

Overview: Feminist Foreign Policies

Sweden, Canada, France, Mexico, Spain, Luxembourg, Norway, Libya and USA

Sweden: Feminist Foreign Policy

Date of Announcement:

- Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy was announced in October 2014 by Foreign Minister Margot Wallström → first FFP worldwide
- Part of a bigger framework: Swedish government self-defines as being 'feminist' and strives for gender equality in all policy areas

Key Documents:

- Handbook - Sweden's feminist foreign policy (2018), accessible online: [Handbook Sweden's feminist foreign](#)
- The Swedish Foreign Service action plan for feminist foreign policy 2019-2022, including direction and measures for 2019 (2018/19), accessible online: [UF handlingsplan för fempol 2019-2022 \(docx\)](#)
- Government Communication 2019/20:17 - Sweden's feminist foreign policy (2019), accessible online: [Government Communication 2019/20:17](#)
- The Swedish Foreign Service action plan for feminist foreign policy 2019-2022, including direction and measures for 2021 (2020/21), accessible online: [The Swedish Foreign Service action plan for feminist foreign policy 2019-2022, including direction and measures for 2021](#)

Key Objectives:

Three core elements ("3 R's") as stated in the handbook (2018, p. 11-12):

1. Rights:

"The Swedish Foreign Service promotes all women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights, which includes combating all forms of violence and discrimination that restrict their freedom of action."

2. Representation

"The Swedish Foreign Service promotes women's participation and influence in decision making processes at all levels and in all areas, and shall seek dialogue with women representatives at all levels, including in civil society."

3. Resources

“The Swedish Foreign Service works to ensure that resources are allocated to promote gender equality and equal opportunities for all women and girls to enjoy human rights. The Swedish Foreign Service shall also promote targeted measures for different target groups.”

Six main objectives/focus areas as defined in the action plan (2020, p. 3-4):

The Swedish Foreign Service is required to contribute to all women’s and girls’

1. Full enjoyment of human rights
2. Freedom from physical, psychological and sexual violence
3. Participation in preventing and resolving conflicts, and post-conflict peacebuilding
4. Political participation and influence in all areas of society
5. Economic rights and empowerment
6. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

Internal commitments of the Swedish Foreign Service as described in the action plan (2020, p. 19-20)

- Develop results based-management
- Apply gender budgeting
- Gender mainstreaming of guidelines and templates
- Intensify communication activities
- Strengthen gender mainstreaming of grant management
- Promote gender equality in recruitment and appointments
- Achieve gender equality in nominations to international posts
- Prevent, investigate and respond to sexual harassment (internal)
- Strengthen gender perspective in skills development
- Provide more effective consular support to people affected by patriarchal system
- Gender -balanced representation in delegations and meetings
- Gender mainstreaming in security work, provision of safe and secure Foreign Service premises

Three policy areas as identified in the government communication (2019):

1. Foreign and Security Policy:

→ Including 1) Peace and security. 2) Human rights, democracy and the rule of law. 3) Disarmament and non-proliferation. 4) Export control.

2. International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid

→ Including 1) International development cooperation. 2). Humanitarian aid. 3).) Climate, the environment and gender equality.

3. Trade and Promotion including Sustainable Business

→ Including 1) Trade. 2). Promotion. 3). Sustainable business and decent work

Evaluation/Assessment:

Strengths:

- First FFP
- Inspiration for other countries to follow
- Comprehensive approach,
- Embedded in larger feminist framework encompassing both international and domestic politics⁸

Shortcomings:

- Binary conceptualization of gender
- Lack of inclusion of LGBTQ+ people ([Thompson & Clement 2019, PASSION. PROOF. POWER.](#))
- Continuation of arms exports despite disarmament pledges ([CFFP/Irsten 2019, How Feminist is the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy? – CFFP](#)).

Helpful Links:

- [How Feminist is the Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy? – CFFP](#)
- [The Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy – CFFP](#)

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Canada: Feminist International Assistance Policy

Date of Announcement:

- June 2017

Key Document:

- Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy - #HerVoiceHerChoice (2017), accessible online: [Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy](#).

Key Objectives:

Six action areas (2017, p. 16-61):

1. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (core action area):

Actions: Address unacceptably high rates of sexual and gender-based violence, provide better support for local women's organizations and movements that advance women's rights, help governments in developing countries address differential needs of women and men through policies and services, step up commitment to evidence-based decision making (p. 19)

2. Human dignity:

2.1. Health and nutrition:

Actions: Work to close persistent gaps in sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls, join global partnerships that promote sexual and reproductive health rights, focus efforts on programs and projects that put gender at the heart of their efforts to improve health care, facilitate access to nutritious foods and supplements (p. 25)

2.2. Education:

Actions: Support programs and advocacy efforts that help women and girls get the skills training and education they need to succeed, work to ensure that school facilities are welcoming spaces that respond to the specific needs of girls, support programs and partners that help those who have missed out on the opportunity to complete a quality education (p. 27)

2.3. Gender-responsive humanitarian action:

Actions: Strengthen sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response strategies in humanitarian settings, advocate for humanitarian principles and international law, support the full range of women and girls' sexual and reproductive health needs during humanitarian responses, help strengthen the capacity of local and national women's groups to assist in humanitarian emergencies (p. 31)

3. *Growth that works for everyone*

Actions: Focus international assistance more on increasing economic leadership and empowerment of women at all levels, help improve economic opportunities and the resilience of rural women, promote greater financial inclusion for women, and equal access to capital, markets, digital technology and business development services, promote women's economic rights and access to decent work, support technical and vocational training for women, help address unpaid work and the disproportionate burden of care shouldered by women (p. 38-39)

4. *Environment and climate action*

Actions: Support women's leadership and decision making in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, resilience-building and sustainable natural resource management, ensure that the government's climate-related planning, policy-making and financing acknowledges the particular challenges faced by women and girls, support employment and business opportunities for women in the renewable energy sector (p. 45).

5. *Inclusive governance*

Actions: help advance women's leadership and decision making in governance and public sector management at all levels, help strengthen legal systems and promote reforms that eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls, improve access to justice for women and girls, support the protection of women's human rights defenders, support the efforts and capacity of governments at all levels to ensure public services respond better to the needs and potential of women and girls (p. 52-53).

6. *Peace and security*

Actions: support the meaningful participation of women and women's rights organizations in peace negotiations and conflict-prevention efforts, help advance women's rights in post-conflict state-building, help prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict zones and enforce its zero-tolerance policy for abuse perpetrated by peacekeepers (p. 59).

Characteristics of Canada's international assistance framework (2017, p 11)

- Human rights-based and inclusive
- Strategic and focused
- Transformative and activist
- Evidence-based and accountable

Financial commitments: Canada's pledges as a feminist donor:

- “We will ensure that 15 percent of all bilateral international development assistance investments specifically target gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by 2021-22” (p. 71)
- “We will also improve and increase the integration of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls across all international assistance efforts. We commit to investing no less than 80 percent of bilateral international development assistance through Global Affairs Canada for initiatives designed to achieve these goals” (p. 71)
- Combining these two objectives means that, by 2021-22 at the latest, at least 95 percent of Canada's bilateral international development assistance investments will either target or integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls” (p. 71)

Evaluation/Assessment:

Evaluation resource: Feminist International Assistance Policy Indicators, accessible online: [Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy Indicators](#)

→ action area key performance indicators measure and monitor the implementation of the FIAP

Strengths:

- Brings attention to formerly neglected issues
- Builds on international framework of SDGs
- Concrete and measurable commitments
- Significant step towards comprehensive FFP for Canada

Shortcomings:

- Only concerned with international assistance
- No comprehensive FFP
- Vague definition of feminism
- Essentialized use and conflation of “gender” and “women”
- Conflation of “gender equality” with “women's empowerment”
- Possible diverging notions of feminism in target countries in the Global South ([Rao & Tiessen 2020](#) Whose feminism(s)? Overseas partner organizations' perceptions of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy - Sheila Rao, Rebecca Tiessen, 2020; [Cadesky 2020](#) Built on shaky ground: Reflections on Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy - Jessica Cadesky, 2020).

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Developments:

In 2020, announcement of then-Foreign Minister François-Philippe Champagne to draft official statement on Canada's FFP with civil society actors → resulted in recommendations for more comprehensive FFP [What We Heard: Feedback from discussions on Canada's feminist foreign policy](#)

France: Feminist Diplomacy

Date of Announcement:

- March 2018

Key Document:

- France's International Strategy on Gender Equality (2018-2022), 2018, accessible online: [STRATEGY REPORT](#)

Key Objectives:

Five objectives as defined in the International Strategy on Gender Equality (2018)

1. Promote a stronger institutional culture of gender equality and the integration of gender issues within the Ministry and its agencies (p. 23)
2. Step up France's political advocacy efforts on gender equality (p. 27)
3. Increase and improve integration of gender equality in ODA (p. 29)
4. Improve and strengthen the visibility, transparency and accountability of action taken by the Ministry and its agencies for gender equality (p. 31)
5. Strengthen ties with civil society actors, the private sector and research stakeholder to fight inequality (p. 33)

Three guiding principles (p. 13-15):

1. A comprehensive approach

→ Include gender throughout France's external action, consistent with 2013 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2. A rights-based approach

→ Integrates norms, rules and international principles of human rights

3. A gender-based approach

→ Promote gender mainstreaming

Evaluation/Assessment:

Assessment report by the High Council on Gender Equality (2020), accessible online: [HCE - Feminist Diplomacy](#):

Strengths and shortcomings:

- “Despite this global ambition, the scope for action of French feminist diplomacy is limited. Focused mainly on diplomacy in the strict sense and official development assistance, it does not cover, unlike in Sweden and Canada, all the areas of foreign policy, including defence and security policy and trade policy” (p. 2)
- “Enhanced advocacy but insufficient infiltration in the various areas of France’s foreign policy” (p. 3)

Recommendations (p. 4):

1. Make the feminist approach a structuring component of official development assistance (ODA)
 - France: level of ODA targeting gender remains below the average of countries on the Organisation of the OECD Development Assistance Committee → 26% of which 3% are targeting gender equality directly
2. Promote and achieve the WPS Agenda for a feminist defence and security policy
3. Mainstream gender for a feminist trade policy

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Mexico: Feminist Foreign Policy

Date of Announcement:

- Announcement of intention: September 2019
- Adoption: January 2020 → first Latin American country to do so ([Mexico Adopts Feminist Foreign Policy](#) | [Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores](#) | [Gobierno](#) | [.gob.mx](#))

Key Document:

- Conceptualizing Feminist Foreign Policy: Notes for Mexico, accessible online: [CONCEPTUALIZING FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY: NOTES FOR MEXICO \(2020\)](#) (by the Centro de Investigación International, not the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs)

Key Objectives:

Five pillars according to the Notes for Mexico (p. 16):

1. Foreign policy with a gender perspective, and a feminist agenda abroad → “feminist policy plus”
2. Parity within the Foreign Ministry
3. A Foreign Ministry free of violence that is safe for all
4. Visible equality → making visible the contributions of women to the Ministry and foreign policy
5. Feminism in all areas of the Foreign Ministry → the Ministry is feminist and intersectional

Evaluation/Assessment:

Strengths:

- With Sweden one of the most comprehensive approaches to FFP
- Goes beyond binary conceptualization of gender: “Mexico’s Feminist Foreign Policy is not only a question of gender but of human rights in general. “For us, it is not only a Feminist Foreign Policy, but a Feminist Foreign Policy plus, because we are also including LGBTQI individuals and the disabled.” (CFFP ‘A Feminist Foreign Policy for the European Union’ 2020, p. 23)

Shortcomings:

- “Mexico’s feminist foreign policy is a welcome development, but the incongruency between the country’s aspirations and leadership on the world stage and the actual state of gender relations in the country remains problematic” (Deslandes 2020 [Checking In on Mexico's Feminist Foreign Policy, One Year On](#)) → high and even increasing level of violence against women in Mexico
- “While Mexico’s Foreign Feminist Policy might be well-intentioned, it conflicts with the Federal government’s general agenda which constantly undermines women and girls’ rights and wellbeing” (Philipson 2020 [Mexico: Champion of Women or Detractor? - WILPF](#))

Spain: Feminist Foreign Policy

Date of Announcement:

- 2021

Key Document:

- Spain's Feminist Foreign Policy: Promoting Gender Equality in Spain's External Action, accessible online: [SPAIN'S FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY](#)

Key Objectives:

Lines of action (p. 21-28)

1. Women, Peace and Security

→ Promote WPS internally, on the national, EU and multilateral level

2. Violence against women and girls

→ combat gender-based violence

3. Human rights of women and girls

→ Strengthen civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls, supporting human rights defenders

4. Participation of women in decision-making

→ Promote participation in political life, in multilateral bodies, in peace processes and in climate action

5. Economic justice and empowerment for women

→ Commit to gender-responsive trade policy

Instruments

1. Mainstreaming the gender approach in foreign policy
2. Bilateral and regional diplomacy
3. European Union (--> contribute to the EU Action Plan on WPS 2019-2024)
4. Multilateral diplomacy
5. International cooperation and sustainable development
6. Consular protection and assistance
7. Public diplomacy
8. Equality policies within the Foreign Service

Five principles (p. 7):

1. Transformative approach
2. Committed leadership
3. Ownership
4. Inclusive participation and fostering alliances
5. Intersectionality and diversity

Luxembourg: Feminist Foreign Policy

Date of Announcement:

- February 2021

Key Document:

- Foreign Policy Address (2019), accessible online: [Foreign Policy Address 2019](#)

Key Objectives:

Aims as stated in the Foreign Policy Address (p. 40-41)

1. Taking concrete action to stop violations of the rights of women and children
2. Strengthen protection of women and children in conflicts
3. Strengthen the representation and participation of women at all levels
4. Implementation of the Action Plan on “Women and Peace and Security” from 2018
5. Encouraging equal participation of women in civilian missions abroad
6. Supporting women and girls through Luxembourg’s Development Cooperation → initiative “She Decides” with Belgium, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries

Norway: Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Date of Announcement:

- 2015 → however, not using the term “feminist”

Key Documents:

- Norway's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2015-18), the International Strategy to Eliminate Harmful Practices
- Freedom, empowerment and opportunities. Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Foreign and Development Policy 2016-2020, accessible online: [Freedom, empowerment and opportunities - Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Foreign and Development Policy](#)
- National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2019-2022)

Key Objectives:

Five priority areas identified in the action plan (2016-2020):

1. Inclusive and equitable quality education for all girls and boys;
2. Women's equal participation in political life;
3. Full economic rights for women and equal opportunities for women to participate in the labour market;
4. The elimination of violence and harmful practices against girls and women;
5. Sexual and reproductive health and rights for girls and women.

Libya: Feminist Foreign Policy

Date of Announcement:

- July 2021 → first African nation to adopt FFP, announcement at the official Generation Equality Forum side event by Foreign Minister Najla Mangoush

Key Documents:

- Press release “Libya Becomes Latest Government to Commit to Feminist Foreign Policy” by the International Center for Research on Women [PASSION. PROOF. POWER.](#)
- No official report from Libya’s government yet

Key Objectives:

No information yet

Date of Announcement:

- No announcement of FFP yet, however introduction of resolution into House of Representatives (HoR), current status: has neither passed Senate, nor HoR

Key Documents:

- A Feminist Foreign Policy for the United States: A Memo to the Next Administration by the Coalition for a Feminist Foreign Policy in the United States [A Feminist Foreign Policy for the United States](#)
- House of Representatives Resolution 1147 (Introduced in House 09/23/2020), accessible online: [H. RES. 1147](#)

Key Objectives:

Four core areas as defined in the memo:

1. Policy articulation

→ Next administration should launch an overarching U.S. Strategy for a Feminist Foreign Policy

2. Leadership and structures

→ Assemble White House Feminist Policy Council with a clear mandate and establish executive agency-level gender focal points and action plans

3. Funding

→ No less than 20 percent of U.S. foreign assistance funding should be dedicated to promoting gender equality as a primary goal

3. Accountability

→ Be transparent about progress in implementing FFP

H. RES. 1147:

“Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding the importance of taking a feminist approach to all aspects of foreign policy, including foreign assistance and humanitarian response, trade, diplomacy, defense, immigration, funding, and accountability mechanisms”

The House of Representatives-

1. Supports the goals of a feminist foreign policy;
2. Recognizes that a whole of government effort that ensures coherence of a feminist approach across all streams of foreign policy is necessary to achieve those goals, and must include—
 - High-level leadership with a mandate to design and implement a feminist foreign policy with clearly articulated objectives;
 - Commitment to gender parity, diversity, equity, and inclusion, both internally among leadership and staff and externally, cocreated with feminist civil society groups and other stakeholders outside of government;
 - The adoption of a zero-tolerance policy on gender-based violence and workplace harassment, immediately eliminating policies that allow abusers to move from one post to another once accused without facing consequences related to their employment or promotion;
 - Training and capacity-building to ensure robust implementation;
 - Gender analysis underlying all aspects of foreign policy;
 - Adequate resourcing to ensure all of the above; and
 - Regular and public reporting on efforts and outcomes; and
3. Commits to work with feminist civil society groups and other stakeholders inside and outside of government to advance a more feminist foreign policy in the United States.