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Gender Equality in Finnish Foreign Affairs

from 2019 to 2022

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Summary

This study reviews the ways in which Finland has promoted gender equality in its foreign affairs from January 2019 to October 2022. Drawing from expert interviews and document analysis, it examines policy and programmes across all areas of Finnish foreign policy. In addition, it undertakes a case study of Sweden and Spain, two countries that have exercised explicitly Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in recent years, and compares these findings to the baseline analysis of Finland.

The results indicate that Finland has incorporated gender equality to some extent in all areas of foreign policy, and most effectively so in the areas of development cooperation and human rights policy. Finland has also reached gender parity in diplomatic leadership as well as near parity among experts seconded to civilian crisis management missions. However, Finland's traditional security and defence policies in particular suffer from gender amnesia, which is well demonstrated in the recent policy documents related to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and Finland's ensuing NATO accession process in the spring of 2022.

When gender equality is included in security policy, such as in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, or in diplomatic efforts outside the human rights policy realm, Finland's predefined priorities of sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, disability inclusion and intersectionality are only rarely referred to. Instead, gender equality is promoted in more narrow terms primarily by increasing women's participation through gender balancing. This is understandable since Finland does not currently have a clear strategy to guide its international gender equality efforts.

The case studies of Sweden and Spain suggest that while adopting an explicit FFP has transformative potential, it is not a magic bullet if not planned and implemented with utmost care. At the same time, the adoption process provides a window of opportunity for governments to redefine and sharpen their gender equality policies in foreign affairs, as well as reinforce coordination efforts with other governmental actors and with civil society.

Finland's strong reputation and expertise in gender equality provides it with an excellent opportunity to develop a transformative and intersectional foreign policy, whether named as feminist or not. If backed with the necessary financial and human resources, and a carefully drafted dissemination strategy, it has all the possibilities to create something innovative and new. This is important in today's polarised world, where gender equality, women's rights, and human rights norms are under continuous attack.

Tiivistelmä

Tässä selvityksessä tarkastellaan, millä tavoin Suomi on edistänyt sukupuolten tasa-arvoa ulkosuhteissaan tammikuusta 2019 lokakuuhun 2022. Raportissa käsitellään kaikki Suomen ulkopolitiikan osa-alueet asiantuntija-haastatteluihin ja asiakirja-analyysiin perustuen. Lisäksi selvityksessä tuotetaan tapaustutkimus feminististä ulkopolitiikkaa viime vuosina harjoittaneista Ruotsista ja Espanjasta, ja verrataan tämän analyysin tuloksia Suomen ulkopolitiikan tasa-arvopolitiikkaan.

Selvityksen tulokset osoittavat, että sukupuolten tasa-arvo on jokseenkin läsnä Suomen ulkopolitiikan kaikilla osa-alueilla. Erityisen ansiokkaasti tasa-arvotyötä on tehty kehitysyhteistyössä ja ihmisoikeuspolitiikassa. Huomionarvoista on myös, että ulkoministeriön johtajista sekä Suomen lähettämistä siviilikriisinhallinnan asiantuntijoista on jo noin puolet naisia. Suomen perinteinen ulko- ja turvallisuuspolitiikka kärsii kuitenkin sukupuolisokeudesta, josta hyvänä esimerkkinä ovat viimeaikaiset politiikkadokumentit liittyen Venäjän hyökkäykseen Ukrainaan ja sitä seuranneeseen Suomen Nato-hakemusprosessiin keväällä 2022. Silloin, kun sukupuolten välinen tasa-arvo on sisällytetty turvallisuuspolitiikkaan esimerkiksi Naiset, rauha ja turvallisuus -agendan kautta tai diplomaattisessa työssä ihmisoikeuspolitiikan ulkopuolella, Suomen ennalta määritellyt painopistealueet – seksuaali- ja lisääntymisterveys ja -oikeudet, sukupuolittunut väkivalta, vammaisinkluisio ja intersektionaalisuus – näkyvät vain harvoin. Näiden asemesta sukupuolten tasa-arvoa on edistetty yksipuoleisesti lähinnä naisten suhteellista lukumäärää lisäämällä.

Ruotsin ja Espanjan tapaustutkimukset viittaavat siihen, että feministinen ulkopolitiikka voi toimia muutostoimivana vain huolellisen suunnittelun ja täytäntöönpanon kautta. Suunnitteluprosessi tarjoaa kuitenkin hallituksille ainutkertaisen tilaisuuden terävöittää ja täsmentää omia linjauksiaan. Lisäksi koordinaatiota muiden valtiollisten toimijoiden ja kansalaisyhteiskunnan kanssa on luonnollista arvioida tässä yhteydessä uudelleen.

Suomen asiantuntemus ja hyvä maine sukupuolten tasa-arvoon liittyvissä kysymyksissä tarjoavat erinomaiset lähtökohdat transformatiivisen ja intersektionaalisen ulkopolitiikan kehittämiseen, olipa se sitten nimetty feministiseksi tai ei. Tällaisen ulkopolitiikan avulla on mahdollista luoda jotain aidosti uudenlaista, mikäli sitä tuetaan välttämättömillä taloudellisilla ja henkilöstöresursseilla. Tuoreet lähestymistavat sukupuolten tasa-arvon edistämiseen ovat erityisen tärkeitä nykyisessä jakautuneessa maailmassa, jossa sukupuolten tasa-arvoa, naisten oikeuksia ja ihmisoikeusnormeja kyseenalaistetaan yhä enenevässä määrin.

I Introduction

Gender equality and women's rights are among the major fault lines in contemporary world politics.¹ In addition to the rough division between pro- and anti-gender states, more subtle nuances can be traced inside these two camps. While it is evident that Finland belongs to the pro-gender coalition, it remains less clear if Finland's gender equality stance in the realm of foreign policy would fall into the category of (a) status quo-oriented, (b) gender-sensitive and inclusive, or (c) transformative with the goal of "deliberately confronting gendered power structures."²

The aim of this study is to provide a systematic analysis on gender equality in Finnish foreign affairs during the Sanna Marin Cabinet³, as executed by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (the Ministry), and thus provide a tentative answer to the above-mentioned conundrum. The original level of ambition of the Rinne/Marin cabinet with gender equality was visibly high, to the extent that some researchers described the Government Programme as a counterblow to the almost gender-blind approach of its predecessor⁴. However, the Government's term of office has been marked by numerous international crises, ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the ensuing Finnish membership negotiation process with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Indeed, the current government has had to react to extraordinary shifts in world politics to such an extent that "business as usual" has been an exception rather than the rule.

Despite these challenges, Finland has been able to promote gender equality in its foreign policy both through gender mainstreaming and through targeted activities. For most of the diplomats and civil servants we interviewed at the Ministry, promoting gender equality was a self-evident value and goal, to the extent that individuals and units do not always stop to deliberate about what gender equality and its promotion actually entail. We hope that this study will manage to tease out some of the similarities and differences in gender equality work between the various units and departments operating under the umbrella of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, headed by Mr Pekka Haavisto, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland since 2019.

The study examines gender equality work in all key areas of Finnish foreign policy. We analyse Finland's approaches to international security, mediation practices, international trade, human rights and development cooperation. Furthermore, diplomatic practices, HR guidelines, and legal advisory work are also examined. Since the Government has adopted a dual approach to gender equality, where there is a complementarity between gender mainstreaming and specific activities targeted at increasing gender equality, the study considers both these aspects. We review international cooperation at the bilateral, EU, and multilateral levels, as well as in specific regional arrangements, such as Nordic and Arctic cooperation. We then compare the results of our analysis on Finland's foreign policy to countries which have or are exercising feminist foreign policy, with a particular focus on Sweden and Spain. The purpose of this comparative element is to identify some recommendations for foreign policy actors of Finland, who have yet to decide whether to frame their foreign policy as feminist.

The study is divided into two main sections. The first section begins by detailing the overall research setting from data collection methods and research questions. After setting the scene, gender equality policies and activities in the foreign policy of Finland are examined under several sub-headings. In addition to covering the main issue areas, accomplishments and remaining challenges are specified. The purpose of the second main section is to present some of the key building blocks of feminist foreign policy, as exercised especially by Sweden and Spain, and compare these findings to gender equality work undertaken by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Finally, by way of conclusion, we discuss the opportunities and challenges for adopting a feminist foreign policy for Finland and depict three future scenarios.

II Research setting

The primary research data were composed of 24 interviews with experts on Finland's foreign policy, a vast majority of whom were diplomats and civil servants in the Ministry (see Annex 1 for details). Most interviewees had a senior position at the time of their interview, they had a long career with the Foreign Service, and they knew the organisation and its developments inside-out. In addition, four experts with knowledge about the foreign policy of Sweden and Spain were interviewed to gain insights on feminist foreign policy. The interview material was complemented with a document review of key guidelines and other documentation providing the normative infrastructure about the gender equality work undertaken by the Ministry. To verify our findings, these two data sets were finally mirrored and contrasted with academic research results.

As researchers, we had a complete freedom to design and implement the study, even if the Ministry's Unit for Policy Planning and Research, as well as other experts, were always ready to provide their support upon our request. That said, all remaining errors remain our own. We wish to extend our gratitude to the interviewees whose expertise provided the most important data source as well as the backbone for this study.

Limitations of the study

Finnish foreign policy and international relations are built and maintained by a range of actors, in addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These include but are not limited to the president of the republic, the prime minister, sectoral Ministries, and the Parliament, but all these actors largely fall outside the scope of this study. In relation to the European Union (EU), we have focused mainly on foreign policy in the framework of the European External Action Service (EEAS).

III Gender equality in Finnish foreign affairs

Defining gender equality in foreign policy

Consistent and coherent foreign policy begins from clear definitions that set the stage for the subsequent actions. Our study suggests that there are three broad ways to define gender equality in Finland's foreign policy: definitions are either based on law, policy, or national identity.

Legal definitions see the Ministry as responsible for upholding its responsibilities under national and international law. The Finnish Constitution prohibits discrimination and contains an obligation to promote gender equality. The Act on Equality between Women and Men (known as the Equality Act) prohibits discrimination based on gender, gender identity or gender expression and requires all public authorities to promote gender equality and take measures to prevent direct and indirect discrimination. The Non-Discrimination Act, on the other hand, promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discrimination based on age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, health, disability, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

While Finland's national gender equality and non-discrimination laws were rarely mentioned as relevant in our interviews or referenced in the Ministry's policy documents, we can see the typically Finnish frame of discrimination based on gender as a separate phenomenon from discrimination based on any other personal characteristics. This is reflected, for example, in the Ministry's two separate cross-cutting objectives in development policy: gender equality and non-discrimination. While domestic legislation was not typically referenced as relevant to the Ministry's actions on gender equality in interviews, some did mention the importance of international legal frameworks, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).

A definition of gender equality based on policy was more widespread in the interviews than the one based on legislation. Prime Minister Marin's Government Programme was typically mentioned as the most important source for policy guidance. The chapter on foreign policy of the Government Programme ("Globally Influential Finland") includes eight references to gender equality across four areas of foreign policy: (1) multilateral collaboration, particularly "new partnerships" for gender equality with countries in the Global South and support to strengthen the multilateral treaty system; (2) peacebuilding, particularly promoting women's participation and safeguarding women's and girls' rights in peace processes; (3) development cooperation, particularly reaching the EU target of 85% of new programmes with gender equality objectives; and (4) trade policy, particularly ensuring that the EU trade agreements take into account the rights of women and girls.

The Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2020-2023 elaborates on the gender equality policy priorities in the Marin Government Programme and details concrete, required activities to turn the goals of the Government Programme into reality. These include four policy deliverables for the Ministry: (1) defend the rights of women and girls, particularly during Finland's membership of the Human Rights Council, (2) increase the proportion of

development projects that include a gender equality goal towards 85% by 2025; (3) mainstream gender equality in development cooperation systematically and evaluate impacts; and (4) increase the number of experts serving as gender advisors in civilian crisis management missions, including more men serving in these positions. Although the Action Plan for Gender Equality plays a central role in ensuring that the government gender equality goals are reached, few of the interviewees referenced the plan as relevant for promoting gender equality in their work. The approach of the Action Plan for Gender Equality is intersectional, “an approach where an individual’s status in society is considered to be influenced simultaneously by multiple factors – not just gender”⁵. The importance of addressing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is underlined, as are the rights of sexual and gender minorities and people with disabilities.

The Government Report on Foreign and Security Policy, as well as sectoral Government Reports (which we will cover in subsequent sections), were referenced as important texts framing gender equality in Finland’s foreign policy. The Government Report on Foreign and Security Policy mentions gender equality goals in five, out of a total of 18, policy priorities: (1) bilateral relations with African countries; (2) human rights policy; (3) development cooperation and (4) mediation capabilities and (5) crisis management. It is notable that gender equality is not an individual policy priority in the report, but rather comes up in the description of other policy priorities. For comparison, the previous Government Report on Foreign and Security Policy drafted by the Cabinet of Juha Sipilä spells out gender equality as one of its headline priorities⁶. The absence of reference to sexual and reproductive health and rights is also noteworthy in the report, given Marin Government’s commitment to human rights based foreign policy. Notably, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not have a strategy or policy on gender equality in foreign policy, nor does such a strategy exist in any subsection of foreign policy.

Finally, a definition of gender equality based on national identity was relatively popular among our interviewees. This meant that instead of (solely) relying on policy guidance or legal frameworks, diplomats and civil servants relied on their “gut instinct” in understanding gender issues in their areas of work. Many claimed that gender equality has been such an important part of Finnish societal and economic development and a long-standing foreign policy priority that a certain level of inclusion of gender issues should be taken for granted in Finland’s foreign affairs, “a part of our DNA”, as one interviewee put it. Although a source of pride for many in the Ministry, a definition based on gender identity is a more nebulous framework for action on gender equality and does not lend itself well for accountability measures. To increase foreign policy coherence, it is crucial that Finland clarifies key concepts in its international (gender) equality work, such as non-discrimination, gender equality and intersectionality.⁷

Human resources and gender expertise at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Gender equality work is headed within the Ministry by the Ambassador for Gender Equality, currently Ms Katri Viinikka, who is based in the Unit for Human Rights Policy in the Political Department. The Ambassador for Gender Equality coordinates a cross-departmental Gender (Equality) Task Force and leads the gender equality “theme” in development policy and cooperation, but currently has no team to support her work. There are two Gender Equality Advisers in the Ministry, who advise both targeted actions and gender mainstreaming efforts in development policy and development cooperation, undertake advocacy work to promote high standards of gender equality in multilateral institutions, and provide general advice on issues of gender equality within the Ministry. The Gender Equality Advisers are based in the Sectoral Policy Unit in the Department of Development Policy and have no direct organisational link to the Ambassador for Gender Equality. It can be thus summoned that

resources for everyday gender equality work in the Ministry do not fully match the level of ambition set by the Government since there are only three full-time employees working on these topics in the Ministry as a whole.

Human resources and gender equality

Women make up a large proportion of the Ministry's staff: in leadership positions (50%), managerial roles (60%), expert roles (67%) and support roles (76%) (figures for 2022). The number of women in leadership positions has risen steadily over the last 15 years. In 2008, only 30% of the Ministry's leadership roles were held by women. By 2018, gender parity was reached in the Ministry's leadership, an important achievement in international comparison, after which growth has plateaued. Each intake of new diplomats typically includes 60–70% women. Men are thus a clear minority in support, advisory and junior diplomatic roles, whereas they make up about half of all managerial and leadership roles.

The Ministry's Gender Equality and Non-Discrimination strategy for Human Resources (2019-2022) lays out the organisation's approach to fulfilling its legal duty of promoting equal opportunities and preventing discrimination in recruitment, remuneration, promotion, and staff welfare. The Human Resources unit carried out a survey in the preparation of the strategy and found out that most concerns around discrimination do not refer to gender but rather to age, for example. An annual mapping of salaries is used to track the achievement of pay equality, in which small differences are shown in the pay based on personal performance, particularly at the highest levels of leadership.

The Ministry commissioned an external study in 2019 on the prevention of and response to harassment, after an alleged harassment case by an ambassador. The study made recommendations for improving the Ministry's response to cases of harassment and inappropriate behaviour. It also highlighted the fact that Human Resources officials in charge of decisions about staff rotation (and thus career advancement) are often themselves also part of that same system of rotation. This setup may affect the extent to which the HR unit is seen as impartial by staff wishing to report cases of harassment or inappropriate behaviour.

The diplomatic rotation cycle may be challenging to combine with care responsibilities. The Ministry aims to promote work-life balance and has recently seen an increase in men taking parental leave. However, it is not possible to take family leave while posted overseas without ending the posting. This may affect the extent to which men and women in the diplomatic rotation take advantage of family leave policies, given that men's parental leave is typically shorter and more optional than women's and thus may provide less of an incentive to cut a diplomatic posting short.

Some of our interviewees noted concerns that while women are now well represented throughout most of the organisation, not enough attention has been paid to the pace at which men and women progress in their career paths or the perceived importance of ambassadorial appointments. The overall statistics do not give differential weighing to ambassadorial positions in different locales, with considerably varied career prospects and prestige. Based on the data we have, it is impossible to estimate forms of representation other than that of gender, such as representation of ethnic minorities and the efforts undertaken to provide people with disabilities equal opportunities to aim for diplomatic careers.

Gender equality in different areas of foreign policy

Gender equality work in Finnish foreign policy follows a twin-track approach that combines broad mainstreaming efforts throughout all aspects of the Ministry's work with specific actions targeted at promoting gender equality. In multilateral and bilateral diplomacy, gender equality is seen as part of the basic value repertoire of Finnish positions that all diplomats and civil servants can draw from. Gender equality goals are also mainstreamed in more concrete terms in the initiatives and programmatic work that the Ministry supports, in particular through development funding.

Security policy

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a Government Report on Changes in the Security Environment was drafted⁸. It is noteworthy that neither gender, gender equality nor women are mentioned in any section of the 50-page report⁹. Human rights are referred to on several occasions, however, and children fleeing the war are mentioned as a group in need of particular attention.¹⁰ Women are not referred to in this context either, nor in the context of human trafficking, albeit some 71% of the victims of human trafficking are estimated to be women.¹¹ The absence of gender considerations in this report is in contrast with the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy, published in October 2020, which the Changes in the Security Environment report is building on and complementing. In the former, gender equality is referred to as one of the "overarching goals to be observed in all activities"¹² although it does not constitute a policy priority in its own right.

The Report on Finland's Accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, published in May 2022, is also gender blind, and the Government's Defence Report does not refer to gender equality at all. It mentions "women" only in two contextual settings: The first is the goal of increasing women's participation in issues of national defence, especially through voluntary military service. The second reference is in relation to conscription; it is stated that the options for expanding call-ups to the entire age group, including women, will be examined.¹³

These findings are interesting when contrasted with the strong dedication of Finland to the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) that calls for the full participation of women in peace and security policy as well as the consideration of their gendered needs in peace processes and post-conflict peacebuilding. In fact, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, referring to the resolution 1325 and the following nine complementary resolutions, is referenced in most key foreign policy documents drafted before Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In its role as NATO partner country, for example, Finland has supported the implementation of NATO's updated WPS Policy since its adoption at the 2018 Summit as well as the organisation's Action Plan on WPS. In addition, Finland has actively raised gender issues and worked to integrate them into operational planning. According to an external evaluation of Finland's WPS policy, Finland is seen to have strong expertise in these issues, and there has been a particular interest in Finnish operational information gathering and management.¹⁴

Finland drafted its first National Action Plan to implement SCR 1325 (1325 NAP) in 2008 and its third plan covered the period between 2018 to 2021. At the time of this study, the fourth National Action Plan was being drafted. The 1325 NAP is a broad document that brings together various actors for cross-sectoral and inter-stakeholder cooperation to formulate a national-level strategy and course of action for implementing the WPS Agenda in Finland's actions. Our interviews and document review suggest that the implementation of the WPS agenda in Finnish foreign policy gravitates to two themes: (1) promoting women's participation in mediation

and peace processes and (2) strengthening both the gender balance and gender expertise among professionals recruited by Finland to civilian crisis management positions abroad.

Peace mediation has been a foreign policy focus since at least 2007 when it was first mentioned in a Government Programme. During the Marin Cabinet, Finland has continued to raise the profile of the theme by launching the Centre for Peace Mediation as a dedicated unit within the Political Department in 2020. In addition, Finland has included peace mediation as one of the seven areas in the Ministry that receives the Government's Investments for the Future. One of the priorities of the Centre for Peace Mediation is promoting women's participation in peace processes, e.g. by supporting the Finnish Women Mediators' Network, a member of the regional Nordic Peace Mediators Network, and consisting of 16 senior professionals in peace and security policy. The Ministry also works closely with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to implement programmes that promote women's participation in peace processes. The external evaluation of Finland's third 1325 National Action Plan found that there has been unusually open collaboration between foreign and security policy actors and civil society agencies, organised in the Finnish 1325 Network, in developing and implementing the plan. This is specifically the case in peace mediation, where three NGOs - Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), Finn Church Aid and Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (FELM) - are the Action Plan's implementing parties.

In civilian crisis management, Finland has for several years maintained near gender parity in the experts it recruits (48.8% in 2021), which is among the highest figures in the world. These statistics are particularly remarkable taking into consideration that Finland, unlike most other countries, also includes police officers and border guards in this calculation, sectors that continue to be male dominated inside the country.

There are several factors that explain the success of the Finnish model in civilian crisis management. For instance, from the start, Finland took the decision to recruit not only civil servants from within the state administration but also from external sources, which significantly widened the recruitment pool. In addition, the sector was developed from the outset in close collaboration with NGO actors, who are perceived as being watchdogs on the one hand, but also as partners on the other. Indeed, several recruited experts have a background in NGOs. In addition, Finland has been successful in recruiting a number of highly qualified women to serve in headquarters posts, as well as in leadership positions in the missions, up to the Head of Mission level.

A persistent challenge in gender equality work in the civilian crisis management sector is the reconciliation of family and caring responsibilities with expert tasks. This is a challenge that Finland is striving to address, particularly in the context of the EU. Another challenge is the operational culture of most missions, a culture that often relies on chains of command and leadership by fear, rather than modern leadership style and an appreciation of expert work. Sweden has tried to approach some of these challenges by recruiting gender experts not only to gender adviser positions but also to other positions, such as political advisers. With this strategy, gender expertise can be "smuggled" into rooms of power through the side-door.

Development policy

Development cooperation was the first area of foreign policy to incorporate gender equality and women's rights into its work. Gender and development nexus has been central in the Ministry's work since the 1980s, with the first strategy on women's role in development adopted in 1988. The latest strategy and action plan for integrating gender into development cooperation was adopted in 2003. No new strategy has been adopted since its expiration in 2007. Gender equality and the rights of women and girls are advanced in the realm of

development cooperation through project funding, through influencing work in multilateral organisations, such as the UN system, development banks and the EU, and through financial investments for development. Gender expertise within the Department for Development Policy sets it apart from other departments of the Ministry, with two full-time gender equality advisers based in the Unit for Sectoral Policy.

Improving the rights and status of women and girls is one of the five priorities in Finland’s development policy and cooperation. Within this priority, there are two main objectives. First, Finland supports legislation and policies that guarantee SRHR to all, including people with disabilities. Access to high quality sexual health services, maternal and child health services, sexual education, and the inclusion of men and boys are all important components in realising these rights. Second, Finland works to prevent violence, abuse and harassment against women and girls, including those with disabilities. As part of this aim, Finland also supports efforts to eliminate harmful practices such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM)¹⁵.

In addition to the individual policy priority to promote the rights of women and girls, gender equality is also one of the four cross-cutting objectives of Finland’s development policy and cooperation. As such, gender equality is expected to be mainstreamed across Finland’s other development priorities: education; sustainable economies and decent work; peaceful and democratic societies; climate change and sustainable use of natural resources. All projects funded by official development assistance (ODA) across the departments of the Ministry undergo a quality assurance process through which a minimum standard of integration of gender issues is ensured. In many cases, the two gender equality advisers based in the Department for Development Policy also provide direct advice for the design and implementation of these projects across the Ministry.

Table 1: Aid allocated to gender equality: share of screened bilateral allocable aid to gender equality (GE) and women’s empowerment in 2020

	As principal objective	As significant objective	Total aid to gender equality	Aid screened for GE
Finland	13.9%	36%	49.9%	74.4%
Sweden	10.6%	62.4%	73%	92.5%
Spain	18.4%	31.3%	49.7%	100%
DAC average	4.8%	39.8%	44.6%	N/A

Source: OECD DAC¹⁶

During the Marin Cabinet, the Ministry has made important progress towards the goal of having, by 2025, at least 85% of new development cooperation interventions having gender equality as a principal or significant objective. The proportion of funding provided in accordance with the OECD DAC-definition (which excludes core support to multilateral organisations) with a gender equality objective has increased to 70% from just under 50% in 2020. 76% of all new development cooperation interventions, including core support to multilateral organisations, advanced gender equality in 2021 as per the Ministry’s cumulative measurement methodology. However, it is concerning that only 13.9% of screened bilateral aid was allocated to projects with gender equality as a principal objective (in 2020, see Table 1), given that promoting gender equality, including the rights of women and girls, is one of Finland’s stated priority areas of work.

The work to incorporate gender equality questions has been further systematised during the Marin Cabinet. A second gender advisor to the Department for Development Policy has been appointed, and the Guidelines for the Cross-Cutting Objectives in Finnish Development Policy and Cooperation were launched and disseminated in 2020. The guidelines detail the requirements for systematically considering the Ministry's cross-cutting objectives in all aspects of development cooperation, one of which is gender equality. Furthermore, the use of financial investments for promoting development goals has been systematised during the current government. Based on the Government Programme, an investment plan has been drafted during this government's term for the Ministry's investments. The plan prioritises investments that advance Finland's climate policy goals as well as its development policy goals in Africa. Promoting gender equality is an important cross-cutting objective in the investment plan. The financial investments are included in the target of 85% of all new initiatives having a gender equality objective.

Human rights policy

The promotion and protection of human rights are a fundamental overarching principle of Finnish foreign policy. As outlined in the Marin Cabinet's Government Programme: "Finland will pursue a human rights-based foreign and security policy. The central aim of this policy is to systematically promote gender equality and the full materialisation of girls' and women's rights"¹⁷. The Government Report on Human Rights Policy entails a commitment to four Rs: Rights, Representation, Resources, and a Reality check. It is noteworthy that the four Rs selected are the same as the guiding principles of the Swedish feminist foreign policy were. In the realm of development cooperation, for several years Finland has developed and strengthened a human rights-based approach to development.

Two units of the Ministry focus their work specifically on the promotion and protection of human rights. The Unit for Human Rights Policy at the Political Department is responsible for shaping Finland's human rights policy in international organisations, such as the United Nations, Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions of the Ministry's Legal Service, on the other hand, is responsible for the periodic reports and monitoring related to human rights conventions as well as the preparation of relevant national legislation to ensure that Finland adheres to international law.

Gender equality is one of the focus areas of Finland's human rights policy. A chapter in the Government's Report on Human Rights Policy is dedicated to it, along with non-discrimination and participation rights. In its discussion on non-discrimination, the report focuses mainly on EU and domestic contexts, highlighting the high levels of discrimination based on race or ethnicity and discussing the government's efforts to tackle it. These measures include the adoption of an intersectional approach to equality and non-discrimination. In its discussion of gender equality, on the other hand, the report mostly covers Finland's efforts to promote gender equality in the international fora. The two exceptions to this general rule are actions against gender-based violence and the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

Finland's Human Rights Council Membership (2022-24) has provided it with an opportunity to be proactive in shaping international human rights norms and frameworks. Finland is committed to pursuing priorities that fit with its long-term policy positions, including the promotion of the rights of women and girls, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and sexual and gender minorities.¹⁸ While promoting the rights of women and girls, Finland prioritises political participation, sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as the rights

to live without violence and discrimination. Moreover, Finland is committed to promoting an intersectional approach to gender equality.

These efforts are met with active attempts to weaken the international normative framework on the rights of women and girls. In its attempt to strengthen an international alliance for gender equality, Finland also organises events and initiatives to build new alliances. An example of an achievement during Finland's membership of the Human Rights Council was the renewal of the mandate for the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, which required concerted advocacy by Finland and partner countries to counter the strong opposition to the resolution by some members of the Council.

In addition to internal exchange within the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, the Unit for Human Rights and Conventions collaborates closely with other sectoral Ministries. Gender equality is mainstreamed in all the work the unit is undertaking and through specific initiatives. When commenting and providing expertise in national and international arenas, it is emphasised that gender should be considered everywhere and not only in women specific arenas and conventions. Moreover, gender is not only about women. This approach is also reflected when nominating candidates to different international committees where Finland aims to achieve gender parity.

Under the Marin cabinet, due to the high number of new government initiatives, there has been a lot of demand on the Legal Service to comment on each initiative. On gender issues, this has meant highlighting international agreements that are binding for Finland and reminding everyone of the need to undertake gender impact assessments. However, due to the large number of gender-related proposals in the Government Programme, but no increase in resources, it has not been possible to comment on all proposals in detail. It is worth noting that the unit has not been asked to provide their expertise on the on-going NATO negotiation process and the related gender equality obligations of Finland stemming from international conventions.

Finland's challenge in international equality work from a legal perspective is the tension between domestic and foreign policy. The rights of indigenous peoples are perhaps the most glaring example of this tension; for instance, while the Sámi are the only indigenous people in the European Union, Finland has still not ratified the ILO Convention 169¹⁹.

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by Finland in 1986 and the Optional Protocol supplementing it with an individual right of appeal came into force in 2001. Finland's eighth report to the CEDAW Committee²⁰ was due in February 2018 under Juha Sipilä's Cabinet. Finland failed to meet the 2018 deadline and finally submitted its eight report in December 2020 under the current leadership. The CEDAW Committee published a List of Issues in July 2021, to which the Government responded in December 2021. The report was discussed, and a hearing was held from 10 to 28 October 2022, and the CEDAW Committee published its Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Finland on 31 October 2022.²¹

While the Committee welcomed the progress achieved since the seventh periodic report, it still had a number of areas of concern and related recommendations. For instance, the Committee remarked that the equal participation of women and girls in COVID-19 recovery strategies need to be ensured, including disadvantaged and marginalised

groups. It further emphasised that gender equality and non-discrimination should be the primary considerations in the allocation of funds under the Next Generation EU recovery plan. The Committee also noted, “with concern, however, the lack of information on specific measures to address the situation of women who face intersecting forms of discrimination, in particular migrant women, Roma women, older women and women with disabilities”, and recommended that Finland provide in its next periodic report “detailed information on targeted measures to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women who face intersecting forms of discrimination.”

Furthermore, the Committee noted that only 15% of all government initiatives in Parliament in 2020 incorporated a gender perspective, a decreasing percentage since 2018, and the absence of a high-level coordinating mechanism to advance gender equality. Therefore, the Committee recommended Finland to establish

- a. “a high-level coordination mechanism within the Government, with adequate human, technical and financial resources, and with a robust mandate to ensure effective gender mainstreaming in all government policies, formulate new policies and effectively carry out strategies and measures to eliminate discrimination against women”, and
- b. “a dedicated government entity at the highest level and independent of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health that is responsible for the advancement of women and gender equality, and equipped with sufficient human, technical and financial resources to effectively carry out its mandate to promote and protect women’s rights.”

It is noteworthy that the Committee also expressed concern over the underrepresentation of women in high-ranking roles in the defence forces of Finland, and suggested that “temporary special measures, including statutory quotas, for the representation of women in decision-making positions in the defence forces” are put in place.²²

Trade policy

The Ministry promotes Finland’s trade relations within the context of the Common Trade Policy of the European Union. It is working to influence the EU as it negotiates trade agreements with third countries, and it is working directly with various countries bilaterally to support Finnish companies’ ability to engage in exporting goods and services. There are also many ways in which the work of the Department for International Trade overlaps with development cooperation to support sustainable economies and decent work.

Trade policy is one of the areas of foreign policy in which gender equality is a relatively new theme. Only about a decade ago, initial discussions about gender and trade were met with suspicion and scepticism among many working at the Ministry. Since then, the Department for International Trade has carried out an independent study on gender perspectives in trade policy²³ and drafted internal guidance on the issue. It has also worked with international organisations to support programmes that support women’s rights and livelihoods in trade and economic policy. Partner organisations include the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and International Labour Organization (ILO).

Trade agreement negotiations with third countries in the context of the Common Trade Policy of the European Union increasingly consider gender equality issues. The Marin Government Programme has committed that “Finland will aim to ensure that trade agreements concluded by the EU take sufficient account of their impact on [...] the rights of women, girls and employees”²⁴. Gender equality has indeed been one element in most recent trade negotiations that the EU has engaged in with Chile and with New Zealand.

Over the past decade, the Ministry's overall understanding of the importance of assessing the gendered impacts of trade policy and of development interventions that target businesses and the economic structures has improved. However, policy guidance on gender equality and trade remains haphazard. The Development Policy Report gives some guidance on this, but is not focused on trade policy *per se*. While the Marin Government Programme included a commitment to advocate for gender equality components in the EU's trade negotiations, this commitment cannot be found in the Government Report on Foreign and Security Policy, which outlines foreign policy priorities in more detail.

Country branding

Country branding, a part of public diplomacy, consists of strategic advocacy, marketing, and communications about the country and its inhabitants. The goal of this work is to make the country appear attractive in national and international contexts.²⁵

The Government Programme's provisions on Finland's value-based country image on the one hand and the objective of strengthening the Nordic brand on the other hand provide a solid basis for Finnish country image work. Among the key values is gender equality. In addition to the Government Programme, Finland's Country Branding Strategy²⁶, published during the Sipilä Cabinet in 2017, is a key document guiding the work. In the latter, (gender) equality is defined as one of the five key values Finland wishes to promote.

In terms of gender equality, Finland's current country brand is very positive. In 2019, Finland won two significant marketing prizes with the "HÄN" campaign. The campaign revolved around the gender-neutral personal pronoun "hän" ("he/she"), which is used in Finnish to refer to any individual regardless of their gender identity or societal background. The goal of the campaign was to open discussion about the potentialities of gender equality and non-discrimination as normative powers. In addition, factors outside explicit country branding work have contributed to the positive image of Finland. Examples include the world happiness index, where Finland has been ranked first since 2018, and the large number of women in significant ministerial positions in the Marin Cabinet.

Research suggests that although the Nordic and Finnish country branding strategies support one another in the realm of gender equality, there is also an inherent tension between the two goals. In addition to collaboration with like-minded actors, ultimately it is differentiation that is at the core of country branding.²⁷ In other words, the gender equality narrative of Finland should be sufficiently similar but also adequately different from its Nordic companions to have an impact. The same study also posits that while Sweden is mainstreaming gender equality in all its communication, Finland does so less frequently. However, when gender equality is featured in the Finnish case, it is done forcefully and with a loud voice.²⁸ LGBTQ rights and Sámi people are also present in the narrative of Finland and even some references to racism, but the visual impression still provides a picture of "an almost but not entirely white society", researchers conclude.²⁹ It would be interesting to see a follow-up study, where also the depiction of people with disabilities and the presence of the Roma minority would be evaluated.

Gender equality at different levels of foreign policy

Bilateral cooperation

Gender equality is mainstreamed in Finland's bilateral relations across all regions. However, it is more visible in relationships with countries where development cooperation is an important part of the relationship. Policy documents and the interviews we carried out particularly highlight it as a key theme in bilateral relations with African countries, although Asian, Latin America and former Soviet countries with developing country status were also mentioned. These efforts are supported by the gender equality advisers based in the Department for Development Policy, such as through the Gender & Non-discrimination network of Finnish embassies that they coordinate.

Bilateral (development) projects for gender equality come in three types. The most prevalent type is a project that is implemented at the country level by a major international organisation. UN Women seems to be a preferred partner for such projects, adding to Finland's already large core funding contributions to the organisation. Examples include Finland's several "twinning" initiatives to support the adoption of National Action Plans for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in countries such as Kenya, Nepal, Afghanistan, Tunisia and Jordan. Another often cited example is a UN Women project in Nepal funded by Finland that is pilot testing a transformative approach to gender and development.

The other two less-often used types of bilateral projects for gender equality are direct bilateral initiatives between two governments, and projects carried out by local civil society organisations that Finnish embassies can support. In Kenya, for example, Finland has initiated a bilateral project aimed at strengthening the capabilities of authorities to support survivors of gender-based violence and to raise awareness on the issue. Such direct bilateral projects are however seemingly rare in the area of gender equality. Similarly, we did not find many examples of Finnish embassies directly supporting local civil society organisations or other gender equality actors. Indeed, not all embassies offer small-scale local project funds as their administration is seen as too cumbersome.

Finland's committed support to UN Women is important at a time of attempts to undermine gender equality globally. Although the organisation can provide technical and policy advice on issues such as national implementation of UNSCR 1325, there can also be several downsides to channelling most of gender equality funding through one organisation. As UN Women's role is more normative than operational, it does not often have extensive networks in the countries it operates in but is rather focused on capital-level policy work. A shadow report of Finland's second 1325 NAP³⁰ cautioned that UN Women often has strong networks with national-level, capital-based gender equality advocates but has fewer relationships with non-elite organisations and advocates. In working through UN Women, the Ministry's regional departments and embassies also have fewer contacts with national and local policy makers and gender equality advocates and thus miss out on opportunities to acquire stronger analysis of their operational environment.

Regional cooperation

Finland has several cooperation mechanisms in the Northern and Baltic regions. These include Arctic cooperation, Barents cooperation, Baltic Sea region cooperation, as well as Nordic cooperation patterns and institutions. For this study, we selected Nordic cooperation and Arctic cooperation as case studies. In addition, as Finland drafted a cross-departmental Africa strategy under the leadership of the Ministry in 2019, we also analyse the Africa strategy from a gender perspective.³¹

Nordic cooperation

Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden as well as the three autonomous territories of Åland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland participate in the Nordic cooperation. At the Ministry, Nordic cooperation is headed by Mr Thomas Blomqvist, Minister for Nordic Cooperation and Equality, and the coordinating responsibility is with the Secretariat for Nordic Cooperation.

The main intergovernmental institutions for Nordic cooperation are the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Nordic Council is the official body for inter-parliamentary cooperation, whereas the Nordic Council of Ministers complements the work of the Nordic Council through ministerial cooperation. Finland held the Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2021 and of the Nordic Council in 2022. While the Presidency programme of Finland in the former entails several remarks on gender equality and LGBTI issues³², the latter only has two vague equality references—that the Nordic countries already are well-developed in terms of equality, but inequality is however widening in the region³³.

The importance of Nordic networks and cooperation schemes were emphasised in almost all interviews thus indicating it to be the most important form of cooperation for Finland in matters of gender equality. At the international level, Nordic countries form like-minded alliances and typically support each other's initiatives. In addition to similar voting patterns, examples of the Nordic cooperation schemes include joint statements, and coordination mechanisms in gender equality issues in various multilateral forums. For instance, joint campaigning on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) prior the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) 2019 Nairobi Summit (ICDP+25) was contributing to the international community's recommitment to the SRHR agenda, originally set in the Cairo summit of 1994. All in all, consensus on gender equality goals makes for a stronger voice when all Nordic countries can stand together behind shared statements.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the utmost importance of Nordic cooperation has been highlighted, especially in the security sector. On 15 August 2022, Nordic prime ministers held a meeting in Oslo to discuss how to develop security and defence cooperation in the region. As a result, the prime ministers published a Joint statement on Nordic cooperation in security and defence³⁴. The statement entails no references to gender, women, or the WPS Agenda.

Arctic cooperation

Finland's Strategy for Arctic Policy³⁵ was published in June 2021 with the aim of defining the key objectives of Finland in the Arctic region. The programme contains several references to gender equality, which is one of the three cross-cutting themes alongside sustainable development and non-discrimination, and thus is mainstreamed in all Arctic cooperation. Intersectionality is not mentioned in the strategy, but the principle of non-discrimination contains traces of it. Mr Petteri Vuorimäki has served as Finland's Arctic Ambassador since 2019.

The main international framework for Arctic cooperation is The Arctic Council, a high-level intergovernmental forum addressing issues faced by the Arctic governments and the indigenous people residing in the Arctic region. The current member states of the council are Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Denmark, Russia, Canada and the United States, while organisations representing the indigenous peoples of the region may be admitted to the Council as indigenous permanent participants. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Council has halted its official meetings, however, and is currently seeking novel ways to collaborate without Russia, the current chair of the Arctic Council.³⁶ The Ministerial Meeting of 2021 adopted a joint declaration, the so-called

Reykjavik Declaration,³⁷ and the Arctic Council's strategic plan³⁸ for the ensuing 10 years. Both documents include gender equality entries, which Finland was also advocating for.³⁹ The cornerstone of the Arctic Council's work on gender equality is the Gender equality in the Arctic project⁴⁰, which Finland has co-funded for several years. The aim of the project is to promote dialogue on gender equality in the Arctic as well as highlight the importance of recognition and appreciation of diversity in the region.

The European Union is another important reference framework in Arctic relations. The EU announced its new Arctic Communication in October 2021⁴¹, and largely thanks to Finland's initiative, gender equality was included in the Communication. The EU refers to gender equality in this Communication as a precondition for sustainable development⁴², and promises to “involve women and young and Indigenous people more in relevant decision-making processes.”⁴³

The challenges to Finland's gender equality work in the Arctic are stemming on the one hand from the conservative positions of Russia, and on the other hand from occasional conflicts between the values of indigenous peoples of the Arctic and understandings of gender equality provisions in internationally binding treaties⁴⁴. Dialogues are used where possible to resolve such tensions.

Africa strategy

In recent years, Africa has increasingly attracted the attention of the international community, both inside the EU and around the world.⁴⁵ With the publication of its Africa Strategy⁴⁶ in March 2021, Finland positioned itself as part of this trend. Promotion of gender equality is defined in the Strategy as one of the core values for all of Finland's international activities, as set out in the Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy. In addition, gender equality is referred to in relation to “broad security”, as well as a cross-cutting theme. Women are discussed in the context of the UN Resolution 1325, the promotion of inclusive peace processes, combatting of violence against women, and the promotion of women's rights.

Finnish Development NGOs (Fingo), an umbrella organisation for Finnish NGOs engaged in global development, criticised the programme's gender equality provisions. According to Fingo, the strategy's gender equality clauses are surprisingly thin, especially given that gender equality should be an objective to be considered in all foreign policy⁴⁷. For example, there are no gender equality clauses concerning trade policy in the programme. According to Fingo, Finland's Africa strategy focuses in particular on promoting Finland's economic and other interests.

Cooperation in the framework of the European Union

EU Membership provides Finland with an important avenue for its foreign policy, including influencing international organisations, development cooperation, trade relations, and crisis management. Impacting the EU's external action is likewise a noteworthy goal across the Ministry. For example, Finland was an important actor in shaping the Gender Action Plan III (GAP III), which notably promotes a transformative and intersectional approach, both important in Finland's advocacy for the new Plan⁴⁸. Furthermore, GAP III focuses on many of Finland's development policy priorities, such as tackling gender-based violence, promoting SRHR, and the WPS agenda. The Plan also brings a gender perspective to new areas, such as the green transition and digital transformation. Notably, GAP III includes the goal to have 85% of all new actions in external relations contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment by 2025.

Increased disagreements on gender equality issues among the member states of the European Union, particularly but not limited to SRHRs, has made it increasingly difficult to promote Finland's foreign policy goals. For example, Finland made the decision not to put forward new Council Conclusions on gender and development during its latest presidency (July–December 2019), given that reaching consensus among all member states was far from guaranteed even after considerable bilateral influencing efforts. In this context, as in many others, the fact that there would be no major slipping in standards was seen as preferable to uncertain outcomes or potential failures of new initiatives.

At the same time, Finland has several channels for shaping EU's external action and has been able to raise its profile on gender equality in EU's external action. Building on the success in incorporating a transformative approach to GAP III, Finland has led the formation of the gender and transformative approach group among EU member states and has documented concrete examples of applying the approach with UN Women in Nepal⁴⁹. Finland also lobbied successfully for the inclusion of gender equality goals in the EU's updated Arctic Policy (2021) and worked actively towards the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention during its presidency, as well as for the inclusion of women's rights in the EU's latest trade agreement negotiations with third countries. Finding ways to continue to promote and gain improvements in gender equality goals within the EU, including in its external action, is a challenge for Finland and its like-minded peers now, one that is only likely to grow in the coming years.

Multilateral cooperation

Finland works systematically to propose and strengthen gender equality and human rights-based language in all multilateral fora that it operates in. At the UN, these include the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, Commission on the Status of Women, the Human Rights Council, and the UN's budget processes. Other important organisations in which Finland works actively to promote the rights of women and girls include the OSCE and the Council of Europe. In all these organisations, there are consistent and coordinated attempts to weaken the international gender equality architecture. As in the case of the EU and Arctic cooperation mentioned above, Finland aims to work with like-minded partners to prevent backsliding, and many interviewees considered that in many instances maintaining the status quo can be an achievement.

Beyond shaping and defending the multilateral normative framework, the Ministry can also support gender equality through supporting various organisations and initiatives through funding and leadership. An oft-cited example is the Generation Equality campaign. Initiated in 2020 by Mexico and France and coordinated by UN Women, the aim of the initiative is to accelerate progress in global gender equality goals. It will run through to 2026. Finland co-chairs one of the campaign's six Action Coalitions, on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality. The Ministry considers the campaign to be one of its current flagship initiatives around gender equality. It has been important for branding Finland's role in tackling online gender-based violence and discrimination. The theme is likely to inform Finnish approach to gender equality in coming years. It will also be the main theme at the Commission on the Status of Women in 2023 and Finland aims to bring findings from its work in the coalition to both.

Finland uses its fund allocation decisions to support gender equality goals within the UN system. For instance, 47% of Finnish ODA was channelled through multilateral organisations in 2019. An external evaluation of Finland's influencing activities in multilateral organisations found that gender equality "clearly represents the single most important and visible area of Finnish multilateral influence" across all the organisations that it works

with.⁵⁰ In addition to funding allocation, Finland can influence multilateral organisations corporate governance processes, staff placements, as well as other formal and informal channels.

UNFPA receives the largest budget allocation of any multilateral organisation in the Ministry's budget. In 2021, UNFPA received €33m as core funding from Finland. Finland's core funding for UN Women, at €19m in 2021, makes Finland the organisation's largest core donor. Funding for various projects led by the two organisations in some of Finland's partner countries increases the amount allocated for the two UN agencies. Funding UNFPA and UN Women allows Finland to put their weight behind the work carried out by two organisations that most explicitly support the achievement of its gender equality goals with the UN system. Funding UNFPA's work to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights globally provides the Ministry with an opportunity to reach one of its development policy priority goals at a time when reaching consensus on new normative developments in international organisations is increasingly difficult and even established rights are increasingly under threat. Moreover, through its role on the governing boards of these organisations, Finland can directly influence their priorities and strategies. Through its role as the largest core funder of UN Women, Finland has been able to ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights and the rights of sexual and gender minorities remain high in their agenda when these rights have been under pressure from other member states.

In addition to supporting and working through multilateral agencies that are directly committed to gender equality, Finland has also systematically worked to influence other organisations to incorporate gender equality goals into their policies and programmes. As concluded by the external evaluation of Finland's multilateral influencing activities⁵¹, gender equality has been the most coherent policy theme in the Ministry's work across platforms and as a result, it has reached its goals in many instances. For example, through its work with Nordic partners, Finland has been able to influence the World Bank to incorporate gender issues into its work in a somewhat systematic way, particularly in comparison to the agency's approach to gender issues a couple of decades ago.

Achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality through Finnish foreign policy

Our study found that there has been important progress in gender equality goals in Finland's foreign policy during this government term. The central role of gender equality in Sanna Marin's Government Programme and the approach adopted in the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality have brought gender equality at the centre stage of policy, including in foreign affairs. However, in key policy documents outlining foreign and security policy, we have not found such a difference compared to previous governments. The introduction of intersectionality as a fundamental principle of gender equality work by the Marin Cabinet is particularly important in a country in which experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination are among the highest in Europe.⁵² While Finland has advocated for an intersectional approach to gender equality at the EU, and there has been an increased focus on the rights of women and girls with disabilities in the development policy, we have not seen a widespread shift towards an intersectional approach to gender equality in the Ministry.

Moreover, it seems that there are rather strict boundaries on what types of foreign and security issues gender equality policies are applied to. Development cooperation and human rights policy have historically been the areas in which Finland has most systematically considered gender perspectives and promoted gender equality. The Women, Peace and Security agenda has become an important foreign policy flagship over the past 15 years and

has opened possibilities to consider gender issues in broader foreign and security policy. However, we have found that gender equality goals can more easily be applied to ‘soft security’ issues, but in the ‘hard security’ arena the “priority” of gender issues is forgotten. The process preceding Finland’s application to join NATO, and policy and public debates since, have underlined this amnesia. Similarly, the gender blindness within the Government Report on Defence is worrying, given that universal male conscription is one of the most gendered institutions in the whole society. It also makes it increasingly difficult for Finland to meet its international commitments to increase the number of women in military crisis management operations as well as in the security and defence sector in general. This would be regrettable considering Finland’s outstanding figures in the civilian crisis management sector, where nearly half of the recruited experts are women.

One area in which we have seen perhaps the greatest progress, is in the quantitative goal set in the Government Programme to make sure that 85% of all new development initiatives include a principal or significant gender objective by 2025. Clear progress has been made on this goal and a roadmap is being developed to take the final steps. While the 85% goal reflects the increased resources in gender equality work in the development cooperation sector, there is a broader concern that the goal of gender equality is not sufficiently resourced within the Ministry as a whole; especially considering that this is a foreign policy priority. In development cooperation, funding to targeted actions for gender equality, a stated priority, was only 13.9% in 2020.⁵³ Outside development cooperation, it is more difficult to access and analyse funding amounts, but insufficient human resources in general and an Ambassador for Gender Equality without a team do not seem sufficient to introduce gender equality fully in the Ministry’s internal and external activities. Similarly, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, which was mentioned in most foreign policy documents that we reviewed, suffers from insufficient human resources to allow “the strategic development of the agenda” to occur⁵⁴.

Another significant achievement during the Marin Government has been the fact that the Ministry, along with its international partners, has been able to avoid major backsliding in international gender equality and human rights norms, despite the backlash in Europe and beyond. In the context of the global anti-gender movement, Finland’s continued role as a core funder of UN Women & UNFPA has global significance. A lot of the achievements are down largely to the expertise and consistent quality of the Ministry’s staff, across all roles and levels. Through several years, Finland has developed an undeniably strong brand as a country which persistently promotes gender equality and has the expertise to do so, as witnessed by several recent external evaluations. A high-level strategy outlining Finland’s vision and approach to gender equality in foreign policy and diplomacy could significantly strengthen and streamline Finland’s impact globally given the existing strong commitment and brand that the Ministry already has.

IV Feminist foreign policy case studies

Feminist foreign policy is becoming increasingly popular in global politics. By October 2022, seven countries were exercising explicitly feminist foreign policy (FFP): Canada (2017), France (2019), Mexico (2020), Spain (2021), Luxembourg (2021), Germany (2021), and Chile (2022). In addition, a number of countries have expressed their interest in developing their own feminist foreign policies, with the Netherlands and Belgium already in the process.⁵⁵ These are interesting developments and seem to act as a form of resistance to the observed backlash against the concept of gender in general and women's rights in particular, a trend that has been omnipresent in global affairs in recent years. Sweden, the first country to officially adopt FFP in 2014 and its best-known proponent, chose an opposite path in October 2022. Its newly elected government decided to abandon FFP, claiming that the label had become more important than the content. Nonetheless, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Tobias Billström has pledged that the country will “always stand for gender equality”⁵⁶ and is therefore worth observing.

Case 1: Sweden

Sweden was the first country to officially adopt feminist foreign policy (FFP) in 2014 under Foreign Minister Margot Wallström. Since then, Sweden has gained a reputation as a gender equality pioneer in the international arena, with the stated goal to “systematically integrate a gender perspective throughout our foreign policy agenda.”⁵⁷ Even if FFP has now been officially withdrawn in Sweden, it is nevertheless important to understand the main building blocks of the Swedish model as basically all the following feminist foreign policies are either based on the Swedish case or have drawn from it.

Sweden's FFP was originally formulated around three Rs, for Rights, Representation and Resources. In the 2019 Handbook, a fourth R (for reality) was added to complement the original core. To summarise, Rights refer to “all women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights”, Representation to “women's participation and influence in decision-making processes at all levels and in all areas”, and Resources to the adequate allocation of resources “to promote gender equality and equal opportunities for all women and girls to enjoy human rights.”⁵⁸ These three Rs should finally be based on the Reality of where women and girls live. Since their original formation, the model has expanded to include both government-led and locally tailored practices. For instance, Sweden's diplomatic staff have been asked to suggest new ideas to advance FFP.⁵⁹ The Swedish model is also defined as intersectional, “which means taking into account the fact that people have different living conditions, levels of influence and needs.”⁶⁰

The 2019 Handbook provides six objectives for Sweden's FFP: 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; and 6) SRHR. Since 2017, the annual action plan has also included a seventh objective with the aim to implement FFP within the Foreign Service itself.⁶¹

Sweden's FFP was supported by a coordination team under the leadership of the Ambassador for Gender Equality and Coordinator of Feminist Foreign Policy. The coordination team oversaw drafting action plans to implement FFP, as well as general policy development, operational planning, skills development, and communication. In addition, all departments of the Foreign Service and every mission abroad were appointed a dedicated focal point for FFP.⁶² Thus the level of institutionalisation in the Swedish model seems to be high on paper. However, in addition to the Ambassador, there were only two other full-time employees in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden working on gender equality issues—which is exactly the same number as currently in Finland.

How the Swedish model was received

The original version of Swedish FFP was met with contrasting voices both nationally and internationally. On one hand, there were sceptics who framed Sweden as naïve and unrealistic, yet on the other hand, others saw the Swedish initiative as being something brave, bold and new. Swedish civil society was heavily involved in the design of the original programme, and NGOs succeeded in getting many of their objectives into the final version. However, when Margot Wallström left the office, the momentum diminished as did the original collaboration patterns with NGOs. Nonetheless, in terms of foreign policy areas, the Swedish FFP continues to be the most comprehensive of all existing models, with the aim to advance gender equality for its own sake.⁶³

A recent study shows that the perception of Sweden's FFP has been mainly positive among the diplomatic representatives from other EU member states. The policy is well-known, and Sweden is regarded as the leader in gender mainstreaming and norm promotion. The study also revealed that feminist FFP has been good for the country image of Sweden, even with the resistance expressed by certain member states.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, other studies analysing media coverage indicate that in non-western countries, Sweden's FFP has been received somewhat modestly or not referred to at all.⁶⁵

Swedish FFP has been criticised on several overlapping grounds. The first set of criticism questions Sweden's continuing arms trade with countries such as Saudi Arabia by arguing that arms trade with regimes violating human rights in general and women's rights in particular is in stark contrast with the goals set out in the FFP.⁶⁶ Secondly, Swedish FFP has been criticised for instrumentalising feminist ideas and terminology to advance the "Progressive Sweden" brand thus misusing feminist ideas and terminology to non-feminist purposes.⁶⁷ Thirdly, Swedish FFP and most other models of FFP have been questioned for their failure to see foreign policy itself as an inherently gendered, raced and classed phenomenon and for their failure to do justice to various cultural contexts. According to these critics, a truly feminist foreign policy would need to think anew the practices of foreign affairs, by fundamentally challenging its institutions and practices rather than upholding the status quo.⁶⁸ Finally, Swedish FFP can be criticised for its heavy leaning on "women and girls" rhetoric which makes it narrow in terms of inclusivity and perception of gender. Indeed, even though the policy is characterised as intersectional, discrimination categories such as race, class and disability are absent from the Handbook.

Despite these criticisms, the overall perception of Swedish FFP has for the most part been positive among academics, diplomats and NGOs. As one of the interviewees stated, if nothing else, Swedish FFP has at least provided practical tools to hold the government accountable in gender equality issues.

Case 2: Spain

Spain adopted a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in Spring 2021 when Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez launched the guidance document entitled *Spain's Feminist Foreign Policy: Promoting Gender Equality in Spain's External Action*. The policy spells out the guiding principles, the instruments of foreign policy, the lines of action (thematic priorities), the actors, the monitoring mechanisms and the resources that are required to make Spain's commitment to FFP a reality.

The guiding principles are noteworthy, as they frame Spain's approach to FFP: (1) a transformative approach aimed at structural change in working methods and institutional culture; (2) commitment of the entire Ministry of Foreign Affairs to develop FFP, starting with its leadership; (3) ownership across the Ministry; (4) inclusive participation and fostering alliances across ministries, civil society, private sector, think tanks, and international partners; and (5) recognition of the existence of intersectional and multiple forms of discrimination.

FFP will be rolled out across a wide range of foreign policy instruments. The three thematic priorities that are outlined for Spain's FFP are (1) Women, Peace and Security; (2) Violence against women and girls; and (3) Human rights of women and girls. The roll out of FFP is led by the the Ambassador for Feminist Foreign Policy, who has a team of two part time staff and one support staff. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Spain also has an internal gender equality unit, which is focused on promoting gender equality in internal processes at the Ministry. A network of gender focal points is also being developed, currently covering three embassies and the permanent representations at the UN and the EU.

The adoption of FFP builds on Spain's earlier experiences of promoting gender equality both in domestic policy and in foreign policy. In domestic policy, The Gender Equality Act of 2007 sets a framework for all public authorities, in their role in promoting gender equality. The law has also increased the requirement for the number of women holding public office, with the current government showing gender parity among government ministers. In fact, FFP is seen as necessary for conference between national policy and external action of the country⁶⁹.

In foreign policy, Spain has a strong background in promoting gender equality, most notably in development cooperation - a commitment that has been immune to changes in government. Achieving SDG 5 under the 2030 Agenda is a priority of the Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation 2018-2021. The department of development cooperation has had a gender strategy since 2007, and gender mainstreaming is included in a number of development policies and plans. Analysis by the OECD DAC has described gender equality as "a hallmark of Spanish Cooperation"⁷⁰. With 18.4% of screened allocable bilateral aid committed to gender equality, as a principal objective in 2020, Spain ranks second among OECD countries⁷¹.

Spain has also developed a considerable global profile in promoting gender equality in multilateral fora and EU institutions. Gender equality was an important component in Spain's successful campaign for a seat on the Security Council in 2015 and in that year, Spain's Prime Minister represented the country at the October Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security. In 2016, Spain organised the founding meeting of the WPS Focal Points Network and in 2019, Spain, with Finland, launched the Commitment 2025 on Women's Inclusion in Peace Processes. Since 2021, Spain co-leads the action coalition on Justice and Economic Rights of the Generation Equality campaign.

Although Spain's FFP is relatively new, some achievements can already be inferred. Firstly, the impact of the principle of mainstreaming gender equality throughout the diplomatic service has been important. Unlike the department for development cooperation, Spain's diplomatic corps has been characterised as conservative and male-dominated. The focus of FFP on the internal culture of the diplomatic service and on recruitment and advancement policies have been seen as important. The proportion of women ambassadors has increased from 19% in 2019 to 25% in 2022. There is currently gender parity in the leadership positions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain. Out of four Secretaries of State, two are women. However, the commitment to appointing women ambassadors to G20 countries has not yet been fulfilled. There have also been clear guidelines to all parts of the diplomatic service, that gender equality should feature as an agenda item in all their work and that women's civil society organisations should be involved systematically in Spain's foreign policy.

Secondly, FFP has created space for increased dialogue with NGOs both within Spain and in partner countries. The explicit adoption of a feminist foreign policy gives a strong tool for civil society organisations for advocacy and monitoring of the actions of the government. FFP has been considered to be an important achievement for Spain's feminist movement, although there are criticisms that it hasn't been enough. There are those who worry that FFP is just rhetorical and will not result in real action; and those who view it as transformative as it opens up opportunities and possibilities redefining how foreign policy is built and how it is carried out.

Third, FFP has created new openings for exploring what feminist development cooperation looks like. The Council for Development Cooperation published a report in 2022 outlining the potential of feminist development cooperation. The report highlights the importance of considering decolonial, post-colonial and intersectional feminisms in the development of such approach as well as the contributions of ecofeminism and feminist economics⁷². Finally, Spain's adoption of FFP has positioned itself well for developing collaborative initiatives to support the development of FFP by the governments of Chile and Colombia, as well as to share good practices with Mexico which adopted FFP in 2020. These collaborations are seen as a way to promote gender equality in bilateral relations outside of development collaboration.

There are a number of challenges encountered in implementing the vision for FFP. Although the FFP policy spells out that there will be a budget associated with the policy, it does not specify amounts. Some observers are concerned that human or financial resources do not match the ambition of the new approach.⁷³ Others note that there are considerable limitations of the roll out of the policy across the ministry as well as embassies and representations at present. Furthermore, there are signs that gender equality has not been fully integrated into areas such as security policy. At the 2022 NATO summit in Spain, for example, some civil society organisations were concerned that WPS issues were side-lined to a side event. Others have criticised Spain's continued arms exports, including to countries such as Saudi Arabia.⁷⁴

Similarities and differences between the country cases

A comparison exercise between the country cases makes it strikingly clear that the adoption of feminist foreign policy obliges foreign policy actors to produce key documents to necessitate strategic guidance. This is not a minor issue—it forces the actors to spell out what feminist foreign policy entails, why it is essential, and how it will be implemented. In other words, it pushes the actors to deliberate on what gender equality means in foreign policy in the ongoing political and societal context. In this way, it can be stated that adopting an explicit FFP can in itself be transformative. It requires processes of conceptual clarification; it provides opportunities for advocacy dialogue and oversight; and it can transform our understanding of what foreign policy is all about.

In this way, adopting FFP may go further than the policies of “only” advancing gender equality inside the existing foreign policy frameworks.

The Spanish case is a revealing example of such a process. While most Finnish interviewees understood gender equality to be part of Finnish national identity, a type of self-evident value, the road to FFP in the case of Spain seems to have been paved with political discussions and dialogues with a range of actors. In other words, while gender equality is seen as something self-evident in Finland, gender equality was understood to result from political processes in the case of Spain. Also, the demands for coherence between national and international policies and activities were emphasised in the Spanish case, following the lessons learnt from other countries already exercising FFP.

In a similar manner to Spain, Sweden also invested heavily in involving civil society actors in the planning phases of FFP. However, in both countries, the momentum has been tied to charismatic and committed individuals, which has simultaneously pushed forward the agenda but has also made it vulnerable to change. It should also be noted that Sweden sets itself apart from the two other cases with its high institutionalisation level and considerable resources.

Even though all three countries – Finland, Spain and Sweden – all refer to intersectionality in their foreign policy agendas, Spain is definitely the boldest of the three on paper. It outlines the goal of achieving a transformative approach and structural changes in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself, including in its institutional culture and working methods, while also recognising the existence of intersectional discrimination. However, these guiding principles are in contrast with the three selected thematic priority areas of Spanish FFP, which are traditional in nature and concentrate on women and girls. Despite of the mismatch, it is clear that at the document level, the Spanish model comes closest to the transformative feminist approach referred to in the introductory section of this study, when both Sweden and Finland remain in the gender-sensitive and inclusive category. However, the Spanish FFP is still very new, and the practical implications of it can only be evaluated after some years of implementation.

Interestingly and somewhat worryingly, all three country cases reveal a reality in which gender equality aspirations slip away from issues that are considered to be “hard security”, such as defence policies and arms trade. Thus, there is still considerable work to be done within and in collaboration with the security and defence sector, where gender considerations are either non-existent or aim only at women’s increased participation in existing institutions.

V Conclusions and the way forward

Reality is constantly being created and re-created through the narratives told⁷⁵. Finland's current gender equality narrative relies on its history as an equality-driven nation, something that is "in our blood" and therefore is treated as self-evident. As the current backlash against gender equality and women's rights across the world is revealing, however, historical narratives and self-evident truths can only take you so far. Instead, the status of gender equality and the tools to enhance it need to be constantly re-evaluated in internal and external affairs to match the changing realities. Furthermore, the internal and external narratives and actions should correlate and thus be consistent.

Meaningful gender equality means that everyone, notwithstanding their gender, social class, age, sexuality, ability, or ethnic background, has equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities in national and international contexts. Advancing this kind of transformative gender equality policy requires an intersectional approach. While the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2020–2023 took important steps in this direction, intersectionality demands disappeared from the list of actions required from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. Thus, while the Ministry can proudly "tick the boxes" of achieving the goals required from it in the Action Plan, which in itself is a considerable achievement, the transformative spirit of the Action Plan has not been realised in the area of foreign policy.

All in all, Finland seems to have followed the typical path in its foreign affairs, in which gender is allowed to enter "soft affairs", but the "harder"⁷⁶ the issue becomes, the likelier it is for gender to disappear. Indeed, the two extremes in gender equality matters in Finnish foreign affairs are development cooperation and international security policy. Whereas in the former, gender equality is mainstreamed basically throughout, the latter is almost gender blind. It is noteworthy in relation to the on-going NATO negotiations that if gender is not included in the first negotiation rounds and preliminary agreements, it is very difficult to change the situation in the subsequent phases. It is indeed in situations like these that the true dedication to gender equality is measured in practice. Gender expertise should be included in the negotiation teams, the minimum requirements in relation to gender equality should be clear to all negotiating parties, and the negotiation team itself should be representative. This is not an easy task, but adopting a feminist stance is not easy, nor it should be. Rather, gender mainstreaming as well as feminist foreign policy are ethical commitments that need to be retaken over and over again.

Does Finland already have an implicit feminist foreign policy in place, while it does not explicitly state so? It depends on how feminism is defined. If the goal of feminism is to achieve equality between men and women through political and legal reform, which can be simplified to be the goal of liberal feminism, then we could say yes, Finland already has a form of feminist foreign policy in place, but only if (international) security policy is excluded from this scenario as well as the lack of a clear and precise strategy. However, if the goal of feminism is truly transformative, with the ultimate intention to challenge and alter gendered power structures inside and outside Finland's borders, including throughout the Ministry, then the answer must be no. Nonetheless, with this same set of evaluation criteria, none of the other countries already exercising feminist foreign policy would

tick the box of feminism either. Therefore, we could conclude that in this company Finland has already gone relatively far.

Advancing gender equality in foreign affairs: three future scenarios for Finland

What options does Finland have in advancing its approach to gender equality in foreign affairs in an increasingly polarised world? First, Finland needs to strengthen its strategic guidance.⁷⁷ The Advisory Board for International Human Rights recommended in 2022 for Finland to develop “a strategy and action plan for gender equality in external relations, including cross-cutting means to achieve the objectives across the whole diplomatic service, a monitoring system, indicators and reporting.” The Advisory Board also recommended Finland to adopt Feminist Foreign Policy to support this work.⁷⁸

Building on the recommendations given by the Advisory Board, we propose that Finland has three alternatives in its international gender equality work.

Scenario 1: Continuing along the current path

Promoting gender equality in Finland’s external relations both through specific actions and through gender mainstreaming. No specific measures on international security policies.

Pros: Finland already has an excellent reputation and brand in gender equality issues, which allows for systematic continuation of that work. Cooperation with gender-phobic states may be easier without the brand of feminist foreign policy.

Cons: Finland could be excluded from certain international circles without the FFP brand. The current approach is likely not to be sufficient for taking decisive actions against the backlash in national and international arenas. This is especially true in the altered security environment, in which special emphasis is placed on (international) security and defence policies.

Scenario 2: Developing a strategic approach to international gender equality work, without labelling it as FFP

Developing a guiding document such as a strategy for international gender equality work across the Ministry. This would provide clear signposts to all actors on what, why, and how gender equality is being promoted in Finnish foreign relations. Providing sufficient financial and human resources to undertake this work. Increasing hands-on cooperation with like-minded countries to further coordinate and strategize different efforts. Placing a specific emphasis on security and defence policies.

Pros: Finland already has an excellent reputation and brand in gender equality issues, which allows for systematic continuation of that work. Cooperation with gender-phobic states may be easier without the brand of feminist foreign policy. Decisive actions to increase gender equality in the (international) security and defence arena would make Finland more credible as a gender equality actor among NATO members and its allies. A clear strategy would crystallise the goals for all parties.

Cons: Finland might be excluded from certain circles without the FFP brand. Many forms of resistance would likely occur among security and defence actors. With limited resources and many competing foreign policy interests, it might be challenging to gather sufficient resources for gender equality work without outspoken FFP.

Scenario 3: Adopting a feminist foreign policy

Planning, adopting, and implementing an explicitly feminist foreign policy.

Pros: By declaring a feminist foreign policy, Finland would decisively and openly declare its stance in the polarised new reality. Collaboration with other states with an explicit FFP would likely increase. The Finnish brand as an equality-driven nation would be further strengthened.

Cons: To avoid exposing itself to criticism, Finland would need to plan and implement FFP with utmost care. Failure to do so would put Finland in a bad light both nationally and internationally, and especially so if security and defence policies were to be excluded from the realm of FFP. Furthermore, adopting a feminist foreign policy simultaneously with accession to NATO would place tremendous pressures on further strengthening gender equality work in (international) security and defence policies.

Annex 1: List of interviewees

Experts from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

1. Katja Ahlfors, Director, Centre for Peace Mediation, Political Department
2. Sofie From-Emmesberger, Director General, Department for Africa and the Middle East
3. Jaakko Jakkila, Senior Adviser, Development Policy, Department for Africa and the Middle East
4. Irene Leino, Team leader, Financial investments, Department for Development Policy
5. Eija Limnell, Team leader, Team for UN development issues, Department for Development Policy
6. Erik Lundberg, Deputy Director General, Political Department
7. Laura Kamras, Director, Unit for Public Diplomacy, Department for Communications
8. Mikko Kivikoski, Deputy Director General, Department for Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia
9. Titta Maja, Director General, Department for Development Policy
10. Liisa Maunula, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Finland, Madrid
11. Krista Oinonen, Director, Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions, Legal Service
12. Krista Orama, Senior Adviser, Gender Equality, Unit for Sectoral Policy, Department for Development Policy
13. Sami Pirkkala, Director, Unit for Sectoral Policy, Department for Development Policy
14. Johanna Rasimus, Desk Officer, Unit for General Development Policy, Department for Development Policy
15. Anna Salovaara, Director, Unit for UN and General Global Affairs, Political Department
16. Salla Sammalkivi, Director, Unit for General Development Policy, Department for Development Policy
17. Satu Sistonen, Legal Counsellor, Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions, Legal Service
18. Katja Tiilikainen, Senior Adviser, Gender Equality, Unit for Sectoral Policy, Department for Development Policy
19. Katri Viinikka, Ambassador for Gender Equality, Unit for Human Rights Policy, Political Department
20. Petteri Vuorimäki, Arctic Ambassador, Unit for Northern Europe, Department for Europe
21. Kent Wilska, Director, Sustainable Trade Unit, Department for International Trade

Other experts interviewed

22. María Jesús Conde, Ambassador for Feminist Foreign Policy, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, Spain
23. Kirsi Henriksson, Director, Crisis Management Centre, Finland
24. Manuela Mesa, Director, CEIPAZ, Spain
25. Eppu Mikkonen, Adviser, Development Policy, Fingo, Finland
26. Malin Nilsson, Secretary General, WILPF Sweden
27. María Solanas, Director of Programmes, Real Instituto Elcano, Spain
28. Nora Stenius, Researcher, University of Helsinki, Finland

Information provided by email from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland:

1. Kirsti Pohjankukka, Deputy Director General, Human Resources
2. Ann-Mari Fröberg, Team Leader, Human Rights Council, Political Department
3. Jemina Järvilehto, Desk Officer, Women's rights, Political Department
4. Suvi Tuominen, Desk Officer, Human Rights Council, Political Department

Annex 2: Notes and references

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- 4 Elomäki, Anna, Anu Koivunen, Hanna Ylöstalo & Johanna Kantola. 2019. "Tasa-arvopolitiikan vastaisku?" *Politiikasta.fi*, 5.6.2019, <https://politiikasta.fi/tasa-arvopolitiikan-vastaisku/> [3.11.2022].
- 5 Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. 2021. *Making Finland a Global Leader in Gender Equality: Government Action Plan for Gender Equality 2020–2023*, p. 12. Available at: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-8666-4> [3.11.2022]. Intersectionality is originally a legal term coined by American civil rights advocate and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. It refers to intersecting social identities and systems of oppression based on identity markers such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, or age. Intersectionality suggests that various systems of oppression interact and may reinforce one another, and should therefore be analysed as a whole.
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- 19 The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, also known as the ILO Convention 169, is the major binding international convention concerning indigenous peoples and tribal peoples.
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