

Report:
**The Gender—Foreign and Security Policy Nexus: Can the EU be a
Global Standard-setter?**

On the 28th of November, EUROPEUM and Think Visegrad platform in cooperation with GLOBSEC organized a public event focusing on the ambitions of a gender-equal Foreign and Security Policy of the EU and its potential to set its goals as a standard among its global partners. The panel discussion involved Jonna Neumanen, Senior Gender Adviser at the EEAS, Vladislava Gubalova, Senior Researcher at GLOBSEC, and Danielle Piatkiewicz, Research Fellow at EUROPEUM. The event was moderated by Sofiiia Shevchuk, Founder of VONA.

Mrs. Jonna Naumanen commenced the discussion by underscoring the robustness of the European Union, representing 27 member states, and thus positioned to play a pivotal role in shaping global standards. She highlighted the EU's proactive stance in foreign policy, citing initiatives such as combating violence against women in unstable regions such as the Sahel. Mrs. Naumanen also pointed out that, despite gender equality being a core European value, its manifestation, in reality, falls short, drawing attention to the divergent interpretations of this concept among member states, while the Lisbon Treaty avoids mentioning the matter.

Acknowledging progress in conceptual frameworks and policy initiatives addressing gender inequality's role in conflicts, Mrs. Gubalova contributed to the discussion with a Central European perspective. She shed light on the plight of Ukrainian women fleeing the war in their country, emphasizing the correlation between conflict and gender inequality. Mrs. Gubalova noted the uneven implementation of directives across Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, impacting the safety and support provided to women facing unique challenges in times of crisis. She mentioned several to illustrate the difficult position of women refugees: obtaining childcare is more difficult; finding a safe accommodation without being exploited is also a challenge as many landlords expect the women to do chores instead, or in addition to, paying rent; or becoming a victim of human trafficking. It is also harder to find a job or to know where to find help centers in a country you don't know.

Transitioning to the nexus between gender and democracy, Mrs. Danielle Piatkiewicz asserted that gender inclusivity is also a security issue, drawing a parallel with climate change's elevated status. She lamented the continued underrepresentation of women in key positions and questioned the EU's ability to champion gender inclusivity and equality globally when these ideals are not fully realized within the organization itself.

The discussion delved into the varying meanings of the term "gender" across countries, with Mrs. Piatkiewicz sharing survey insights revealing entrenched gender stereotypes hindering women's participation in politics. These often relate to the perception that women are "responsible for the family" which "cannot go hand in hand with their career goals" or that women are "generally softer and less resilient" to the stresses that are part of political life.

Mrs. Naumanen reflected on the strides made in addressing gender equality and stressed the necessity of involving men in the conversation. She highlighted the distinction between gender equality and gender parity, emphasizing that it goes beyond numerical balance to recognize the different impacts women have on foreign policy decisions. The term "anti-gender movement" was mentioned, signifying opposition that rigidly defines masculinity.

Mrs. Gubalova also highlighted the diminishing support for Ukrainians in some CEE countries and proposed that CEE nations, unburdened by post-colonial baggage, could play a key role in setting global standards for equality. Western Europe, and consequently the EU, is often perceived as a post-colonial power carrying historical baggage, complicating efforts to advocate for freedom and equality. In contrast, CEE countries lack this historical burden, suggesting that assuming a leadership role could allow them to engage more effectively with African, Latin American, and Asian regions, offering a fresh start. This presents a dual benefit, as the EU possesses the reach that CEE countries lack due to their size and influence.

Mrs. Piatkiewicz added that CEE countries, having transitioned from communism to democracies, could serve as examples for other nations. Emphasizing the importance of civil society, she called for greater support through ambassadors who can foster gender equality initiatives in foreign policy.

Later on, the discussion also provided space for participants to interact with the panelists and comment or ask questions to them. Some of these addressed the issue of the lack of gender parity in the diplomatic corps of the Member states, most visible in the countries of the CEE. Participants were also interested in hearing more about the polarizing effects that the discussions about gender equality have among certain groups of populations. Lastly, the issue of the lack of capacity on the side of EEAS to dedicate more staff to work on the topic in more detail and provide specific data or country/regional reports was mentioned.

About EUROPEUM

EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy is a non-profit, non-partisan, and independent think-tank focusing on European integration and cohesion. EUROPEUM contributes to democracy, security, stability, freedom, and solidarity across Europe as well as to active engagement of the Czech Republic in the European Union. EUROPEUM undertakes original research, organizes public events and educational activities, and formulates new ideas and recommendations to improve European and Czech policy making. We are the recipient of institutional funding from the European Commission under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme.