 86
Croatia	116 006
Cyprus	1440
Czech Republic	2 51 51 13 13
Denmark	45 70 20 30 82
England	0808 2000 247
Estonia	1492
Finland	080 005 005/0800 02400
France	39 19

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51   https://www.endvawnow.org/en/need-help

52   https://shewillsurvive.com/get-help-europe/kosovo/

53   The list is up to date for 10 October 2021, please check if the number is still valid before using it

Georgia	112
Germany	0 8000 116 016
Greece	SOS 15900
Hungary	(36) 80 20 55 20
Iceland	(00 354) 5611205
Ireland	1 800 341 900
Italy	15 22
Kosovo	0800 11112
Latvia	37 16 72 22 92 2
Liechtenstein	42 380 02 03
Lithuania	88 0066 366
Luxembourg	352 407 335
Malta	179
Moldova	0 800 88 008
Monaco	377 92 05 95 05
Montenegro	(382) 40213086 / 68024086
Netherlands	0 900 126 26 26
Northern Ireland	0800 917 1414
North Macedonia	070 141 700/075 141 700
Norway	800 40 008
Poland	8011 200 02
Portugal	800 202 148
Romania	(40) 264 598155
Russia	8 800 7000 600
San Marino	800 738 738

Scotland	0800 027 1234
Serbia	0 800 100 600
Slovakia	112
Slovenia	080 11 55
Spain	016
Sweden	020 50 50 50
Switzerland	044 291 46 46
Turkey	155/156/183
Ukraine	0 800 500 335 or 386 (mobile)
United Kingdom	0808 2000 247
Wales	0808 80 10 800

Tool 6: Your Glossary on Violence Against Women[54][55]

Alcohol or drug facilitated sexual assault

The use of alcohol or other drugs to intentionally incapacitate or se-date another person for the purpose of sexual assault. This includes an assailant targeting someone who is already visibly intoxicated.

Acquaintance sexual assault

A form of sexual assault in which the survivor has an existing relation-ship with the assailant. The assailant may be someone the survivor hardly knows, such as a friend of a friend or a first date, or they may be someone the survivor knows well, such as a partner or a close friend.

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54   https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/types-of-violence

55   https://www.mcgill.ca/osvrse/about-sexual-violence/glossary

Coercion

A tactic used to intimidate, trick or force someone to have sex without resorting to physical force. Some examples of coercion are:

- Constantly putting pressure on someone and refusing to take no for an answer.
- Implying sex is owed in return for financial favours, such as buying dinner, drinks or gifts.
- Making someone feel guilty for not engaging in sex ('if you loved me, you would…').
- Continually buying alcohol to inebriate the other person(s).

Consent

Consent is an agreement between participants to engage in sexual activity or enter into marriage. It must be freely and actively given and cannot be provided by someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol or by someone underage. Consent is specific, meaning that consent to one act does not imply consent to any others, as well as re-versible, meaning that it may be revoked at any time.

Corrective rape

Corrective rape is a form of rape perpetrated against someone on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is intended to force the victim to conform to heterosexuality or normative gender identity.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a form of online violence that involves sending intimi-dating or threatening messages.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence, also called domestic abuse or intimate partner violence, is any pattern of behaviour that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. It encompasses all physical, sexual, emotional, economic, and psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This is one of the most common forms of violence experienced by women globally.

Doxing

Doxing is a form of online violence that involves public release of private or identifying information about the victim.

Economic violence

Economic violence involves making or attempting to make a person financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, withholding access to money, and/or forbidding attendance at school or employment.

Emotional violence

Emotional violence includes undermining a person's sense of self-worth through constant criticism; belittling one's abilities; name-calling or other verbal abuse; damaging a partner's relationship with children; or not letting a partner see their friends and family.

Femicide

Femicide refers to intentional murder of women because they are women but may be defined more broadly to include any killing of women or girls. Femicide differs from male homicide in specific ways. For example, most cases of femicide are committed by partners or ex-partners, and involve ongoing abuse at home, threats or intimidation, sexual violence, or situations where women have less power or fewer resources than their partner.

Female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is divided into four major types, and both the practice and the motivations behind it vary from place to place. FGM is a social norm, often considered a necessary step in preparing girls for adulthood and marriage and typically driven by beliefs about gender and its relation to appropriate sexual expression.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) involves the use and abuse of power and control over another person and is perpetrated against someone based on their gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender. Violence against women and girls is one of the forms of GBV. It also has a disproportionate impact on LGBTIQ+ and gender-non-conforming people. GBV includes emotional and psychological violence, such as intentional misgendering, intentional 'outing', and use of gendered slurs, as well as physical, sexual, and structural or systemic violence.

Honour killing

Honour killing is the murder of a family member, usually a woman or a girl, for the purported reason that the person has brought dishonour or shame upon the family. These killings often have to do with sexual purity and supposed transgressions on the part of the female family members.

Human trafficking

Human trafficking is the acquisition and exploitation of people through means such as force, fraud, coercion, or deception. This heinous crime ensnares millions of women and girls worldwide, many of whom are sexually exploited.

Interpersonal violence

Also referred to as Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Domestic Violence, it is the abuse of power and control within a past or current relationship that endangers the well-being, security, or survival of another person. Interpersonal violence can occur in all types of relationships (e.g. dating, long-term, common-law, marriage, etc.). It can also occur between roommates and close friends.

Non-consensual sexting

Non-consensual sexting involves sending explicit messages or photos without the recipient's consent.

Online or digital violence

Online or digital violence against women refers to any act of violence that is committed, assisted or aggravated by the use of information and communication technology (mobile phones, the Internet, social media, computer games, text messaging, email, etc.) against a woman because she is a woman.

Physical violence

Physical violence involves hurting or trying to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, burning, grabbing, pinching, shoving, slapping, hair-pulling, biting, denying medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use, or using other physical force. It may include property damage.

Psychological violence

Psychological violence involves causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm to self, partner or children; destruction of pets and property; 'mind games'; or forcing isolation from friends, family, school and/or work.

Rape

Rape is any non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of another person with any bodily part or object. This can be by any person known or unknown to the survivor, within marriage and relationships, and during armed conflict.

Rape culture

Rape culture is the social environment that allows sexual violence to be normalised and justified. It is rooted in patriarchy and fuelled by persistent gender inequalities and biases about gender and sexuality.

Revenge porn

The distribution of nude and/or sexually explicit photos and/or videos of an individual without their consent. In many cases, the pictures or footage are obtained by a partner during a relationship and posted after a break-up. Posts can also be made by acquaintances, former partners or hackers hacking into someone's personal electronic device(s).

Sexual assault

Sexual assault refers to any act of a sexual nature carried out in circumstances in which an individual has not freely agreed or consented. Sexual assault includes unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature that can range from unwanted kissing and touching to forced sexual intercourse and/or oral sex.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment encompasses non-consensual physical contact, like grabbing, pinching, slapping, or rubbing against another person in a sexual way. It also includes non-physical forms, such as catcalls, sexual comments about a person's body or appearance, demands for sexual favours, sexually suggestive staring, stalking, and exposing one's sex organs.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is any sexual act committed against the will of another person, either when this person does not give consent or when consent cannot be given because the person is a child, has a mental disability, or is severely intoxicated or unconscious as a result of alcohol or drugs.

Slut-shaming[56]

The act of criticising a woman for her real or presumed sexual activity, or for behaving in ways that one thinks are associated with her real or presumed sexual activity.

Stalking

Stalking is the wilful, malicious, and repeated following and/or harassing of another person. It can involve repeatedly following a person, watching their house, repeated communication with the person and/or threats to them or their family. Examples of stalking behaviour include:

☐ Continuous communication, either directly or indirectly, with the person. This may include calling on the phone, repeated text or social media messages, repeated letters or stealing mail.

☐ Repeatedly following a person. This may include watching the person, tracking them, showing up at their home, work, or school uninvited, being present at parties or events where the stalker knows the person will be. The stalker may also follow someone known to the person.

☐ Attempting to woo the person into a relationship by constantly sending flowers, candy, love letters, etc.

☐ Turn to intimidation and threatening behaviour when the person refuses the stalker's unwelcome advances. This may include vandalising the person's home or car, leaving tokens to let the person know that they are being watched, direct or indirect threats to the person's safety or the safety of those close to them.

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56   Sweeney, B. "Slut Shaming." In The SAGE Encyclopedia of Psychology and Gender, edited by K. Nadal, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2017, pp. 1579–1580.

Stealthing[57]

Stealthing refers to the purposeful and secretive removal of a condom during intercourse, when a partner's consent has only been given for condom-protected sex.

Survivor/victim[58]

Both terms are used to refer to a person who was sexually assaulted. 'Victim' is commonly used in the judicial system (by the police and in court) and is the most common term in the media. It is equally possible for a person to be a survivor and a victim depending on their experience. Personal, cultural, and socio-political reasons may influence a person in self-identifying with either term.

Survivor-centred

A form of sexual violence response that prioritises supporting the survivor and protecting their rights. The approach also aims to help those who have been assaulted begin to define their own experience.

Victim blaming

The act of blaming the occurrence of sexual assault on the survivor instead of the person who committed the sexual assault. Victim blaming can be very implicit. For example, recommending that one does not wear revealing clothing, travel alone at night, or engage in sexting implies that such actions provoke sexual assault. A non-victim blaming response acknowledges that people make choices to violate the bodily integrity of others, and that they alone are responsible for these choices.

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57   Brodsky, A. 2017. "Rape-adjacent: Imagining Legal Responses to Nonconsensual Condom Removal." Columbia Journal of Gender and Law, vol 32, pp. 183–210.

58   Victim or Survivor: Terminology from Investigation Through Prosecution. RTI International, https://sakitta.org/toolkit/docs/Victim-or-Survivor-Terminology-from-Investigation-Through-Prosecution.pdf

Appendix II – Demographics of Survey Participants

When it comes to the country of origin, participants came from 25 different European countries: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina,[59] Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (Figure 17).

1. Country of residence

77 responses
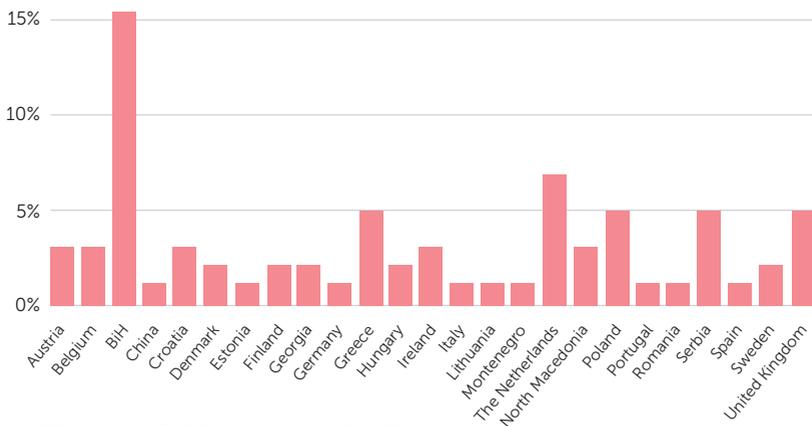
Figure 17. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

59   One participant was based in China at that moment but is originally from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although the question on gender of the participants was partially posed as an open-ended one, most of the respondents identified themselves as female (89.6%), 9.1% as male, whereas the rest of the respondents (1.3%) preferred not to say (Figure 18).

2. Gender

77 responses

1.3%

9.1%

■ Female
■ Male
■ Prefer not to say

89.6%
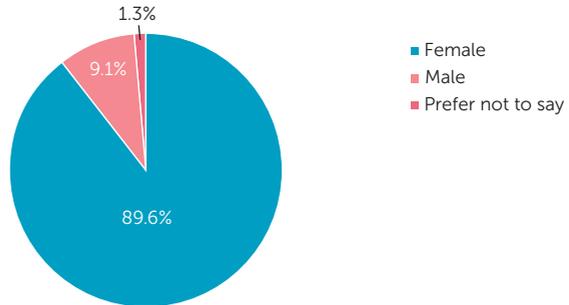
Figure 18. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

The age of the respondents was diverse, ranging from those below the age of 25 to those over the age of 65. The majority of the respondents fell into two groups: those between the age of 25 and 34 (35.1%), and those between 35 and 44 (29.9%), whereas the least represented age group were those over the age of 65 (Figure 19).

3. Age

77 responses

1.3%

7.8%   11.7%

14.3%

■ Under 25
■ 25–34
■ 35–44
■ 45–54
■ 55–64
■ 65 and

35.1%

29.9%
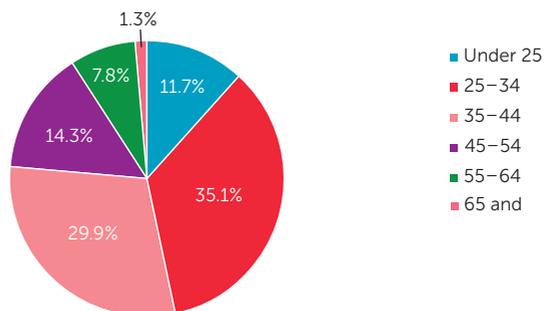
Figure 19. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

Out of the 77 respondents, most were either married or in a domestic partnership (57.1%) and 31.2% were either single or never married (Figure 20).

## 4. Marital status

77 responses
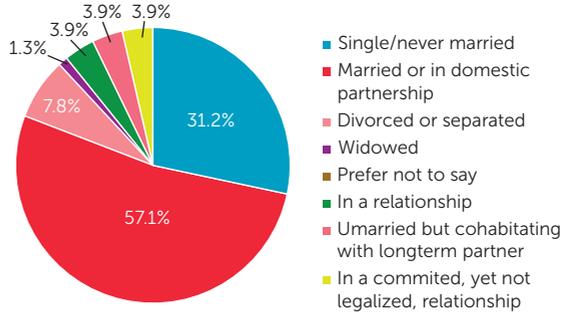
Figure 20. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

Regarding the level of education, most respondents had a master's degree (61%), 29.9% had a bachelor's degree, 6.5% had a PhD, whereas 2.6% stated that they successfully completed secondary education (Figure 21).

5. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

77 responses
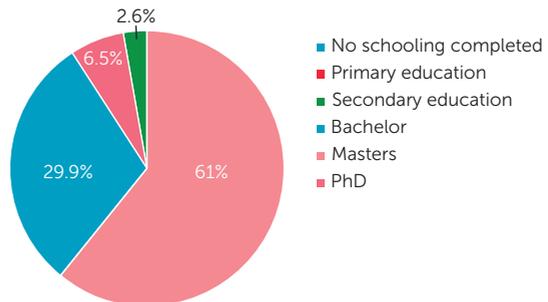
Figure 21. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

The last question of the demographics section addressed the political ideology of the respondents – rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most conservative and 5 being the most progressive. 44.2% of the respondents defined their ideology as highly progressive, 40.3% as somewhat progressive, while 11.7% identified themselves as centrist. The survey lacked conservative participants (Figure 22).

### 6. On a conservative-progressive scale from 1 to 5, how would you define your political ideology?

77 responses
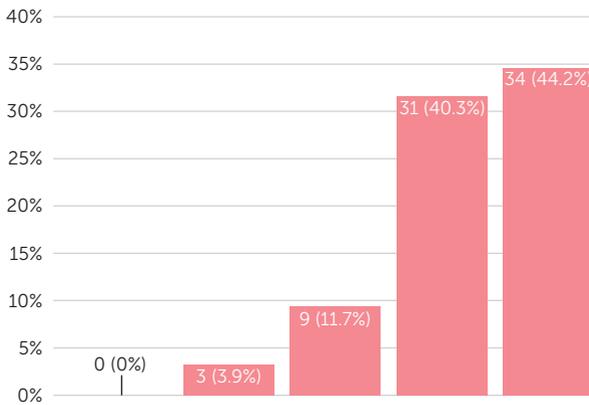
Figure 22. (Source: ELF Survey on VAWP in Europe)

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Organisations

The European Liberal Forum (ELF)

The European Liberal Forum (ELF) is the official political foundation of the European Liberal Party, the ALDE Party. Together with 46 member organisations, we work all over Europe to bring new ideas into the political debate, to provide a platform for discussion, and to empower citizens to make their voices heard.

ELF was founded in 2007 to strengthen the liberal and democrat movement in Europe. Our work is guided by liberal ideals and a belief in the principle of freedom. We stand for a future-oriented Europe that offers opportunities for every citizen. ELF is engaged on all political levels, from the local to the European.

We bring together a diverse network of national foundations, think tanks and other experts. At the same time, we are also close to, but independent from, the ALDE Party and other Liberal actors in Europe. In this role, our forum serves as a space for an open and informed exchange of views between a wide range of different actors.

International Educational Center

International Educational Center (IEC) is a liberal foundation (NGO) that provides political education and training opportunities to citizens and organizations. The IEC organizes political education programmes and provides training and capacity building assistance to liberal organization in the region. The IEC is a member organization of the European Liberal Forum and the European Network of Political Foundations.

D66 International / Stichting IDI

D66 Internationaal / Stichting IDI is an independent yet integrated pillar of the international work of the Dutch progressive liberal party D66. D66 Internationaal / Stichting IDI is committed to contribute to working for more sustainable, democratic and open international societies. To this end, D66 Internationaal / Stichting IDI works mainly on political trainings and academies, the development of liberal social thought and best-practice sharing. Respect for human rights and minorities, promotion of inclusive institutions and practice of sustainability are key elements of the projects.

VVD International / Haya van Someren Stichting

VVD International is responsible for the international activities and relations of the Dutch Liberal Party VVD. VVD International is based at the headquarters of the VVD in The Hague, The Netherlands. Over the past 25 years VVD International has successfully supported liberal political parties abroad, through the deployment of VVD's best trainers and experts, whom provide trainings in field of communication, volunteer management, coalition building, manifesto drafting, running a campaign and much more. VVD International works on a demand-driven basis and organises and contributes to over more than 150 programmes a year. Through capacity building projects VVD International contributes to the emergence of capable, viable and professional liberal (future) politicians and parties. Projects have been successfully implemented in Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Egypt, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Tunisia and Ukraine.

Boris Divkovič Foundation

Boris Divković Foundation (BDF) has been established in 2013 with an aim of improving policy practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and currently in the region. The Foundation promotes responsible politics, which will serve all citizens and act on the principles of equality, coexistence and solidarity. The focus of BDF is policymaking, lobbying and

advocacy for progressive policies, based on principles of democracy, equality and inclusion. Therefore, one of the strongest segments of BDF is Research and Development Department, which produces custom made policy solutions with the strongest emphasizes on areas of education, social and economic development.

Projekt: Polska

Projekt: Polska are people who are dreaming of a modern, open, and liberal Poland. Those, to whom a democratic, effective and citizen-friendly government is a key goal, and who help accomplish this goal while enjoying themselves, forming new friendships, and furthering their own interests. The Projekt: Polska Foundation is our framework, a group of professionals with immense experience in direct action: entrepreneurs, leading ngo heads, civil servants. www. projektpolska.pl.

Indítsuk Be Magyarországot Foundation

The aim of Indítsuk Be Magyarországot Foundation is to actively contribute to the creation of a modern, innovative democracy, which is able to use the solutions of the 21st century and where we all proactively work together for a successful Hungary. This vision however is only achievable through the continuous development of the political culture. In its activities, the Indítsuk Be Magyarországot Foundation puts particular emphasis on civic education and knowledge sharing by supporting education programs, organising conferences and distributing books and publications. Highly supported areas of activity are scientific research, innovation and technological development and propagation of basic civic knowledge.

National Democratic Institute (NDI)

NDI is a non-profit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that has supported democratic institutions and practices in every region of the world for more than two decades. The Institute has worked to strengthen political and civic organizations, safeguard elections and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability

in government. NDI's Regional Political Integrity Program based in Sarajevo, BiH supports its partners in Southeastern Europe in developing internal integrity mechanisms. This work targets accountability and transparency gaps in political parties and institutionalizes internal processes intended to demonstrate those values to the public.

The Alliance of Her (platform of the ALDE Party)

The Alliance Of Her is Europe's leading platform dedicated to supporting liberal women in politics to lead and succeed.

Our mission is to create change by empowering women in Europe to pursue their political ambitions; championing their efforts every step of the way; mobilising to dismantle the gendered barriers that stand in their path; and fighting every day for a future shaped by their voices. We do this by:

- Delivering world-leading academies for talented, ambitious liberal women at all stages of their political journey. *
- Harnessing the collective power of our growing alumnae and allies' network and sharing resources, expertise, and inspiration.
- Fearlessly and creatively advocating towards a more gender equal European politics.

* Participants that hold elected office or intend to run in an election campaign during the academy or up to 12 months are required to cover costs independently. For more information, please contact The Alliance Of Her team or refer to our website. https://www.aldeparty.eu/theallianceofher

About the project

Study on Violence against Women in Politics is a project of the European Liberal Forum, supported by the International Educational Center, the Boris Divković Foundation, D66 International/ Stichting IDI, VVD International/ Haya van Someren Stichting, the Indítsuk Be Magyarországot Foundation and implemented in partnership with the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The project's goal was to gain comparative insights into the problem of violence and other forms of discrimination against women in politics in Europe based on perceptions and experiences of political practitioners. The research component of the project was accompanied by a raising awareness campaign consisting of two high level events in Sarajevo and Brussels gathering more than 200 female political practitioners. It is the hope of the organizers that the project can serve to encourage more research into the subject and foster policy reforms and organizational changes in political organizations.

About the author

Jasmina Mršo is Naša Stranka's current international officer and deputy secretary-general of the Liberal South East European Network – coordinating 21 liberal organisations from this part of Europe. She was a municipal councilor in Sarajevo and now works mostly on projects related to gender equality, youth activism in South East Europe, the enlargement of the European Union and Western Balkan-EU relations.

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