

**BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS**

**EMPOWERING WOMEN IN SLOVAK DIPLOMACY:  
EXAMINING THE INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS AND TOOLS OF  
THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS  
BACHELOR THESIS**

**Bratislava, 2024**

**Claudia Benková**

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### **Declaration of Originality**

I hereby declare that this bachelor thesis is my own work and has not been published in a whole or in part elsewhere. All used literature and other sources are attributed and cited in Bibliography. This bachelor thesis is written with the help of AI – concretely Grammarly, to check the grammar and sentence building.

In Bratislava, February 23, 2024

Claudia Benková

Signed:

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### **Abstract**

Throughout the world, increasingly more data shows us that women are occupying progressively more leading positions in companies and official public institutions. More and more women are taking positions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and even ambassadorial posts. However, even if this trend is increasing, there are still incomparably fewer women than men. This bachelor thesis investigates the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (MFEA) to promote gender equality and empower women in diplomacy. It underlines the importance of MFEA leadership commitment and both internal and public initiatives, such as discussion, directives, public activities, and cultivation of the public, so a more inclusive workplace can be set for women. The Slovak MFEA can take an example from several foreign countries like Spain, Germany, Norway and Sweden. By adopting a Feminist Foreign Policy, MFEA would face criticism from society. The thesis recommends adapting elements of such policies but aligned with Slovak values. Implementing these recommendations can position the MFEA SR as a leader in promoting gender equality in Slovakia.

Názov práce: Posilnenie postavenia žien v slovenskej diplomacii: skúmanie inštitucionálnych aspektov a nástrojov Ministerstva zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí

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### **Abstrakt**

Dostupnejšie dáta nám ukazujú, že po celom svete ženy obsadzujú postupne čoraz viac vedúcich pozícií v spoločnostiach a oficiálnych verejných inštitúciách. Viac a viac žien zastáva pozície na Ministerstve zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí SR, dokonca aj na veľvyslaneckých postoch. Aj keď tento trend stúpa, žien je stále neporovnateľne menej ako mužov. Táto bakalárska práca sa zaoberá iniciatívami Ministerstva zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí Slovenskej republiky (MZVEZ) na podporu rodovej rovnosti a posilnenia postavenia žien v diplomacii. Zdôrazňuje dôležitosť angažovanosti vedenia MZVEZ v interných aj verejných iniciatívach, ako sú diskusie, smernice, verejné aktivity a kultivácia verejnosti, aby bolo možné vytvoriť inkluzívnejšie pracovisko pre ženy. Slovenské MZVEZ si môže brať príklad z viacerých zahraničných krajín ako Španielsko a Nemecko. Prijatím Feministickej Zahraničnej Politiky by MZVEZ čelilo kritike zo strany spoločnosti. Odporúča sa prijať niektoré z elementov takejto politiky, ale ich zosúladiť so slovenskými hodnotami. Implementácia týchto odporúčaní môže postaviť MZVEZ SR ako lídra v presadzovaní rodovej rovnosti na Slovensku.

**Vocabulary**

MFEA – Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic

MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

FFP – Feminist Foreign Policy

MZVEZ – Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí

SFPA – Slovak Foreign Policy Association

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## Introduction

Women represent half of the world's population, however, in many cultures women do not have the same position in society as men do. Many times they are looked down on, and treated as things rather than human beings. It is not fair that women have to go through such pain just because they are viewed as 'weaker' or in traditional views only as 'mothers, wives, those who take care of family members and house'. Women are much more than things. That is why it is important to set our values straight and respect human rights. "Gender equality, besides being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieve peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development" (UN, n.d.)

The world is opening up to equality, and many states advocate for it, but it is a fact that women are not equal to men in every sense. That is why it is so important to talk about topics of equality and inclusivity. Societies should start by educating their children from a young age that everyone is equal, no matter what gender, sex or race, as the topic of equality, is not only about women, but also about men. It needs to be talked about in every part of society, but especially state institutions and state leaders should advocate for such rights. They are representing our states and if they fail, if they share hate, it will mirror in the society.

Slovakia is currently becoming more progressive, we are accepting women in leading positions, many excellent women who are as qualified as men, if not even more. However, the representation of women in diplomacy in the highest positions as ambassadors is still very low in comparison to the representation of men. Currently, in 2024, only 23% of heads of missions are women while the rest are men (MFEA SR, n.d.). Despite notable advancements, women continue to face barriers to entry and progress in diplomatic careers, which results in a gender gap. This indicates that there is a need for change, for progress.

Even when most of the obstacles women were facing disappeared, there are still a few more steps to make the environment beneficial for women, and to make the field more accessible. Therefore, a lot of weight is on the shoulders of the Ministry of Foreign and

European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, as they are the ones who can make a change and become a leader of gender equality in Slovakia. Whether it is accepting new policies or leading discussions, both within the ministry as well as with the public.

The public also plays a huge role in the topic of equality of women and men in diplomacy. The MFEA cannot implement new policies without society being ready for it. They are intertwined, so if one becomes more progressive, the other one will follow. Nevertheless, Slovak society is quite traditional, especially now with the influence of political leaders. That is one of the reasons why MFEA has to be involved in public discussion about gender equality, so it can culture the society and push it to be more progressive.

Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic is conducting steps towards equality at its resort and in foreign service, but there is space for improvement. Slovakia can take examples of good practices from other countries, such as the Nordic countries, but also from countries closer to us – Germany, Spain, and France to name a few. These countries are accepting policies empowering women and are implementing them to their foreign services. At the same time, they are signaling to the international community that this is an important topic, and they are willing to become leaders in gender equality. It became common for these countries to address the topic of gender equality, topic of protecting women in international discussions, and trying to make more progress globally.

Slovakia can become one of the leading countries as well, but it has to implement more progressive policies. Slovakia needs leaders who will be brave enough to push this topic forward, and who will lead the conversations. Former state secretary, Ingrid Brocková stated “Slovakia needs stronger involvement of women in all areas of public and political life. We need more women in diplomacy, where they play an irreplaceable role. If we want a safe place to live, we must all do more for the dignity of every woman” (MFEA SR, n.d.).

This thesis investigates the underlying factors contributing to this gender disparity, including societal norms and institutional barriers, and evaluates the efforts of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs to promote gender diversity. Through

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a comparative analysis with more gender-inclusive foreign affairs ministries, it proposes strategies for the Slovak MFA to enhance the representation of women in diplomacy, aiming to contribute to broader discussions on gender equality in professional spheres.

## Chapter 1: Theoretical Background

### Gender and Hierarchy

Gender is a fundamental aspect of our lives, and of our society and has been discussed for years. Gender shapes how an individual is expected to behave, and what role a person should play, especially in society. Besides being a well-discussed topic among common people, gender, and its issues become a topic of interest in academia and diplomacy. In terms of academia, a new scientific discipline was created – gender studies. Regarding gender in diplomacy, this bachelor thesis will cover the position of institutions on this topic.

The World Health Organization, also known as the WHO (2002), explains the concept of gender as characteristics of both men and women that are socially constructed. It means that the characteristics include norms of behavior and roles associated with being a man or a woman, which are constantly changing. Therefore, characteristics and learned behavior associated with gender roles.

Moreover, gender is a hierarchical construct that produces inequalities either in social or economic circumstances. The WHO (2002) states that “Gender-based discrimination intersects with other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender identity and sexual orientation, among other”. For this situation is also created the term – intersectionality. It is important to realise that not only gender can be an obstacle in economic or social areas, but also a combination of many factors.

Gender equality is defined as a sameness between men and women, placing importance on equality in the social status of men and women by eliminating existing inequalities. Moreover, gender equality does not want to suppress the biological differences or the diversity between genders but aims to eliminate the hierarchy in the statues of men and women. Therefore, gender inequality reflects differences in either (or both) the social or economic domains, for example in their rights, access, benefits, etc. (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family of the Slovak Republic, 2014).

From the legal point of view, gender equality in the Slovak Republic is legally established through the Constitution, anti-discrimination laws, and the Labour Code of the Slovak Republic. Moreover, the National Gender Equality Strategy was put into practice in 2014, and later in 2019. In 2022, the national initiative called Gender Equality in the Workspace started being implemented (Hlinková et al., 2022).

As mentioned before, part of gender is also its hierarchy. It is visible everywhere – from the workplace to the family environment. How many of us have heard that the man is the head of the family or that the highest managers are men? It is a social phenomenon that is constantly changing with society, however, Slovak society has yet to change. In Slovakia, most of the men are in those leading positions while women are supporting them from the background.

According to Bzdilová (2022), patriarchy can be understood as a “form of mental, social, spiritual, economic and political organization or structuring of society” (p. 10). This kind of structuring recognizes the dominance of men and can directly or indirectly lead to the discrimination and hierarchization of society. As mentioned before, political and social structures are strongly dominated by men and they are the ones in power, those able to make a change. Furthermore, even though they have the ability to change the conditions for women, their decisions do not reflect the needs of women. Consequently, women form a minority in both the social and economic structure – in high and well-paid positions in a workspace.

Because gender is expected to shape how human beings behave, and their characteristics, it is obvious that gender roles are created. Gender role is a manifestation of one’s gender identity (Browne, 2023). In other words, every person has a role in society, some roles we have from birth – a daughter, a cousin, but there are roles we gain during our life, for example, a teacher, a mother, etc. Every role has some expected pattern of behavior that the person should follow. In connection are gender stereotypes, because as described, each role expects certain behavior, it also stereotypes the role. Since we are little, people talk about what is more ladylike and what is more suitable for men. To give an example, females are stereotyped to be kind, modest, quiet, and tender, while stereotypical perceptions of men are strong, confident, and not showing

their feelings. Gender stereotypes are also connected with gender prejudices, which are biases not built on the truth. For instance, because men are stereotyped as strong leaders, who do not let their emotions sway their opinion, they are most often the type chosen for leading positions, while women are given the lower ones.

However, these stereotypes, and therefore obstacles, are not only seen in the field of diplomacy and politics, but also in everyday jobs as doctors, teachers, engineers, businesswomen, and many more. Despite the fact that women are just as capable, ambitious and hard-working as men, they face obstacles that make it difficult for them to progress in their careers (Madarászová, 2022, p. 42). Physical strength, prejudice regarding their family status – whether they have children, are married or single, or societal stereotypes – as fields that are more suitable for soft, emotional women and fields that are more suitable for strong and rational men, are the obstacles women have to face in everyday life.

“We tend to underestimate women’s performances and overestimate men’s. As a result, women have to accomplish more to prove that they are as competent as men. This is why women are often hired based on past accomplishments, while men are often hired based on future potential” (Lean In, 2019). Moreover, if a woman replaces her name with a male name on résumé, the odds of her getting the job improve by more than 60%. When a man is more assertive, for example in a leading position, we think of it as a natural thing, but when a woman is assertive, we see her as being bossy, and not very likable. It is because we associate women with kind and quiet behavior. When displaying strong leadership or speaking assertively, women are frequently labeled as “too aggressive” or “bossy”, terms seldom applied to men. It is important to be liked because people would rather promote someone as a well-liked man than a less-liked woman (Lean In, 2019). Women face obstacles in the workplace, no matter how we try to hide it, no matter what job she does. Somewhere, gender representation is equal, while in some fields it is not. This problem must be tackled – no matter what field the woman is in.

Moreover, as the academic field of gender studies has grown, new concepts have been created, and one of them is very important for this bachelor thesis. Glass ceiling is a concept described as an invisible barrier from advancing to higher positions of power

or basically any working position within an organization simply because they are female (Li & Leung, 2001). In other words, women are facing a great difficulty that they cannot change or overcome. This barrier has been created by men for men to make sure that women do not end up in leading positions. This is also connected to the topic of women in diplomacy, where many women are not chosen for higher positions as they might not be taken seriously.

### Diplomacy as a Profession

Because states need some kind of tool to communicate and to settle differences, the art of diplomacy was created. At first, there were no permanent institutions/roles, but rather there were ad hoc diplomatic missions. Usually, men who were good at rhetoric had a certain status in society, had a good reputation, or were smart were sent to represent the ruler – for example, respected elders, senators, and people close to the ruler. This is part of the ancient diplomacy that the Egyptian, Roman, and Greek empires were part of (Bjola & Kornprobst, 2018, pp.14-15). Later, ancient diplomacy transformed into medieval diplomacy which is mostly developed in Europe as a consequence of Christianity and Roman Law, and the first consuls were traders (Bjola & Kornprobst, 2018, pp 20-21). A few centuries later permanent representation, institutions, formal structure, and permanent roles were created during the period of modern diplomacy. Many important events in this period affected diplomacy as we know it now, such as The Peace of Westphalia (1648) or the Congress of Vienna (1814). Modern diplomacy is characterized by several features such as the usage of treaties, face-to-face conferences, granted immunities to ambassadors, official languages, and residential ambassadors (Bjola & Kornprobst, 2018, pp 24-32).

Defining the concept of diplomacy is difficult for many various reasons, some of them are that the concept changes over time, or that each state conducts diplomacy differently. Nevertheless, the international community has agreed upon a definition that will be used in this thesis. Diplomacy is defined as “the art and practice of conducting negotiations between nations” (Marks, 2016). However, the word has two general meanings, diplomacy in the policy sense means the government’s diplomacy or in other words, country’s foreign policy, or there is an operational sense where diplomacy



means business conducted between governments or institutions. More important is to understand that diplomacy is not the message, but the instrument of communication.

Moreover, it is crucial to describe what a diplomat does and what they have to possess to do such a job. To describe it from the Western point of view, Neumann in his work *To Be a Diplomat* (2005) sketches three scripts upon which diplomats should act (using Charles Taylor who identified the first two). The first one is the bureaucratic script, which is concerned with the decency of everyday life, whether a person is good, or if they do what is expected from them. This script has no place for anything heroic and can be found in ordinary professions - if not followed a punishment may come. Another one is the heroic script. This one involves extraordinary individuals, people of deed, leaders, and people willing to change something. We are mostly met with the second kind of script in our times as many people want to climb the ranks as they want either more power or a change. Finally, the most important one, and that is the script of practice and that of negotiation. As mentioned before, negotiation is one of the core aspects of diplomacy, therefore it is immensely important for a diplomat to be good at it. We have to understand that they are not negotiating on their behalf but on behalf of their State, minister, Ministry, or Government. Therefore, they must take the role seriously as they are representing thousands to millions of people and their actions have an impact on the future of their country. In addition, the question is on how much does a diplomat act based on his/her own instincts and knowledge, and how much they do based on what the MFA instructs. In the past, diplomats used to govern their territory with trust given to them by the ruler, but now, diplomats are aware of the hand above them. The question is, to what extent does a diplomat have their own freedom to act and say upon their best intentions?

Furthermore, diplomats not only have serious responsibilities, but they also enjoy several immunities. They were written to ensure the safety of the diplomat and his family abroad. They were legally established in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (The United Nations, 1961), and ratified by 193 countries. It states what are the functions of diplomats and also their immunities. To connect it with the previous part, the functions will be named first. The Vienna Convention of 1961 clarifies that the functions of a diplomatic mission consist in:

- a) Representing the sending State in the receiving State;
- b) Protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law;
- c) Negotiating with the Government of the receiving State;
- d) Ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the receiving State, and reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State;
- e) Promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State, and developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations.

To be able to fulfill these functions, diplomats have to be protected and that is why they were granted several diplomatic immunities. Some of them are: ‘The premises of the mission shall be inviolable. The agents of the receiving State may not enter them, except with the consent of the head of the mission (Article 22-1).’ ‘The archives and documents of the mission shall be inviolable at any time and wherever they may be (Article 24).’ These are just examples, but there are also other important Articles such as Articles 27, 29, and 31.

Overall, a diplomat is a person, usually a man, who has to be able to orient themselves in a fast changing world and be able to adapt to different situations. Also, they carry a huge responsibility, and if they fail with negotiations a war can start. Marks and Freeman (2024), describe diplomats as “specialists in carrying messages and negotiating adjustments in relations and the resolution of quarrels between states and peoples. Their weapons are words, backed by the power of the state or the organization they represent.” Moreover, diplomats have skills in languages, cultures, history, political situations, traditions, and they have to have a general knowledge and outstanding negotiating skills. Diplomacy as a job requires a lot of time, and experience, so the person has to be willing to sacrifice their private life and many of the luxuries an ordinary person enjoys. It is an immensely demanding job, which takes years to prepare for.

## Women in Diplomacy

Since we were children, we were told stories about men, princes, heroes who saved the world, and princesses, from evil forces. However, almost no story puts a woman into a heroic position, it is always a man, therefore we are putting this image of a woman who needs to be saved by a man into the minds of our children. However, it would not be fair to say that no woman had an important role in history as we know many of them – Queen Elizabeth I, Rosa Parks, Marie Curie, and many more, but the number of what we can describe as heroic women to the number of heroic men is very small.

For a long time, women were just objects, the property of men and it was much a struggle to get rights, to get equal positions to men. Some may argue that women still do not have equality, but that is a discussion for another time. However, women in diplomacy has been a similar story. Women were not in any important diplomatic positions and no one cared about their opinion. An ordinary person cannot name one woman who acted as a diplomat before democracy was established as we know it now. Nevertheless, there were special women. In 1507, Caterine, daughter of Ferdinand of Aragon, was sent as an ambassador to England to negotiate with Henry VII; in 1529, the Treaty of Cambrai, also called ‘The Ladies’ Peace’ was created as negotiation of Lousie of Savoy and Margaret of Austria on behalf of their respective countries. These are only a few of examples of how important women in diplomacy were (Fritsche, 2002).

Nonetheless, in the twentieth century, women were mostly active in diplomacy as wives of diplomats and consuls. They were important because they were hosting events or were taking part in community work (Fritsche, 2002). These events were crucial for networking activities and they also meant opportunities to discuss topics and some may have reached the agreements in such places. What is more, it was a place/time where diplomats could show off their status because if a person was important then they had been invited. Another reason why wives of diplomats were crucial was their community work which created a positive image of their husband. Altogether, women stood behind their husbands, helping them mentally, advising them, and trying to paint them in the best light, which did not always have to be an easy job. In this way, those women deserved immense respect. Additionally, if a woman wanted a position in diplomacy,

and not as a wife of a diplomat, they could apply for the job of a typist – allowed to women in Norway at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Neumann, 2008).

However, the situation had changed after the First World War – many opportunities opened for women in terms of working positions and rights. One of them was diplomacy, where many women started to succeed, for example, Alexandra Kollontai, a Soviet feminist, became the first female ambassador. She was appointed to Norway to represent the USSR in 1924 (Demel, n.d.). The influence of women only grew and in 1933, 13 countries had admitted women into diplomatic and consular positions. Also, in the same year, Spain appointed Isabel de Zulueta as Chancelier of the Spanish Legation at Panama, proving themselves as pioneers (Fritsche, 2002). For example, in Norway women were first allowed into the Foreign Service career in 1939, Great Britain did in 1946 and Sweden did in 1948, yet Swedish MFA reached gender parity in the 1990s. Evidently, time has not had much connection to the number of women in diplomacy (Aggestam & Towns, 2018).

Even though bans stopping women from entering diplomatic services were lifted, many obstacles remained. For instance, married women were banned from diplomacy, and if a single woman wanted to marry and have a diplomatic career, she had to leave. Some of these bans were not lifted until the late 1960s and 1970s. Sweden lifted these bans in the early 1970s while Great Britain lifted them in 1973 (Aggestam & Towns, 2018).

In conclusion, prior to the nineteenth century, very few women served as diplomats and ambassadors, although it was rare. Women often influenced the court and their husbands through roles as mothers, sisters, and wives by providing pieces of information or spreading false information. However, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, women gained the positions as ‘diplomatic wives’ and were able to contribute to diplomacy through the support of their husbands, organizing events, and some community work to help the image of their husbands. Only after WWI, women were allowed into diplomatic positions, but even that did not go without obstacles.

## Methodology

This thesis embarks on a comprehensive exploration of gender representation and equality within the realm of diplomacy, particularly focusing on the initiatives to eliminate any obstacles or challenges undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (MFEA SR).

The first part of this thesis is a literature review, where I look specifically at the key terms, which need to be defined before the empirical part. It is immensely important to understand terms such as gender, gender equality, hierarchy, and the glass ceiling, and the obstacles that these ideas create. Gender is an obstacle for women in career growth, therefore, knowing exactly what it means is crucial. Later in the theoretical part, I looked at the history of women in diplomacy, and how they gain more rights and possibilities in the field of diplomacy.

To conduct the empirical part, the mixed methods approach is used, combining both the qualitative and quantitative methods. To fully understand why and what steps does the MFEA SR takes, both methods are necessary. Statistical analysis is used to analyze the representation of women in diplomacy globally, as well as within the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, and the societal views on equality, and position of women in the Slovak society. It involved gathering and analyzing data from sources such as Women in Diplomacy Index 2023, official webpage of the MFEA, and World Values Survey. After analyzing this data, a conclusion is drawn about the current state of gender representation in diplomacy. Moreover, a literature review is conducted to provide additional definitions, theoretical frameworks, and background information on topics related to feminism, gender equality, women in diplomacy, and Feminist Foreign Policy.

A comparative analysis is also carried out, as I look into the Feminist Foreign Policies of Germany and Spain and compare them with the steps Slovak MFEA takes to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment. It involves analyzing official documents and web pages, so the comparison can be made. This thesis ends with a provision of recommendations for the Slovak MFA to enhance gender equality, diversity, and

inclusivity within the organization. These recommendations were informed by the data and analysis conducted throughout my research, as well as insights gained from interviews and comparative analysis of other MFAs' practices.

To learn about public diplomacy - steps the MFEA SR takes to cultivate the public, to learn about policies of foreign MFAs, a document analysis is carried out. I look closely at the official reports on the webpage of the MFEA SR and study the policies of both Spanish and German MFAs official publications, which are analyzed to be able to describe their foreign policies. It helped to understand the approach of the ministries to the topic of women in diplomacy, empowerment of women, and equality of all.

To gain more information about the obstacles women are/were facing, the societal views, and the work of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, four semi-structured interviews were conducted. All of the respondents were contacted through email communication, where I specified what I was interested in. The people contacted were Denisa Frelichová, a former ambassador, an employee of the ministry in a leadership position, and as a Coordinator for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion; Mária Krasnohorská, a former employee of the ministry and former diplomat; Ivana Uličná, a founder at Hekima Slovakia and Senior expert at the Slovak Foreign Policy Association; and Miroslav Wlachovský, former ambassador and Minister of Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic. All of the respondents were carefully chosen, as each of them has years long experience with the topic of women in diplomacy. All of the questions asked were beforehand approved by my thesis advisor Ingrid Brocková.

The interview with Denisa Frelichová was conducted through the Zoom video-call application, and the rest of the interviews took place one-on-one in the pre-agreed place and time, and each interview lasted an average of one hour. The questions were structured in a sequential manner but remained adaptable depending on the direction the interviewee took, aiming to guide them naturally into discussing the phenomenon under study. The interviews were conducted in a conversational tone to encourage open dialogue and thoughtful consideration of the topic at hand. All of the respondents allowed me to make audio recordings, which were later transcribed, so the citations correspond to what was said during the meeting.

The reason why these approaches were chosen is that incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a holistic understanding of the issues surrounding gender equality in diplomacy and the tools and aspects of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic.

However, the limitation to my approach is the limited number of respondents which may be considered as an unrepresentative sample. With a larger sample size, a more comprehensive exploration of the societal views could be carried out, as well as the experiences of the challenges. Moreover, if there were more respondents from non-governmental organizations, this sector would be more represented, as not everyone may agree with Ivana Uličná.

## **Chapter 2: Navigating Progress and Obstacles: Women in Diplomacy and the Path to Gender Equality**

### **Women in Diplomacy Today**

Over the decades the situation of women trying to gain more solid positions in diplomacy is getting better, we can see more and more female diplomats and ambassadors, but that does not mean they are not facing any obstacles. As mentioned before, diplomacy is still considered as a male discipline and MFAs are regarded as gendered institutions. “These institutions seem to contain predictable division of labor, including a familiar division of responsibilities and tasks among women and men, with women often ending up in support functions and in “soft” policy areas whereas men tend to cluster in “hard” policy areas and are overrepresented in leadership positions, Women’s entry into diplomacy seems to have been marked by such divisions” (Aggestam & Towns, 2018, p.13). A great example of such a pattern is Neumann’s example of women entering diplomatic careers as typists which I have mentioned before.

Moreover, another obstacle for women is the gendering of positions – there are ‘hard’ and more ‘masculine’ positions connected to the military and economy, and more ‘soft’ and ‘feminine’ positions which are regarded more as administrative jobs or lower-ranking jobs. In 2014, Towns and Niklasson conducted research to find out whether there are gender patterns in ambassador appointments. Their analysis is based on data containing almost 7,000 ambassador appointments made by the fifty highest ranked countries in terms of GDP. The result of their research is that female ambassadors are less likely to occupy a high-ranked ambassadorship than men. Furthermore, they proved that “men are to a greater extent appointed to the most prestigious economic positions” and that “women are less often appointed ambassadors to countries with the highest military status” (Towns & Niklasson, 2017, pp. 534-535). Despite that, some states are exceptions, and the position of women also depends on individual MFAs.

However, even with such obstacles, the number of women taking part in leading diplomatic positions is growing. One of the many reasons for improving the situation



is the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in 2000, which addressed the impact of armed conflicts on women. It is titled “Women, Peace, and Security” and it reflects several points: the need for increasing participation of women in the decision-making process at all levels in institutions promoting security, protection of women from gender-based violence, promoting women’s participation in peace-building, addressing needs of women in post-conflict situations and their recovery (UNIFEM, 2006, p. 5). Since its introduction in 2000, Resolution 1325 has inspired global actions to support gender equality and equal participation in decision-making in areas of conflict. It is a significant step forward in recognizing and empowering women in efforts to build peace and resolve conflict all around the world.

Every year the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy releases a document called the Women in Diplomacy Index which maps the percentage of female ambassadors and permanent representatives of the UN member states. The 2023 Women in Diplomacy Index found that only 20.54% of ambassadors and permanent representatives are women, which means almost 80% are men. The highest average of female ambassadors and representatives is Europe with 28%, followed by the Oceania cluster (New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea) with 26.38%. In third place stands the US and Canada with 25%, and in fourth place, below the average of 20.54% is the MENA (Africa, Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East) with 18%.

It is interesting to observe that some EU states have huge differences in percentage regarding the representation of women in ambassadorial or representative positions. For example, Finland has 49.5% of women in top diplomatic positions while Belgium only has 11.5% of women as ambassadors. Nevertheless, Belgium is not the only EU country that is far below the average of 20.5%. Portugal has only 19%, Hungary has 16%, Italy has 12%, and our own country, Slovakia, has only 14%. We may not be the worst, but 14% of women as ambassadors or representatives is extremely low. Moreover, the country with the highest Percentage Share of Women Ambassadors is Canada with 51% in 2023, followed by Sweden with 47%, and the United Kingdom with 43%. In comparison, countries with the lowest Percentage Share of Women Ambassadors in 2023 are Russia (1.5%), Japan (2%), and South Korea with 2.5% (Women in Diplomacy Index 2023, 2023).

In conclusion, there is an evident increase in the representation of women as ambassadors for the countries of the G20 – increased to 21% in 2023 compared to 17% in 2018. But despite that, only 13% of negotiators and 6% of mediators in the 1992-2019 period were women. The numbers are even lower in countries affected by a conflict, where they may even be absent. Women remain underrepresented in ambassadorial positions all around the world. We as a global society still have a long and complicated road to ensuring gender equality in diplomatic positions, and therefore there is a long way to transform diplomacy into a gender-inclusive field (Women in Diplomacy Index 2023, 2023).

### Slovak Diplomacy

Slovak diplomacy did not start with the creation of the Slovak Republic in 1993 as many may think, but a few years before, when Slovakia was part of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic (1990-1992). The beginnings of Slovak diplomacy began with the creation of the Department of International Relations of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic in December 1989, and its task was to participate in the implementation of the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, developing contacts with Slovaks living abroad and many other tasks (Mojžita, 2019, pp. 17-18).

In August 1990, after the approval of the Competence Act by the Slovak National Council, the Ministry of International Relations of the Slovak Republic was established - it was headed by Milan Kňažko. The ambition was to build Slovak reputation abroad.

In 1993, the Slovak Republic was created as a sovereign state with its own diplomats. However, that led to conflicts as many of the diplomats and workers of various ministries were born Czechs, therefore they became diplomats of the Czech Republic, and many decided to take a break from diplomacy (for example the case of Magda Vášáryová) (Mojžita, 2019, pp. 117-118). Slovakia, especially Kňažko, had to find people to fill the positions asap, so the ministry could work properly.

The Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs in 1993 had 286 workers, out of which 126 of them were women. Despite that, only three women were leading the departments – Jana Buriánová was the head of the personnel department, Mária Krasnohorská was the head of the section of bilateral cooperation, and Ernestína Federičová was the head of the payroll department (Mojžita, 2019, pp.183-186). Even though, the number of female employees was almost equal to the number of male ones, the number of heads of departments, in other words, the decision-making positions, was extremely low.

#### Female Slovak Diplomats and Women in Decision-Making Positions at the MFA

From January 1, 1993, the Slovak Republic had 53 functional embassies and four permanent missions (Mojžita, 2019, p. 152). Nonetheless, there were only three female diplomats in the position of mission leaders: Klára Novotná in Bonn, Oľga Bakossová in Helsinki, and Eva Mitrová in Strasbourg (Mojžita, 2019, pp. 187-190).

In 2021, the MFEA had 1,175 employees of which around 607 were women, which makes 51,7%. 482 people worked at the headquarters out of which 54.6% were women, and 693 people worked abroad (permanent missions, representatives offices, delegations, representations to the EU, consulates general, and Slovak cultural institutes) out of which 49.6% were women (Tomová & Demeš, 2021). In other words, the MFA had more women than men as employees, but if we take a closer look at the higher position, the numbers were not so positive.

In the high decision-making positions were 13 men (minister, state secretary, general secretary, and 10 directors general) and only 2 women – Ingrid Brocková (state secretary) and Karla Wursterová (director general) (Tomová & Demeš, 2021).

Currently, in 2024, the Slovak Republic has 91 diplomatic missions abroad – 62 embassies, 8 permanent missions to international organizations, 10 consulates general, 9 Slovak institutes, 1 liaison office, and 1 Slovak Economic and Cultural Office. In total, the Slovak Republic is represented in 64 countries on all continents. Out of 91 diplomatic missions, Slovakia has only 21 female heads of missions. To be concrete,

11 of them are bilateral ambassadors, 5 women lead Slovak institutes, 3 women are heads of consulates, and 2 women are ambassadors to the permanent missions (Slovak MFEA, n.d.). That means only 23% of heads of missions are women.

Despite a notable increase in the number of diplomatic missions and female employees within the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs over the years, gender representation in higher decision-making positions remains disproportionate. Even though most of the MFEA's workforce are women, they remain underrepresented in leadership positions. That is obvious from the imbalance of the number of women and men occupying high-ranking decision-making positions such as ministers, state secretaries, and directors general.

Moreover, although there has been progress in appointing female diplomats to lead and be the heads of diplomatic missions abroad, the numbers remain low. As of 2024, only 23% of heads of missions are women, indicating persistent challenges in achieving gender parity in leadership positions within the diplomatic profession.

### Obstacles Within the Diplomatic Career

There have been many obstacles that had to be overcome in order to make the role of diplomats more accessible to women, such as the predominantly patriarchal character of our society. Therefore, also in the diplomatic field, there is still a prevalent belief that a woman is not fit to make competent decisions as a diplomat, and still too often a female diplomat has to prove to others that she is worthy of the position, something her male colleagues do not have to do. Moreover, the role of the family plays a significant role. For example, if a female diplomat has a husband, he has to either move with her, and therefore give up his job or stay in their homeland. Not every partner is willing to do so. In the past, if a female diplomat had a child, she was not either picked for the diplomatic position or she had to take her child with her. Additionally, a woman could not give birth to her child in the hosting country but had to return to Slovakia (Tršňanský, 2022, pp. 33-37).

Mária Krasnohorská, one of the first women to work at the Slovak MFEA, and one of the first female diplomats in Slovakia, expressed her experience with the gender situation at the ministry right at its beginning, *“In those early days, there was such a euphoric and friendly atmosphere, we all had a common goal, so I genuinely did not feel or see any discrimination or open inequality. At that time, there were no systemic measures to equalize the differences between genders in the foreign service, but despite this, I did not feel any inequality. However, as time went by and the ministry grew, it happened that some men unknowingly, did not promote equality of opportunities. They were not open enemies of women, but they did not even think of doing something to address this issue, they were not sensitive to this topic. But there were also a few who did not hide their antifeminist convictions.”* It was not meant as something bad, just as described before, women are more sensitive to social issues while men mostly focus on the military, economy, and these more ‘hard fields’. Krasnohorská did stress that even though she did not face any major obstacles regarding gender during her career, minor situations happened on a daily basis. *“It happened that a group of men were debating, a woman said something, but it was like she had not said anything.”*

Moreover, she emphasizes that the gender equality situation depends very much on the person in charge. *“Of course, this depends on the specific character of people in the decision-making positions. Whether they create (at the ministry, at the embassies) an atmosphere of respect and sophistication, or not.”*

Denisa Koterec Frelichová, former ambassador of the Slovak Republic to the Kingdom of Norway, Coordinator for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion, and Director General of the Section of the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, described her experience with the words *“In senior positions - my bosses were for a very long time predominantly men, and they were used to the fact that diplomacy was a masculine domain. At the time of their studies at the Diplomatic Academy, most of them were educated by the renowned MGIMO (Moscow State Institute of International Relations), education in diplomacy was open only to men, women could not enter, at least not from Eastern Europe (during communist time). So, this was a belief they acquired from their education, oftentimes, they just did not realize that women can and should be part of the diplomatic profession. They honestly believed*

*that the role of women in diplomacy was to support and assist.* When asked about the current situation, she replied *“There is definitely still a big difference in the ease for men and women to advance in their careers. Men still have an easier ride, for example, if a man makes a mistake, it is more likely to be pardoned without consequences, than when a woman stumbles. Moreover, there is still this old belief that women, when gaining more responsibilities, it is mostly in the area of ‘care businesses, like development, humanitarian assistance, culture, public diplomacy, and such, while men get the ‘fight’ business, like peace and security. This reinforces the old stereotype that men win the war and women come afterward with bandages, food and medicine.”* However, it is important to mention that it is not only a problem in our country, but many other countries are also facing it. These are only a few examples of the obstacles women had to face in the past, and, indeed, some of them are still lingering around, but the MFEA is trying to eliminate most of them.

There are also obstacles and challenges women face even before the diplomatic career. Ivana Uličná, a founder at Hekima Slovakia and Senior expert at the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA), believes that the first obstacle women face lies in not preparing young women for a diplomatic career, and that education is often burdened with gender prejudices about women’s role in diplomacy. She continued with an example *“When we talked to young women, we very often found out that even during their education, they encountered the barrier that their lectures and guest speakers directly told them that women do not belong in diplomacy. And either they did it directly or they did it with anecdotes. I met a student who told me that her teacher told her that a woman belongs to the kitchen or just as a diplomatic wife, which happened about 5 years ago.”* Encountering such discouragement from a young age, during the time people try to find themselves, erects significant barriers, making education crucial for young minds. Not only is the discouragement a challenge, but also the fact that most of the schools do not talk about women in leading positions.

Moreover, young women in internship positions also face challenges, to which Uličná said *“They are given only administrative tasks – more like helping men, and get questions like ‘Would you make a coffee?’ If a young man and young woman started in a similar position, the young woman was given more administrative tasks, while a man was given more analytic tasks.”* Therefore, the gendered task assignments are

reinforcing biases and impacting skill development. *“We get better at what we practice, so when a man is already solving analytic tasks from some internship at 23, it is clear that in his 30s he will be more experienced and a better analyst than a woman who was only assigned to do the administrative tasks,”* Uličná continued. People in leadership positions should therefore pay more attention to whether they assign tasks based on stereotypes, even if often unconsciously.

In summary, not only is the diplomatic career full of obstacles but also the road to it. Gender stereotypes that are present in education influence young people’s way of thinking about themselves, which may cause doubt for young women. It also reflects a social unwillingness to acknowledge women in leadership and decision-making positions.

### Feminist Foreign Policy

One definition of what is the Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) and what are its principles and characteristics does not exist. According to Madarászová (2022), if we are talking about universal models and definitions, it is important to consider cultural, social and historical backgrounds that are part of the international system. If we decide to ignore them, we cannot fully access the full potential of the Feminist Foreign Policy in individual countries. It is most effective when the FFP is tailored for each country differently based on their backgrounds (Madarászová, 2022, p. 131).

However, there are few explanations of the FFP, such as, “Feminist Foreign Policy is the policy of a state that defines its interactions with other states and movement in a manner that prioritizes gender equality and enshrines the human rights of women and other traditionally marginalized groups, allocates significant resources to achieve that vision and seeks through its implementation to disrupt patriarchal and male-dominated power structures across all of its levels of influence (aid, trade, defense and diplomacy), informed by the voices of feminist activists, groups and movements” (Thomas & Clement, 2019). Nevertheless, there are several more such definitions, and no one can agree on one.

The Feminist Foreign Policy is a framework that provides a fresh perspective on traditional foreign policies. It aims to intensify the perspectives and experiences of

women and other marginalized groups, to deconstruct existing systems of patriarchy and racism in a way that supports equality, builds peace and protects human rights. Its goals are to empower women and marginalized groups, eliminate gender gaps, support equal representation and try to change the power structures (Doyle, Olden, Sheunemann and Skaluba, 2021).

The first country to introduce Feminist Foreign Policy was Sweden in 2014, followed by Canada (2017), France (2018), Mexico (2020), Spain (2021) and Germany in 2022 (Madarászov, 2022, p. 131). Since then, they have implemented their Action Plans into their policies and influenced the international community to take a step towards more feministic policies.



### Chapter 3: Navigating Social Perception

The steps taken by the Slovak MFEA regarding the topic of women in diplomacy cannot be thought of without looking at the situation of the society we live in. The MFEA cannot take steps for which the society is not prepared because it would only create unrest and distrust among the citizens. In other words, MFEA and society are interconnected – they influence each other, and they push each other forward. That is why people in decision-making positions need to know and understand the societal view on things. To find out what society likes or dislikes, there are many surveys with valuable information regarding a wide range of topics.

The World Values Survey, in the years 2017-2022, conducted extensive research that examined various topics of the everyday lives of Slovaks, such as trust in different institutions, feelings towards neighbors, confidence in institutions, worries, etc. One of the questions asked, was about the essentiality of a certain characteristic to diplomacy, in this case, it was how essential is to ‘Women to have the same rights as men’ to diplomacy, to which 56.6% said that it is ‘an essential characteristic of democracy’ (the highest score that was possible). To the question, of whether ‘Men make better political leaders than women do’, out of 1, 200 asked, 49.7% said that they disagree, 47.7% said that they agree, and 2.5% do not know (WVS, 2022, pp. 12, 79). Here we can see that society is divided almost in half on this topic, which is not the worst situation, but it is not the best either.

Slovak society does not understand the term ‘feminism’ in its real meaning and it becomes distorted when coming to public awareness. “The original, real goal of feminism is to achieve equality between women and men. Of course, not in the sense of equality, that all differences between women and men should be erased, but in the sense of equal opportunities: that women, like men, can lead a dignified life and fully develop their potential” (Filová, 2023). Instead, the public is often presented with feminists depicted as hostile, and resentful towards men, viewing themselves as something more, as superior. Moreover, they are also viewed as people disdain

family values and neglecting children (Filová, 2023). None of it is however true. These negative stereotypes may come from the underlying belief that women and men should not have equal rights and opportunities in their lives.

Miroslav Wlachovský, former diplomat and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, commented *“In Slovakia, there are very strong currents that are traditionalist, conservative with a very outdated view of the division of roles between men and women, and this is a problem when these forces come to power. As well as the progress that has been achieved, some regression can be changed by practical steps.”*

From the data collected, it seems obvious that Slovak society is not ready for more feministic foreign policies. If a society cannot accept the term feminism, then it must not be used to describe a policy. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic cannot accept such a policy, not like Spain or Norway because the ministry would not be understood. When asked about the situation of Slovak society in connection to gender equality and the position of women, Mária Krasnohorská, former ambassador of the Slovak Republic, stated *“Society is not ready for feminist policy, especially not for a radical approach. A radical approach today would have the completely opposite effect, these people would simply be ostracized, and the topic would be pushed aside.”* Therefore, the steps MFEA is taking have to be slow, evolutionary, anything radical will not be accepted.

Moreover, when asked where the Slovak Republic makes mistakes, Krasnohorská replied that according to her own opinion *“I see a great reserve in education and culture. Slovak society advances very slowly in this regard. Even worse, today the whole public discourse is being vulgarized, and unfortunately, it is coming from the highest political positions. Today, the terrible anti-women narrative comes often from the mouths of prominent politicians.”* It has become a common occurrence that we hear vulgar words and aggressive gestures from our leading politicians, whether they are directed at each other or even at the most vulnerable groups of people in our society – minorities.

Denisa Frelichová, also stated, *“Gender equality is a matter of both good manners and common sense. Why would any society choose to ignore and not use the potential of half of its population?”* And on the question of whether Slovak society is ready for gender-equal policies, she firmly said *“No, we are not ready. We see it in all elections as well as on all female politicians, who are more attacked for useless and stupid things in our country.”*

On the other hand, some societies are open-minded, diverse, and especially polite – one such society is Norway. During the interview with Denisa Frelichová, she expressed why she believes the Norwegian society is so progressive, as she spent years as a Slovak ambassador to Norway. *“They explained to me that it is pure pragmatism, why should they dismiss half of the population, which is equally capable? There is a whole history of evidence that women can do things just as well as men can. There are statistics and many good examples around the world that prove that those societies, where women are in decision-making positions and the society work better, prospers, whether it is business or state administration.”* In terms of numbers, currently, the Norwegian Parliament has out of 169 members 75 women which makes 44.38% of female representation (IPU Parline, n.d.).

Frelichová then continues *“They understand that just like the parliament, every society, whether it is a business or a state administration, must reflect the composition of Norwegian society. They realize that everyone should be represented, and the more diversity there is around the table, the better because it means higher quality and decisions are made faster. Moreover, the concerns and needs of all who live in the society are more likely to be addressed if well represented. Logically, when you have a parliament full of men, they will not deal with social issues, they will not deal with women's and children's issues, they'll just deal with problems from their one-sided perspective because many of those are issues they have never experienced first-hand.”* Women are usually put into positions that reside over ‘soft’ fields, for example, social policies and topics of equality and rights, so without them, men mostly focus on ‘hard’ fields, such as the military and economy.

Additionally, Frelichová described her own feelings of the situation in Norway. *“In Norway and also in Iceland, they don't think about gender differences at all, I just had*

*the feeling that they look at a person. The society there had already matured to such a situation that I already felt like a person. The society is very mature in this regard and one does feel that what matters is the qualities of the person, not gender or race.”*

Overall, if Slovak society wants to move forward, and be more open and tolerant towards each other, politeness needs to be pushed into our everyday interactions and most importantly into our political scene. Currently, our politicians, our representatives, are signaling to society that it is alright to be vulgar and aggressive, that it is okay to discriminate. From the Slovak political scene, we feel the discrimination towards women and other minorities and it perpetuates a hostile environment for gender equality initiatives. Krasnohorská concluded it beautifully with the words “*At the moment, I see no hope for any significant progress in this topic. Rudeness has overwhelmed us*”. However, the Slovak MFEA has to be careful while implementing policies regarding equality and gender due to potential societal unrest and resistance: the MFEA can go as far as the society as a whole could accept it. However, the MFEA could set an example.

In contrast, societies like Norway demonstrate positive and progressive attitudes toward gender equality, seeing it as an important aspect of their society and societal advancement. Fundamentally, to reach gender parity in diplomacy and any other sector (business, politics, public sectors), it needs more than policy reforms but also the shift of societal views. Their shown lack of differentiation between individuals based on race or gender portrays a mature society that values more individuals based on their merits than anything else. Until Slovak society becomes open-minded, diverse, and accepts differences, there is not much that can be change

## **Chapter 4: Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Their Steps Towards Equal Foreign Policy**

### **Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and its Policies**

The Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs is taking steps towards the elimination of the obstacles that female diplomats face, as well as making the profession more accessible to young aspiring female diplomats. By organizing various activities and events about the topic of women in diplomacy, the MFEA is making the topic visible to the public and therefore, more discussed. However, it is not only about women, but equality of opportunities is a topic for everyone because it is about all people – no matter their gender, sex, race, origin, etc. The steps taken by the MFEA SR are on two levels: 1. internal efforts – directives and any other legal documents that directly affect the profession of diplomats, documents signed by the ministry, internal discussions, etc.; and 2. public diplomacy activities to make the topic visible, to appreciate female diplomats and employees of the MFEA SR.

### **Internal Efforts of the Slovak MFEA**

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic uses directives to get rid of obstacles women face either when working for the MFEA SR in Slovakia or during foreign service abroad. Besides adopting directives, the ministry also organizes internal discussions about what could be done to make the situation of women better at the ministry, and what is the source of the problem. As an initiative of the MFEA SR, the position of Coordinator for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion was created. All of the steps taken are proof that the MFEA SR wants to become progressive, leading by example other institutions to gender equality, equal opportunities and inclusion.

In 2021, after the first Women in Diplomacy Week, the efforts to promote gender equality, diversion, and inclusion resulted for example in the creation of a new position – Coordinator for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion, and for the position Denisa Koterec Frelichová was selected. The content of her work was to monitor and

evaluate the employment of women in the ministry and propose steps that could be taken to improve the situation. She also looked specifically at the working conditions of women abroad, such as maternity leave, the period during pregnancy, etc. (Yar, 2021). When asked about the content of her work during our interview, Frelichová explained *“We held various seminars and meetings. I invited women from other government institutions, but also from businesses, corporations, multinational companies, non-governmental organizations, from parliament and we discussed and exchanged experiences and good practices in advancing gender equality, diversity and inclusion in our work. We talked about how we perceive the situation of women and what we could do to improve the position of women in society in general. Those were very fruitful and inspiring debates that resulted also in many useful improvements in the human resources management within the Ministry in this regard. I have also tried to organize a gender audit, but we were not able to finish the project.”*

Moreover, she added *“I also acted as an informal ombudsman among the employees, because I did not only deal with gender equality related issues, but also with those of other minorities. Subsequently, I communicated these complaints and issues that came from the MFEA employees to the political leadership and the human resource management. They also eagerly attended and attentively listened to our discussions and incorporated the outcomes into our internal rules and regulations.”* Frelichová stressed that *“creating the position of Coordinator for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion was met with lots of enthusiasm from the employees but also from the society outside of the Ministry as not many Government offices and institutions had such positions. It brought hope and determination to the Ministry employees that the stalemate on the gender equality will get new impetus and meaningful upgrades.”*

Another big step for the MFEA SR to reach inclusion, diversity, and gender equality was signing the Diversity Charter. It is a “voluntary initiative for promoting diversity management principles and sharing good practices across member states. The aim of this plan is to ensure efficient protection against discrimination, to better comply with antidiscrimination laws in practice, to better awareness about discrimination, among key stakeholders and to raise awareness about prevention and protection against discrimination among the public” (Charta diverzity Slovensko, n.d.).

### Public Diplomacy Activities to Make the Topic Accessible

By organizing public events, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs was bringing the topic of women in diplomacy to a wide range of people - students, ordinary citizens, institutions and organizations, and anyone interested. During the past few years, MFEA organized many events to make the topic more accessible to people, as well as expressing the need for discussion.

At the beginning of 2021, Ingrid Brocková, State Secretary initiated the project Women's Fridays. On monthly basis Ministry presented a successful woman, whose story is connected to diplomacy, economics, politics, art or science, generally presentation Slovakia abroad. The first woman who was introduced through this program was Gaiane Minasyan, who was/is a member of the demining squad in Abkhazia, showing that the MFA does not only support Slovak women but women overall, no matter their origin. In total, 25 women were recognised (MFEA SR, 2021a). All these women became successful in their fields.

Part of the initiatives to outreach broader public was initiative Women in Diplomacy Week, which was for the first time introduced in 2021, and continued in 2022. Both took place around International Women's Day on March 8<sup>th</sup>. The whole week focuses on awarding successful and inspiring women, making visible female representation in diplomacy and international organizations, as well as in development and humanitarian projects all around the world (TASR, 2021). During the Women in Diplomacy Week in 2021, "We (the MFEA) presented a series of events about women in the system of international organizations, in development cooperation, business, science and research" (MFEA SR, 2021b). The aim was to discuss the improvement of conditions of women and to try to bring concrete proposals/plans on how to make the situation better.

Part of Women in Diplomacy Week was also awarding women who have made significant contributions to the development of international cooperation and spreading the good name of Slovakia abroad. In 2021, the former Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovak Republic Ivan Korčok together with State Secretary Ingrid Brocková awarded five outstanding women – Mária Krasnohorská (Medal for Merit in Slovak diplomacy), Katarína Mathernová (Gold Plaque of the Minister of Foreign and

European Affairs of the Slovak Republic), Erika Kvapilová (Gold Plaque of the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic), Danica Olexová (Gold Minister's Plaque in memoriam), and Dária Kimuli (Silver Plaque of the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR) (MFEA SR, 2021c). All of these women are successful in their own field, becoming the pride of Slovakia. Former minister Korčok stated "My thanks go to the awardees for their efforts and dedication in fulfilling demanding tasks, often in a very demanding environment abroad" (MFEA SR, 2021c). In 2022, Ivan Korčok and Ingrid Brocková continued with the new tradition and rewarded three more outstanding women, three diplomats who contributed to the development of the Slovak foreign service. "Magda Vášáryová, a former diplomat and politician, received the highest award of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic – the Medal of Merit in Slovak diplomacy" (MFEA SR, 2022a). Awarded was also Vlasta Kunová (Gold Plaque of the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic) and Eva Bezáková (Silver Plaque of the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR) (MFEA SR, 2022a).

The Women in Diplomacy Week did not only celebrate the success of Slovak women but also acknowledged their contributions to Slovak diplomacy, international cooperation, and to the positive image of Slovakia. The awards only highlighted their dedication in their own fields, making them the source of Slovak pride. The continuation of the Women in Diplomacy Week was only proof of commitment to recognizing and honoring female diplomats who have done so much for the Slovak Republic.

Part of the public diplomacy of the MFEA is also collaboration with non-governmental organizations, different ministries, and other organizations. One of the examples is collaboration with the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, a foreign policy think-tank based in Bratislava. Upon the initiative of Frelichová, MFEA together with SFPA co-organized a project called "Ženy v diplomacii" (Women in Diplomacy) to promote inclusion and diversity in the environment of foreign service and diplomacy. In November 2022, Frelichová initiated a very first conference 'Ženy v diplomacii', in cooperation with MFEA SR, SFPA and Živena (Slovak Women's Association). The event offered a room for an evaluation of the previous activities and promotions of the topic of women in diplomacy, as well as evaluating progress in the field of inclusion



and diversity. People who took part in the conference were Zuzana Čaputová, Ingrid Brocková, Denisa Frelichová, Ivana Uličná, Rastislav Káčer, Magda Vášáryová and many others (MFEA SR, 2022b).

As part of the project “Ženy v diplomacii”, SFPA in cooperation with MFEA SR prepared in March 2023 an exhibition with the same name “Ženy v diplomacii”. It contained portraits of 15 women – female diplomats who are representing Slovak diplomacy in various positions in the Ministry. The goal of the exhibition, as explained by Ivana Uličná from SFPA, is to highlight the role of female diplomats in diplomacy and foreign service and in shaping successful Slovak foreign policy. The aim is also to present the diplomatic career and the specifics that it entails. At the same, Minister Káčer also awarded four female diplomats who contributed to the development of Slovak foreign policy. The exhibition, later on, traveled around Slovakia, taking place at 3 Slovak universities (MFEA SR, 2023a).

The final product of the cooperation of SFPA and MFEA SR is a textbook called “Ženy v diplomacii”, which provides theoretical background on topics such as gender, equality, women in diplomacy, feministic foreign policy, and more; a historical overview of the topics, and also examples from other more progressive countries. It “maps socio-cultural, economic and institutional barriers for women in the field of diplomacy and foreign policy, analyzes their impact on the current status of women and points to practical solutions for increasing inclusion and diversity in this area (Uličná, n.d.). Moreover, it contains practical exercises so students can fully grasp what they have learned. Currently, the textbook is used by 3 universities in Slovakia – University of Economics in Bratislava, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, and P. J. Šafárik University in Košice, to teach the subject Women in Diplomacy (Uličná, n.d.).

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs has undertaken significant efforts to improve the situation of female diplomats and to promote the topic to a broader public. Internally, the MFEA has implemented many directives to eliminate obstacles and challenges female diplomats were/are facing. They aim to promote inclusivity and equal opportunities for all individuals. The creation of the position of Coordinator for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion underlines the commitment of the ministry to fostering a more inclusive and diverse workplace environment. Public activities

organized by the MFEA SR, such as Women's Friday and project Women in Diplomacy, show a desired to raise awareness of the topic and try to create an environment for discussions. These events also celebrated successful women in Slovak diplomacy. These initiatives not only recognized contributions to Slovak diplomacy by female diplomats but also promoted equality on a broader scale.

### Examples of Good Practice

The world is moving towards more feminist policies, some are creating laws to protect women, and some are implementing National Action Plans, to have certain goals which they want to fulfill. Several countries even implemented Feminist Foreign Policy – Sweden, Norway, Canada, Mexico, Germany, Spain, and a few more. It is a significant step for these countries, a message they are sending to the international community. They are fighting for women, for equality, for a safe and progressive world. Slovakia does not have any policies like this in foreign policy, therefore, our leadership can take an example from these countries.

According to Wlachovský *“We need to take examples from every country where it works better. The Nordic countries are a natural candidate for us to take an example from because their societies are very developed, they have one of the most developed educational systems. When you look at the way they work, they give fairly high equality of opportunity, and they are probably more fair than others from a social point of view. They create the conditions, not for women, but for the functioning of families - even men can take parental or maternity leave, for the woman to be able to work, she needs the man to be able to work in the family. They have this system set up, and it's something we could learn from.”* Nordic countries are very progressive when we are talking about equality and equal opportunities. They are the role models for other countries. Slovakia is far behind in societal views and in policies from the Nordic countries, but we can look at the countries that are closer to us regarding values, that is why Spain and Germany were chosen as examples.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Spain

Spain is one of the leading countries in gender equality and empowering women. In recent years, Spain went through legislative changes that made it possible for the government to implement Feminist Foreign Policy. To be concrete, all parties in the Parliament adopted a law against violence against women, and in 2007, a law affecting gender equality was enacted, establishing the principle of balanced representation – in practice, there cannot be less than 40% of either gender in political party candidate lists or managerial positions in the public administration (Yar, 2022).

Spain adopted their first National Action Plan (NAP) in 2007, without a specific time of implementation, and it aimed at peacekeeping missions, enhancing gender-sensitive peacebuilding, human rights protection, and women's participation in conflict resolutions. Importantly, it encouraged the participation of Spanish civil society in the implementation of Resolution 1325. In 2017, Spain adopted its second National Action Plan for the period of 2017-2023. It builds upon the previous NAP, moreover, human rights and gender equality have held a more prominent place since the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations (Spain – 1325 National Action Plans, n.d.).

In 2020, the Government pledged to adopt Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP), and a year later, in 2021, the guide on FFP was adopted – Spain's Feminist Foreign Policy: Promoting Gender Equality in Spain's External Action (Yar, 2022). It aims to integrate feminist policies into national and foreign actions. The five key principles of the FFP are structural reforms, strong leadership, coordination mechanisms, strengthening participation and alliance building, and intersectionality and diversity. All these principles will be applied to all areas – trade, defense, economic justice, and climate change (Spain, n.d.). Their commitment also shows in statistics – in 2021, Spain had 20.3% of female ambassadors, while in 2023, it was 32.5%, increasing by 12.2% (Women in Diplomacy Index 2023, 2023). Therefore, it means that Spain's efforts are paying off.

Spain emerges as an advocate for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Through legislation, new policies, National Action Plans and the new initiative

Feminist Foreign Policy, Spain demonstrates a commitment to equality and gender parity. Taking significant steps as integrating FFP into foreign policy and national affairs makes Spain a great example of a country that wants to move forward.

#### German Federal Foreign Office

Germany may not be one of the leading countries in gender equality, but it has still made significant progress. It only shows in their dedication to human rights, equality, and empowerment of women. Since 2013, Germany implemented three National Action Plans, the first one was the National Action Plan for the period 2013-2016, followed by the second National Action Plan for the period 2017-2020, and in 2021, the last action plan was implemented – The German Federal Government's Action Plan for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda for 2021-2024. Its six priorities are crisis prevention; participation; protection and support; humanitarian assistance; crisis management, and reconstruction; strengthening the Women, Peace and Security Agenda; and increasing institutional integration and capacities (Germany – 1325 National Action Plans, n.d.).

In March 2023, Germany decided to follow other states and launched new Feminist Foreign Policy guidelines – Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy, guiding all staff at the Federal Foreign Office. The new FFP is inspired by the Swedish one, focusing on three points: equal rights for women and girls, the equitable representation of women in all areas of society, and equal access to resources for women and girls. Moreover, the three main areas of action are gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting, and internal diversity. And to improve the situation even more, Germany will appoint a woman ambassador for FFP (Brechenmacher, 2023).

Several guidelines suggest internal reforms within the German Federal Foreign Office, boosting the representation of women in decision-making and leading positions. It also aims to prevent discrimination and cultivate internal expertise on gender and diversity issues. There is already evident progress as the proportion of women among directors general in the Federal Foreign Office rose from 21.9% to 36.4% between 2020 and 2022. Progress is also evident among heads of missions abroad, as in 2020 it was 19.4% and in 2022 it was 27.1% (Brechenmacher, 2023).

## Recommendations

Slovakia to progress and become one of the more developed countries in the world regarding equality of opportunities, diversity, and inclusion – concretely in gender equality and empowerment of women, has to have certain guidelines that will be followed. Based on what I have researched in this bachelor thesis, I believe these following points should be covered in such guidelines.

1. Leadership is important. The person in a leading position who has the power to change things has to be someone who is open to this topic and is willing to take steps to make the situation better. Leadership commitment is crucial for implementing positive changes within any organization. *“To equalize the status of men and women, whether in diplomacy or society, you need some leaders who push for it, someone who actively promotes it, and there are not many of them now,”* commented Miroslav Wlachovský. Ivana Uličná stated on a similar note *“In terms of leadership, it has always been about introducing new things that may not always be initially understood or popular, and that takes courage.”* At the current state of our society, we need leaders who will be brave to take a step forward and become a ‘role model’ for different institutions and the public.
2. Inclusive and participatory process. From the point of MFEA SR, it is crucial to take steps within the ministry first. It means organizing internal discussions among the employees of the MFEA, discussions with diplomats, and especially representatives in decision-making positions. The men cannot be missing in these discussions as they are a pivotal part of the topic. Gender equality, diversity, and inclusion are topics of everyone and for everyone, no matter what gender, sex, origin, etc. It needs to be the whole of institution process. A great example of progress was creation position of Coordinator for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion, that Denisa Frelichová held. As mentioned before, she organized discussions and monitored the obstacles for women. Once the obstacles and challenges of women are identified, then the ministry can try to address them. One of the obstacles that must be resolved is

how to combine family life with a career in diplomacy. To solve this balance, directives were implemented, for example the possibility to give birth at the mission abroad, being able to be at a mission when pregnant, etc. Wlachovský believes *“It demands social and economic conditions for women, so that they can fully apply themselves on the same level as men.”* Therefore, the MFEA SR has to create such conditions for women to be able to keep their careers. It should adopt new guidelines and policies promptly whenever issues related to equality and diversity arise.

3. Action Plan. A huge step for the MFEA SR would be to implement a Feminist Foreign Policy, however, because Slovak society does not fully understand what feminism is, creating a policy with this name would be questionable. However, Slovak MFEA can implement certain parts of such policies. For example, it would be progressive to create and implement a National Action Plan. The Ministry can set certain goals regarding this topic, including the measurable indicators to track the progress. We can take inspiration from other countries, such as Spain and Germany, and adapt the policies for our society. Once we set our goals, it will be much easier to work on them, as well as, send a message that the MFEA is willing to work on this issue. One of the goals could be a gender audit, which MFEA of Slovakia had not organized yet. “A gender audit considers, normally in a participatory manner, whether internal practices and related support systems for gender mainstreaming are effective and reinforce each other, and whether they are being followed. It establishes a baseline, identifies critical gaps and challenges, and recommends ways of addressing them, suggesting possible improvements and innovations. It also documents good practices towards the achievement of gender equality. A gender audit enhances the collective capacity of the organization to examine its activities from a gender perspective and identify strengths and weaknesses in promoting gender equality issues” (EIGE, n.d.).
  
4. Public diplomacy and awareness building in society. On the level of public diplomacy, it is crucial for the MFEA to cultivate the public, and to bring the

topic of women in diplomacy to ordinary people and different institutions, to lead by example. The public view will not change unless it will be interacting with the theme. MFEA SR should continue with its public outreach, organizing events such as the Week of Women in Diplomacy and Women's Friday. Critical is also interaction with non-governmental organizations, different institutions, students, and education institutions. The more people will understand the topic the sooner Slovakia can become a progressive country in this field.

5. Slovakia as a part of international effort. It is also important to be part of the international discussions and initiatives which means actively supporting and advocating for UN initiatives related to gender equality, women's rights, and the protection of women is vital. The MFEA SR should ensure that Slovakia fulfills its commitments and implements relevant policies and programs in its gender policy agenda. If Slovakia wants to be a part of the progressive world, we have to implement ideas about equality, diversity, and inclusion into our own legislation and policies. Finally, taking an active role in shaping international norms and regulations related to gender equality, diversity, and inclusion is necessary. Through participation in international forums and negotiations, Slovakia can contribute to the development of policies that advance these principles on a global scale.

By committing to all of these goals, the Slovak MFEA would send a message that it is ready for policies protecting and empowering women, as well as other marginalized groups, and is willing to become an advocate for equality, diversity, and inclusion. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic can become a role model for other state institutions, as well as for the public.

## Conclusion

Equality, in this case, gender equality, and representation of women in leadership positions is still far away from being perfect, but Slovakia, concretely, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs is making progressive steps forward. More and more women are becoming leaders, ambassadors, and top managers, but they still face challenges and obstacles along the way.

From the conducted interviews, we learned that women are facing challenges just because they are women, these obstacles are seen even before becoming diplomats. Traditional Slovak society believes that women do not belong to decision-making positions, that it is more of a masculine job, and that women are more suited for 'soft' professions. Moreover, the public does not know what feminism is, they connect it to something negative – to women who hate men and want power. However, that is not true, feminism is about equality, it is about giving equal opportunities to people – both men and women. Unless society progresses with its views, MFEA SR cannot implement anything called Feminist Foreign Policy. Women also face obstacles during their careers, such as the compatibility of family life with their professions. The MFEA SR has to implement such policies to make the foreign service as possible for women as it is for men.

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs is making steps forward with their attitude to gender equality. Over the past 30 years, MFEA implemented many directives to make the foreign service more accessible for female diplomats, such as being on maternity leave during a mission or being able to give birth on the mission. On the side of internal efforts, discussions are also being held between employees and the leadership about things that need to be changed. A huge step forward was creating the position of Coordinator for Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion which Denisa Frelichová held. It signaled an interest in the topic and a willingness to change the situation. Awarding former and current female diplomats and female employees because of their outstanding contribution to foreign service, creating a good name for Slovakia abroad. MFEA acknowledges these women for their capabilities, which is a step to the empowerment of women.



Moreover, the ministry's engagement in public outreach has been outstanding. Organizing events such as Women's Friday and Women in Diplomacy Week reflects its efforts to raise awareness about the importance of gender equality. These events were directed toward the public as well as to other institutions, governmental or non-governmental. A significant step forward was also the cooperation with SFPA on the project 'Ženy v diplomacii' which aimed at the promotion of inclusivity and diversity. The project started with a conference that assessed past efforts and progress regarding women in diplomacy, followed by an exhibition called the same – 'Ženy v diplomacii'. The exhibition aimed to underscore the contributions of female diplomats to Slovak foreign policy and highlight the nuances of diplomatic careers. The collaboration climaxed with the creation of a book with the same name. The textbook is used at three universities to teach young people about the topic. It also raises awareness of the importance of equality in education.

The MFEA SR can take examples from more progressive countries which fight for equality and women's empowerment. We can look at the Nordic countries which are the leaders in this topic, or we can look closer – for example at Germany and Spain. Both countries are implementing Feminist Foreign Policy into their practice. Both also have several National Actions Plans. They set their goals and now are on their way to fulfill them. Slovakia, and specifically the MFEA has to do the same. That is why I wrote several recommendations. It is crucial for the ministry to set itself goals, to create a National Action Plan with measurable indicators so the progress can be tracked. A gender audit would also be a huge step for the positive change.

In addition to domestic efforts, active participation in international discussions and initiatives concerning gender equality, women's rights, and the protection of women is vitally important. Slovakia must align its foreign policy agenda with its commitments to relevant UN initiatives. By implementing policies and programs that promote equality, diversity, and inclusion domestically, Slovakia can demonstrate its dedication to progressive values. Furthermore, Slovakia should actively engage in shaping international norms and regulations related to gender equality and diversity. Participation in international forums and negotiations allows Slovakia to contribute to the development of policies that advance these principles globally.

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic is making praiseworthy steps towards gender equality and women's representation in leadership roles. Despite persistent challenges and societal stereotypes, the MFEA has implemented directives to support female diplomats, established initiatives such as Women's Friday and Women in Diplomacy Week, and collaborated with organizations like the Slovak Foreign Policy Association on projects promoting inclusivity and diversity. However, further progress is essential, including setting measurable goals, conducting gender audits, and actively participating in international discussions and initiatives. By aligning its foreign policy agenda with commitments to gender equality and actively shaping international norms, Slovakia can continue to advance towards a more inclusive and equitable society on both domestic and global fronts.

## Resumé

Ženy tvoria polovicu našej populácie, ale je ich iba malé percento v rozhodovacích a líderských pozíciách. Rovnosť príležitostí je jedno z ľudských práv, ale jeho vymáhanie je trochu zložitejšie. Európsky priemer žien veľvyslankýň je málo vyše 20% s tým, že na Slovensku je to ich 23%. Dôvodom sú viaceré prekážky, ktorým tieto ženy čelia. Sú to prekážky zo strany spoločnosti, ale aj legislatívne a vnútri inštitúcií. Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí Slovenskej Republiky sa snaží tieto prekážky eliminovať, či už úpravou vnútorných smerníc, ale aj kultivovaní verejnosti.

Prvá kapitola skúma základné termíny ako rod, hierarchiu, stereotyp, patriarchát, sklenený strop, ktoré sú potrebné na pochopenie celej tematiky. Následne v tejto kapitole je popísaná diplomacia a náplň práce diplomata. Zisťuje sa, že diplomacia je vnímaná ako mužská profesia, ktorá bola dlhodobo dominovaná mužmi. Napriek tomu si ženy našli miesto v diplomacii. Krátka podkapitola skúma historický vývoj toho ako sa ženy dostávali do pozícií na ministerstvách a do diplomacie.

Druhú kapitolu predchádza metodologická časť, kde sú popísané metódy výskumu. Konkrétne bol použitý mix kvalitatívnych a kvantitatívnych metód výskumu. Na čo najpresnejší výsledok boli použité analýzy dát a štatistík, ktoré popisovali presné percentá zastúpenia žien vo veľvyslaneckých pozíciách na Slovensko, ale aj vo svete. Tiež bola použitá analýza dát na získanie informácií o názoroch našej spoločnosti na otázky, týkajúcich sa žien vo vysokých pozíciách. Konkrétne boli použité World Values Survey a Women in Diplomacy Index 2023. Následne bola použitá analýza dokumentov, ktorá bola potrebná na spracovanie zahraničných politík získaných zo webových stránok ministerstiev zahraničných vecí. S touto metódou sa analyzovali aj webové stránky Slovenského Ministerstva Zahraničných vecí, a nimi zverejnené články. Vďaka tomu bolo možné popísať kroky, ktoré podniká Ministerstvo k eliminácii prekážok. Následne, bola použitá komparatívna analýza na porovnanie politík Ministerstva zahraničných vecí Španielska a Nemecka so Slovenskom. K tomu, aby sa zistili osobné skúsenosti s prekážkami a priamo Ministerstvom, 4 semštruktúrované rozhovory boli uskutočnené. Rozhovorili boli s Denisou Frelichovou, Máriou Krasnohorskou, Ivanou Uličnou a Miroslavom Wlachovským. Každý

z opýtaných je roky zapojený do tejto témy a poskytli mi teda úplne nový pohľad na tému ženy v diplomacii a rovnosť. Jeden rozhovor prebehol online cez Zoom aplikáciu, zatiaľ čo zbytok bol cez osobný kontakt. Všetky rozhovory trvali približne hodinu, otázky boli schválené školiteľkou a každý z opýtaných dovoľil audio záznam na čo najpresnejšie citovanie.

Druhá kapitola popisuje terajšie štatistiky o tom, koľko je veľvyslankýň vo svete, koľko ich máme na Slovensku. Časť tvorí historický vývoj Ministerstva zahraničných vecí, aké bolo zastúpenie žien vtedy. Vďaka tomu vidíme ako sa Slovensko vyvíjalo a modernizovalo. Je jasný nárast žien v diplomacii, ale ten nárast nie je dostatočný. Preto sa v tejto kapitole skúmajú prekážky, ktorým ženy čelia, či už pred vstupom do diplomatickej kariéry alebo počas práce na ministerstve alebo v zahraničnej službe. Tieto prekážky osobne priblížili Frelichová, Krasnohorská a Uličná. Buď zdieľali ich vlastné zážitky alebo zážitky žien čo poznajú. Je potrebné poznať všetky tieto prekážky, lebo ako sa Ministerstvo chce pohnúť vpred, musí ich najprv adresovať. Vysvetlená je aj feministická zahraničná politika, ktorú nie je možné pod takýmto názvom implementovať, lebo Slovenská spoločnosť nie je pripravená na feminizmus. Avšak, MZVEZ si môže brať príklad z krajín, ktoré implementovali feministickú zahraničnú politiku – Švédsko, Francúzsko, Nemecko, Španielsko, Mexiko, a prevziať iba niektoré elementy tejto politiky.

Tretia kapitola skúma konkrétne názory bežných obyvateľov o pozícii žien, ako napríklad, či sú muži lepšími politickými lídrami alebo či by mali mať ženy a muži rovnaké práva. Zistilo sa, že Slovenské obyvateľstvo si myslí že práva by mali byť rovnaké, a ženy robia rovnako dobrých politických lídrov. Kde je potom chyba? Na Slovensku sú veľmi silné tradicionalistické prúdy, kde stále prevláda názor, že ženy nepatria do takýchto pozícií a mali by sa radšej venovať rodine. Tejto situácii nepomáha ani to, že sa rapídne vulgarizuje spoločnosť. Politický lídri nadávajú a agresívnymi gestami ukazujú na marginalizované skupiny, ktorými sú paradoxne aj ženy. Taktiež sa zisťuje, že veľa bežných obyvateľov nevie, čo presne feminizmus znamená alebo ho majú spojený s negatívnymi príkladmi. Feminizmus nie je o ženách, ktoré nenávidia mužov, ktoré chcú byť niečo viac ako oni, ale o rovnosti pre všetkých. Ide o totálnu rovnosť bez ohľadu na rod, sexualitu, vek, farbu pleti, pôvod, atď. Tým pádom nemôže byť prijatá feministická zahraničná politika, lebo by mohla nastať silná kritika MZVEZ.

To priblížiť názory obyvateľstva trochu viac, Frelichová, Krasnohorská a Wlachovský pocity, čo sa týka názorov obyvateľstva. Zazneli názory, že treba mať slušných politických lídrov, treba vzdelávať deti od malička o rovnosti a inklúzii. Jednoducho MZVEZ nemôže podniknúť veľké kroky, pokiaľ spoločnosť nie je na to pripravená. Denisa Frelichová uviedla aj jej skúsenosť z Nórska. Tam je spoločnosť progresívna - aktívne bojujú za ľudské práva a rodovú rovnosť. Veria v to, že by mal byť využitý celý potenciál krajiny a nie iba 50%, a práve preto by ženy mali pracovať a dostávať sa do top funkcií. Aby mohla nastať, nejaká zmena v rodovej rovnosti, a zastúpení žien v diplomacii, je potrebné najprv pozmeniť pohľad spoločnosti na konkrétnu tému.

Štvrtá kapitola popisuje kroky, ktoré MZVEZ prijalo na to, aby eliminovali prekážky, ktorým ženy čelia v rámci profesie diplomacie. Konkrétne sú dve roviny, v ktorých Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí funguje, a to rovina vnútorných opatrení a rovina verejnej diplomacie. Ministerstvo po celej dĺžke svojho existovania prína smernice, ktoré upravujú zahraničnú službu a teda vedú eliminovať konkrétne prekážky – napríklad, je dovolené rodiť na misii alebo byť na materskej počas misie. To sú veci, ktoré neboli možné 10 rokov dozadu. Rovnako Ministerstvo organizuje mnoho vnútorných diskusií, kde vyzisťuje, či sú nejaké diskriminačné problémy, rozprávajú sa o tom, čo by sa dalo zlepšiť na situácii žien, a aktívne sa snažia na tom pracovať. Veľkým krokom pred bolo podpísanie Charty diverzity, kedy sa MZVEZ zaviazalo praktizovať rovnosť, diverzitu a inklúziu. Pozitívne bolo aj vytvorenie pozície Koordinátorky pre rodovú rovnosť, diverzitu a inklúziu, ktorú zastávala Denisa Frelichová. Toto je súhrn iba zopár vnútorných zmien, ktoré posúvajú MZVEZ vpred.

Čo sa týka verejnej diplomacie, tak v rokoch 2020-2023, MZVEZ naviazalo silný kontakt so spoločnosťou v rámci aktivít rodovej rovnosti. Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí vynaložilo značné úsilie na zlepšenie situácie diplomatiek a propagovanie tejto témy v širšej verejnosti. Verejné aktivity organizované MZVEZ SR, ako napríklad 'Piatky o ženách' a projekt 'Ženy v diplomacii', ukazujú snahu zvýšiť povedomie o tejto téme a pokúsiť sa vytvoriť prostredie na diskusiu. Tieto podujatia oslavovali aj úspešné ženy v slovenskej diplomacii. Tieto iniciatívy nielen uznali prínos diplomatiek k slovenskej diplomacii, ale podporili aj rovnosť v širšom meradle. Jedným z dôvodov, prečo bolo MZVEZ také aktívne v tejto tematike, je že malo silných lídrov,

ktorí si uvedomovali, že rovnosť prospieva všetkým a treba ju aktívne presadzovať. Nebáli sa začať s niečím novým a posunúť našu spoločnosť vpred.

Príklad dobrej praxe si môžeme zobrať hneď z niekoľkých krajín, ako napríklad Nordické krajiny, ale aj Španielsko a Nemecko. Tieto krajiny prijali zahraničnú feministickú politiku, kde si nastavili nejaké guidelines v tom, čo chcú dosiahnuť v rodovej rovnosti a posilnenia žien. Rovnako prijímajú Národné Akčné Plány a rovnako sa snažia priniestť túto tému do medzinárodných diskusií. Stali sa obhajcami rodovej rovnosti a Slovensko by si mohlo z nich brať príklad.

Posledná kapitola je vytvorená z odporúčaní pre MZVEZ, ktoré vyplývajú z tejto bakalárskej práce. Odporúčania znejú: 1. je dôležité mať správneho lídra, lebo osoby v líderských pozíciách majú tu moc niečo zmeniť (k lepšiemu, ale aj k horšiemu). Treba preto vyberať ľudí, ktorí sú otvorení téme rovnosti a chcú zlepšiť situáciu. 2. Naďalej pokračovať s vnútornými snahami – treba viesť diskusie, odstraňovať prekážky pomocou smerníc. Hlavne treba zapojiť aj mužov do tejto debaty. 3. MZVEZ potrebuje Akčný Plán, aby sa nastavili nejaké ciele, ktoré sa bude snažiť splniť. V rámci Akčného Plánu, by mali byť aj merateľné ukazovatele, aby sa vedel vyhodnotiť progres. Jedným z cieľov Ministerstva by mohol byť rodový audit, ktorý by signalizoval to, že sa tejto téme chce aktívne venovať. 4. MZVEZ musí naďalej pokračovať s verejnou diplomaciou. Je kľúčová, aby sa kultivovala spoločnosť. Pokiaľ Slovensko chce nejakú zmenu, treba začať so spoločnosťou. 5. MZVEZ SR by malo zabezpečiť, aby Slovensko plnilo svoje záväzky a implementovalo relevantné politiky a programy v agende rodovej politiky. Napokon je potrebné prevziať aktívnu úlohu pri formovaní medzinárodných noriem a nariadení týkajúcich sa rodovej rovnosti, rozmanitosti a začlenenia. Účasťou na medzinárodných fórach a rokovaníach môže Slovensko prispieť k rozvoju politík, ktoré tieto princípy presadzujú v globálnom meradle.

Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí podniká kroky k zlepšeniu situácie žien v líderských pozíciách, konkrétne v diplomacii. Diplomacia je stále považovaná za mužskú profesiu, ale viac a viac žien sa presadzuje v tomto zamestnaní. Na tomto prograse má zásluhu MZVEZ, lebo podnikajú kroky aj vnútri inštitúcie, ale aj kultivujú verejnosť. Verejne dávajú najavo, že sa chcú stať lídrami v rodovej rovnosti na Slovensku.

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