



# EMBRACING FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY WITHIN EU STRATEGIC FORESIGHT CAPABILITIES

## BRINGING FEMINIST FUTURES INTO REALITY

### ABSTRACT

Crises have consistently served as transformative catalysts for the European Union (EU), propelling its integration and global standing, uniting diverse voices in coordinated responses amid chaos.<sup>1</sup> However, as the EU increasingly embraces a narrative of “poly-crisis”, we must question whether this crisis-focused mindset traps the EU in the present and limits its ability to address broader issues. The pandemic, economic crises, conflicts and climate disasters uncovered deep-seated systemic issues that require comprehensive and long-term solutions. Reactive policymaking has hindered the EU’s ability to proactively shape long-term transformations and tackle the underlying causes of crises, including widespread inequality in rights, opportunities and resources.

Feminist foreign policy (FFP) provides a powerful framework for action and is embraced by a growing number of countries. It calls for actively dismantling entrenched power dynamics and embracing gender equality as a guiding principle in foreign policy, inspiring transformative progress on a global scale. While some EU member states are leading the way on FFP, discussions at the EU level often lack a true feminist perspective, treating gender mainstreaming as a mere technocratic formality.<sup>2</sup>

This policy brief calls for integrating FFP into EU foresight practices to prioritise equity, sustainability and resilience in global engagements. By leveraging its capacity for future planning, the EU can make inclusive and purpose-driven foreign policy decisions, building on existing efforts. Inclusivity and diversity should be the cornerstone of this approach, creating the conditions for women and traditionally marginalised groups to actively participate and lead in shaping our future and co-create solutions for systemic challenges and structural inequalities.



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FEMINIST  
FOREIGN  
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VOICES

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## THE RISING SIGNIFICANCE OF STRATEGIC FORESIGHT AND ITS IMPACT ON FUTURE SHAPING

### Introduction to futures studies and strategic foresight

The field of futures research is diverse and wide ranging. Its fundamental premise is that our decisions today are shaped by our visions of tomorrow. These visions not only drive current actions but also possess the transformative potential to shape the future outcomes we strive to achieve.

In policy- and decision-making, strategic foresight merges futures methods with strategic management, enabling long-term planning by analysing trends, anticipating changes and preparing for different scenarios. Tools like scenario planning and horizon scanning gather expert opinions, consult stakeholders and synthesise data to inform strategic decisions. **This proactive approach helps navigate uncertainty, promote flexibility, guide transformation and highlight emerging trends that shape our future.** It fosters shared visions and enhances collective commitment.<sup>3</sup>

Strategic foresight emerged in the early 1960s from military and intelligence research led by institutions like the Hudson Institute and Rand Corporation, initially focused on navigating challenges such as nuclear conflict. Visionaries like Kahn pioneered foresight scenarios during the Cold War, transforming our approach to anticipating threats and political shifts.<sup>4</sup> Despite its evolution from its military and imperialistic origins, strategic foresight still contends with historical biases that prioritise these perspectives over broader societal needs. Sardar's analysis highlights its early rise, driven by enforcing ideological conformity in non-Western nations and aligning them with Western agendas.<sup>5</sup> Figures like Kahn were critiqued by peace scholars for their "realist" futurism, perceived as a "*moral tract of mass murder: how to commit it, how to get away with it, how to justify it*".<sup>6</sup>

### The rise of foresight in decision-making

Current prediction methods focus heavily on short-term risks, often struggling with today's geopolitical uncertainty. While they provide early warnings based on past and present data, they frequently overlook unexpected consequences and their unpredictable reactions.<sup>7</sup> Even in stable times, policymakers face a dilemma: addressing immediate issues while planning for the future. This balance is often skewed, with a tendency to prioritise the present, where gains and losses are clear, overlooking future uncertainties – a phenomenon amplified during crises. This short-term emphasis can result in missed opportunities to address long-term changes and capitalise on future trends.

Futures studies and foresight bridge the gap between short-term predictions and long-term aspirations, helping navigate future uncertainty. These approaches enable us to consider multiple scenarios and their potential impacts, fostering resilience and adaptability in our strategies. By incorporating strategic foresight, we can better align our immediate actions with our long-term goals, ensuring a more sustainable future.

Governments are turning to foresight in their foreign policy to manage uncertainty and rapid change. Strategic foresight enables them to predict emerging issues and geopolitical shifts, improving decision-making; engaging in political contingency planning; and conducting horizon scanning to address conflicts, security and other geopolitical concerns.<sup>8</sup>

This momentum is evident worldwide, with countries like Finland, Singapore, Canada and Spain leading in adopting foresight for anticipatory governance. Multilateral organisations, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the EU, are also actively enhancing their foresight capabilities, recognising the value of proactive and forward-thinking approaches.<sup>9</sup>

## Limitations and bias in foresight

As foresight increasingly guides policymaking, we must critically examine how and by whom visions of the future are shaped. Futurists such as Inayatullah, Dator and Sardar challenge us to ask who holds the authority to define desirable futures? They highlight how state and powerful entities often exclude women, non-Westerners and non-white individuals from shaping our collective vision.<sup>10</sup>

Today, foresight initiatives are mainly driven by governments, corporations and the military, often overlooking gender and intersectional perspectives.<sup>11</sup> This allows biases and privileges of those in power to heavily influence foresight outcomes and resulting policies, potentially harming vulnerable groups.

Moreover, foresight initiatives often overlook the profound impact of these developments on gender roles and power dynamics. Despite the certainty that climate change or the rise of disruptive technologies, for example, will reshape gender roles, many foresight practices fail to acknowledge this reality.<sup>12</sup> This gap persists due to entrenched patriarchal and Western biases ingrained in current foresight frameworks. These biases not only hinder our ability to accurately predict disruptions but also limit foresight's capacity to catalyse meaningful societal change.

## TOWARDS A FEMINIST APPROACH TO STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

### Feminist critics on foresight and futures studies

**Feminism and futures studies share a common goal: shaping our future with intentionality. As foresight increasingly influences policy, there is an important potential for feminist engagement in this arena.** The integration of a gendered perspective into foresight remains uncommon, primarily due to the pervasive influence of a patriarchal framework within the field.<sup>13</sup>

Futures studies frequently neglect crucial perspectives, rooted in underlying assumptions and biases, which hinders the pursuit of socially just futures.<sup>14</sup> Dominated by white, Western and male voices, current foresight frameworks prioritise their own interests and organisational goals, maintaining the status quo rather than exploring innovative futures. By marginalising women and marginalised groups and overlooking their voices, they often miss key factors that shape future outcomes, perpetuating a cycle where policy and strategy are driven by limited perspectives.

Scholars such as Boulding and Milojević critique these fields for perpetuating narrow, biased perspectives and views of the future, often seen through the filters of nationalism, ethnocentrism and gender neutrality that exclude feminist visions.<sup>15</sup> They call for a departure from Western linear models and power dynamics. They dismiss an obsession with worst-case scenarios, favouring instead transformative visions and human agency. This approach champions critically examining narratives and advocating for alternative futures that reshape gender relations and power dynamics.<sup>16</sup> It is not just hopeful; it is proactive, recognising that achieving a feminist future requires deliberate effort and intentional transformation, rather than relying on natural progression.

### Feminist organisations shaping inclusive futures through foresight

Feminist movements have shown their transformative potential by using strategic foresight tools to inspire meaningful engagement in imagining alternative, more desirable and just futures. Back in 1962, alongside figures like Khan, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) pioneered the integration of feminist perspectives into futures studies, challenging the inevitability of war. Rejecting fear-based paradigms, they used foresight and narratives to debunk myths surrounding the inevitability of nuclear conflict and advocated for futures free from militaristic paths.<sup>17</sup>

Today, feminist movements persist in their groundbreaking work, showcasing the transformative power of feminist approaches to foresight and strategy development. The International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) has embraced foresight through its initiative *Imagining Feminist Futures*<sup>18</sup>, which is aimed at discerning how feminist movements can leverage the structural disruptions of the pandemic to forge new pathways forward. Offering workshop methodology to blend futures thinking and intersectional feminist analysis, participants from diverse feminist movements were invited to explore the evolving impact of COVID-19 on existing trends and contemplate ways to shape them into more feminist futures. These discussions aimed to illuminate the changing landscape toward 2030 and beyond, guiding IWDA's strategic planning and actions:

“

*Collective feminist activism is both a tool to achieve feminist futures, and an expression of what feminist futures look like in practice. Start small, start local, and build connections within and between feminist movements. Backlash can drive activism, but we can't only be motivated by what we are against – feminist movements need to collectively build visions of the future we are working towards. (IWDA)*<sup>19</sup>

”

The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) provides another compelling example of feminist movements embracing foresight in their strategic planning.<sup>20</sup> They envisioned four possible scenarios for Africa in 2030 from a feminist and women's rights perspective, focusing on six key areas: economy; governance; demographics; health; education; and technology. They explored future trends and their implications through a feminist lens. Each chapter ends with “feminist questions”, prompting readers

to consider how these trends might impact women's futures in Africa and to envision a future that can be shaped:

“

*We are committed to investing in women's agency and leadership to make better futures for the African continent – and yet, in our planning across donor and women's rights sectors, we tend to reflect backwards, learning from past approaches while considering past or present priorities. Although this is important, we wondered if we were in fact obscuring the very thing we are working to change – the course of the future. (AWDF)*<sup>21</sup>

”

### Elements of a feminist foresight framework

Building on the perspectives of feminist scholars in futures studies and foresight, along with insights from critical futurists and contributions from feminist networks, this section elaborates on the key elements of a feminist foresight framework to facilitate the integration of feminist approaches into foresight exercises (Figure 1).

#### **Prioritising inclusivity, empowerment and agency**

Feminist foresight encourages us to celebrate and harness the diverse knowledge in our world, aiming for inclusive visions of the future where everyone plays a pivotal role in shaping their own destiny. This approach challenges the stereotype of women and marginalised groups as mere victims, emphasising their agency as catalysts for positive change. To champion inclusivity, empowerment and agency in foresight exercises, pivotal steps include the following:

- **Use participatory methods:** employ methodologies such as citizen visioning, futures dialogue and narrative generation to authentically include diverse voices in shaping policies and strategies.
- **Question power structures:** prioritise strategies that dismantle hierarchical frameworks and ensure equitable participation of all stakeholders, amplifying diverse voices and perspectives to foster more inclusive and impactful outcomes.
- **Reflect on role and legacy:** begin by examining one's own role in perpetuating or challenging conflicts and crises, including those rooted in historical and colonial legacies. Take proactive steps to acknowledge and address biases that may influence policy outcomes, ensuring decisions are grounded in fairness and equity.
- **Integrate global and local insights:** integrate global trends, local perspectives and historical contexts for a comprehensive view of future possibilities. This requires taking proactive efforts to authentically engage diverse voices, particularly women's organisations and communities affected by the foresight exercise's focal question, ensuring their participation is central and impactful.
- **Cultivate empathy:** throughout the foresight exercise, prioritise deep listening and meaningful engagement with diverse perspectives. Centre empathy in the exchange and processing of ideas, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.

### ***Addressing root causes and resisting quick fixes***

Feminist foresight guides policymakers in addressing inequality and conflict at its roots by transforming decision-making power dynamics and narrative frameworks, rather than seeking superficial solutions to current crises. By challenging prevailing Western, white, male biases in traditional futures studies, feminist foresight aims for transformative outcomes.

Pivotal steps include the following:

- **Critical self-reflection:** begin by inviting introspection, confronting personal and institutional biases that perpetuate inequality. By fostering workshops and dialogues for participants to openly challenge assumptions, this step lays the groundwork for more equitable and inclusive foresight outcomes.
- **Engage in systemic change:** focus on addressing the root causes of inequality through systemic change. Use frameworks such as intersectional analysis and gender mainstreaming to develop holistic solutions that recognise and respond to diverse experiences and identities.
- **Uncover hidden narratives:** employ tools like the causal layered analysis to uncover deeper causes of inequality. These methodologies go beyond surface-level trends to uncover the systemic issues underpinning inequality. Combine these with participatory techniques, such as storytelling, to include diverse perspectives, especially from marginalised groups.
- **Narrative reshaping for empowerment:** building on the challenging dominant stories that perpetuate inequality, engage in co-creating alternative narratives that empower marginalised groups and foresight exercises that inspire transformative action, through scenarios and visioning exercises.

### ***Adopting a transformative vision of gender equality***

Feminist foresight envisages a future where gender equality becomes a transformative reality. Unlike traditional approaches focused on worst-case scenarios, it serves as a visionary tool for planning equitable futures where gender equality and social justice are foundational principles driving positive change.

Pivotal steps include the following:

- **Foster a constructive vision for the future:** engage in scenario planning and visioning exercises to articulate pathways towards socially just futures. Drawing inspiration from IWDA’s strategic use of foresight, consider guiding questions such as *What pathways can lead to futures where gender equality thrives? What are the current barriers preventing these pathways from being realised?*
- **Facilitate collaborative creation of inclusive futures:** facilitate the collaborative creation of inclusive futures. Utilise community forums and consultations to gather diverse perspectives and input. Tools like the IWDA toolkit and the Imagining Feminist Futures Exercise are

valuable resources for engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including feminist organisations and grassroots communities.

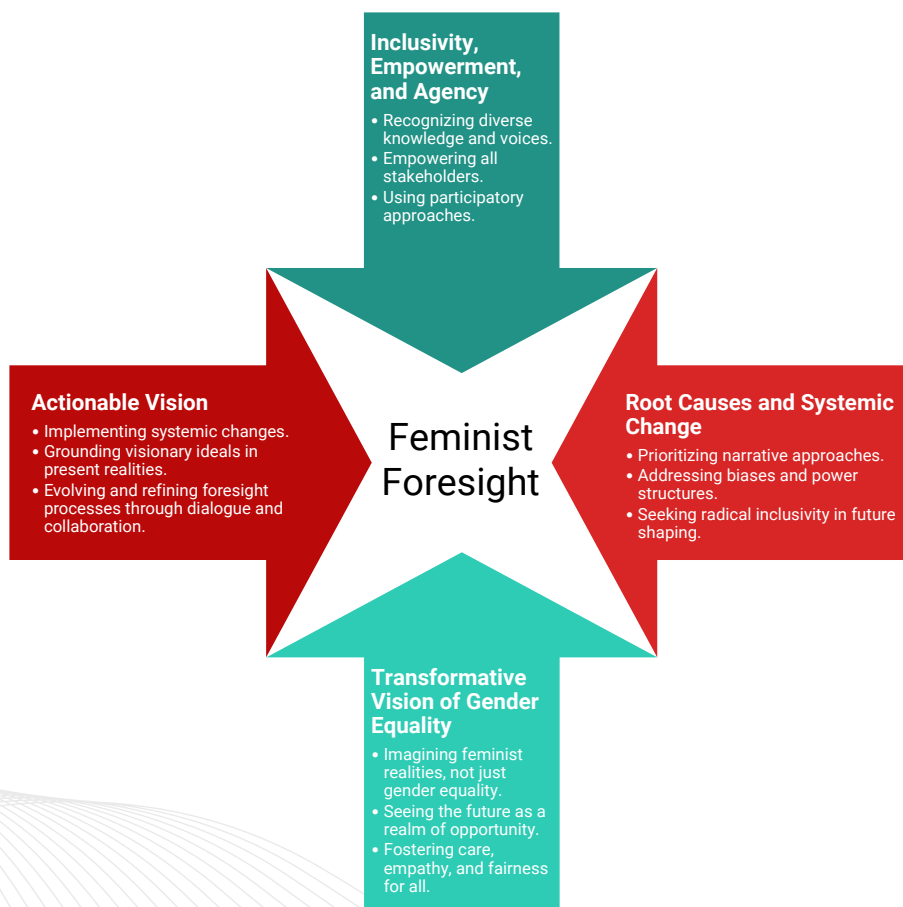
**Continuous action and iterative progress**

Realising a feminist future necessitates actionable steps over mere theoretical contemplation. Creative thinking and visionary ideals are vital, but they must be firmly rooted in present realities to ensure their practicality and long-term sustainability.

Pivotal steps include the following:

- **Translate vision into actionable steps:** develop clear, actionable steps that transform feminist ideals into concrete changes in policies, practices and societal norms.

**Figure 1. Framework for feminist foresight.**



Source: Created by the author.



- **Bridge future and present realities:** identify practical strategies to align future aspirations with current actions. Highlight existing “feminist realities”, actions undertaken by feminist movements and other stakeholders today to advance visions of a feminist future.
- **Continuous adaptation and refinement:** ensure that feminist foresight evolves in response to changing circumstances. Regularly assess and adjust strategies based on new insights, emerging trends and feedback from a diverse range of stakeholders.
- **Promote collaboration and collective action:** establish platforms for open dialogue, collaboration and collective action involving diverse stakeholders, including feminist organisations and grassroots movements. Foster inclusive engagement to amplify diverse voices and perspectives.

## THE EU'S APPROACH TO STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

### Evolution of foresight in the EU

Since its inception under the Delors Commission in the late 1980s, strategic foresight within EU institutions has evolved significantly.<sup>22</sup> Originally met with political challenges, its focus shifted towards research and innovation under the Lisbon Strategy, aimed at enhancing competitiveness.<sup>23</sup> Externally, strategic and military foresight have been effectively employed through the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN), providing early warning, situational awareness and threat assessments.<sup>24</sup>

Under the von der Leyen Commission, foresight has gained momentum across EU bodies, becoming integral to policy planning and review processes through the better regulation guidelines and toolbox and a dedicated foresight unit within the Commission's Secretariat General. Initiatives like the Competence Centre on Foresight and the EU-wide foresight network highlight an increasing focus on long-term planning and governance. Simultaneously,

the European Parliament and Council of the EU have enhanced their foresight capabilities through the Strategic Foresight and Capabilities Unit and the Analysis and Research Team, respectively. These steps mark significant progress in institutional foresight collaboration. Leveraging this enhanced foresight environment and expertise, the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System has facilitated long-term thinking since its establishment in 2010. It helps address challenges and opportunities proactively across EU institutions.

Looking ahead, foresight will likely play an increasingly critical role as the EU is facing increasingly complex global challenges and a constantly evolving geopolitical landscape. The current emphasis and framing of foresight by the EU harken back to its origins being rooted in military and protectionist interests. The adoption of the Strategic Compass in March 2022 further underscores the EU's commitment to intelligence cooperation and strategic foresight to bolster its defence capabilities. This includes guiding actions such as updating the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) legislation;<sup>25</sup> strengthening European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations; and fostering collaboration with NATO, Frontex, European Police Office (Europol) and other security partners.<sup>26,27</sup>

### EU's foresight shortcomings

#### *Persisting gaps in diversity fuel biases*

The critical flaw in current EU foresight practices lies in their glaring lack of diversity and entrenched insular perspectives. These methodologies reflect broader systemic issues within EU institutions. A considerable representation gap persists within EU institutions, despite the adoption of strategies to ensure greater gender balance, such as the European External Action Service (EEAS) Diversity and Inclusion Agenda 2023-2025. For example, women make up 38.6% of EEAS officials, with near parity at lower levels but only 29.7% at senior management levels.<sup>28</sup> Also, only an estimated 7.3% of officials come from ethnic minority backgrounds.<sup>29</sup> This

underscores the narrow spectrum of perspectives that inform future scenarios and strategies.

The EU has also taken steps towards broader participatory foresight with initiatives like the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS)'s Young Talent Network, the EU Climate Pact and the Conference on the Future of Europe. However, these efforts are not fully integrated into the Strategic Foresight and Better Regulation Agendas, leaving it unclear how citizen input will inform the Commission's foresight exercises.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Overlooking uncomfortable truths and evolving global role***

While the EU is increasingly embracing sense-making and participative approaches in its foresight endeavours, the failure to acknowledge its historical contribution to the current state of our world, both in terms of socio-economic and climatic impact, and address its neo-colonial approach, risks undermining the EU's global partnerships and commitment to cooperation and human rights.

Recent global crises have strained trust between Europe and its traditional partners, intensifying resentment towards Europe's historical dominance amid evolving global dynamics.<sup>31</sup> The EU's rhetoric of moral and cultural superiority, evidenced in comparisons depicting Europe as a civilised garden and other regions as wild jungles, further strains diplomatic ties. Such blatant neo-colonial narratives harm relationships and contribute to diplomatic challenges. This underscores the urgent need for a recalibration of the EU's global role and partnerships, utilising alternative forms of foresight to uncover the EU's own biases and limitations.

### ***Challenges in articulating the EU's future-shaping capacity in foresight***

The EU's foresight efforts often fail to show a proactive path for EU leadership in shaping its future. They prioritise institutional agendas and portray crises as beyond its control, reducing its potential for global influence. Additionally, EU foresight tends to prioritise hard security over broader

social, economic and environmental factors. For instance, it heavily emphasises stringent border security measures while overlooking migration's role in climate adaptation. The ESPAS's 2024 report worsens these issues by highlighting migration and low fertility rates as threats, ignoring the positive demographic contributions of migration.

EU foresight needs to move from reacting to risks to actively pursuing opportunities. This means using the EU's capacity for action to shape a future that aligns with its core ambitions and values. Rather than maintaining a "Fortress Europe" mindset, foresight should advocate for a vision focused on inclusivity, sustainability and global leadership.

### ***Emphasis on defensive and protectionist framing in EU foreign policy***

The EU's foresight shortcomings reveal its foreign policy biases, which heavily prioritise economic competition and military interests. This bias is evident in the leaked European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) Draft Briefing Book, which prioritises economic interests over traditional development and foreign policy strategies:

“

*The new College should further drive this modernization by engaging our strategic partners with a mix driven by economic interests, and less so by more traditional narrow development and foreign policy approaches.<sup>32</sup>*

”

Despite foresight's potential to shape EU priorities and propose innovative global strategies, many outputs take a defensive stance. This shortcoming risks pushing the EU towards retrenchment, prioritising safeguarding core interests over advancing stated values. The ESPAS's 2024 report acknowledges

these challenges but lacks clear strategies to align EU values with its evolving global role. It raises questions about investing in soft power and aligning interests with values but primarily frames these as inquiries rather than providing definitive reflections or solutions.

These issues prompt a critical question: how do biases in foresight and foreign policy priorities reinforce each other?

## **INTEGRATING FEMINIST FORESIGHT INTO EU STRATEGIC PLANNING**

In our rapidly evolving world, the EU faces unprecedented challenges that demand innovative and inclusive crisis responses. As indicated in the previous sections, traditional approaches are no longer sufficient to navigate these complexities effectively. The EU requires a foreign policy that combines humility with ambition, fostering robust partnerships with other regions and embracing diverse viewpoints.

Aligning EU foresight practices with these values is crucial, as they significantly influence EU policies and foreign policy approaches. Feminist foresight emerges as a powerful tool to enhance the EU's strategic decision-making capabilities. It challenges the dichotomy of a closed Fortress Europe versus an open union that welcomes external influences, migration and new partnerships while upholding democratic values.

### **Embracing feminist foresight: A vision for the EU**

The integration of feminist foresight within EU policymaking represents a transformative path towards a future defined by inclusivity, equality and innovation. Prioritising gender equality in foresight practices entails actively incorporating diverse voices to enrich scenarios and visioning exercises.

#### **1. Enhance diversity and inclusion in EU institutions**

To embark on this journey, the EU must first address diversity and inclusion gaps within its institutions.

Enhancing representation and inclusivity ensures that people from traditionally marginalised communities, underrepresented groups and women have a voice in shaping policies, strategies and technical foresight endeavours. This approach not only fosters a more equitable and inclusive society but also enriches technical foresight processes with diverse perspectives and experiences.

#### **2. Build a robust data foundation to inform foreign policy decisions**

Secondly, a robust data foundation is fundamental to supporting feminist foresight. This includes generating evidence on the gender impacts of crises and conflicts, collecting data and documenting practices on women's contributions to peace and security efforts in conflict-affected regions, and implementing gender-responsive early warning systems to support informed decision-making. Such a data-driven approach not only ensures inclusivity but also enhances the effectiveness of foresight practices.

#### **3. Embed gender analysis into EU foresight activities and impact assessments**

Thirdly, drawing inspiration from the IWDA's approach, this evolution involves systematically embedding feminist-oriented and gender-responsive questions into foresight methodologies. Concrete integration of feminist foresight exercises into the EU's policy impact assessment agenda offers significant potential. For instance, approaching the goal of achieving net-zero neutrality before 2050 through a conflict-sensitive lens and leveraging women's and communities' mitigation efforts can yield insights that foster sustainable and inclusive environmental strategies.

#### **4. Incorporate marginalised voices to enrich strategic foresight**

Fourthly, the EU should aim to involve a broader range of voices to challenge traditional approaches and intrinsic biases in strategic foresight practices. It should involve young people to inject fresh perspectives and innovative ideas into foresight

practices, drawing inspiration from successful initiatives like Youth4Foresight. Similarly, the EU can support the creation of networks specifically aimed at amplifying the voices of women and girls, LGBTQI+ communities, and other marginalised groups, especially from partner countries, in strategic foresight exercises. Open dialogue and collaborative trust building empower stakeholders to shape foresight outcomes, effectively addressing gaps in current EU foresight efforts.

## **5. Support and fund civil society and grassroots initiatives**

Finally, as a proactive donor, the EU can support civil society's own efforts, especially from grassroots and feminist movements in EU partner countries and conflict-affected countries, focused on developing feminist and innovative approaches to strategic foresight. This investment empowers communities, particularly in crisis-affected contexts, by equipping them with the necessary tools and training in foresight methodologies, scenario planning and strategic thinking.

## **CONCLUSION**

Feminist foresight unveils the limitations of traditional approaches to strategic foresight and offers a pathway to dismantle harmful narratives and approaches that undermine the EU's global role and restrict its ability to shape a socially just future in line with its core values of human rights and equality. By embedding feminist foresight into EU institutions, the EU can not only challenge existing biases but also enrich its collective vision. This approach promotes a shift from defensive policies to a more equitable global vision that aligns with EU values of equality and human rights. Leveraging foresight capabilities early in their evolution to integrate feminist perspectives into policymaking presents a compelling opportunity for the EU to shape a more inclusive and transformative foreign policy.

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Anastaesia Mondesir serves as a project associate at Gender Associations and a consultant specialising in gender equality, peace and security issues. In these roles, she actively supports and evaluates WPS policies and action plans, aiding key stakeholders, such as the governments of Canada and the UK and NATO, in fulfilling their commitments on gender, diversity, peace and security. Previously, she worked at CCID in Cameroon, the OHCHR Regional Office for Europe and the Council of Europe, contributing to gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence.



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**ABSTRACT**

The application of a feminist approach to international relations has gained significant ground across the globe since the original decision by the Swedish Social Democratic and Green coalition in 2014 at the time to explicitly adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP). While it is excellent news that FFP is becoming more 'normalized' in the public debate and increasingly gaining the attention of government actors, the development of a more ambitious concept, policy, and action should be a continued effort. A more ambitious, progressive, and transformative approach must be continuously advocated by feminists, civil society organisations, and policymakers alike. In particular, the European Union (EU) should be more determined to adopt and put into practice feminist principles in its external action. Given its supranational and inter-governmental nature, an explicit feminist foreign policy approach at the EU level represents the opportunity to amplify the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of marginalised groups globally. As Europe finds itself in the most severe security crisis since the end of World War II, there is momentum to transform its external action. Amid what can be considered a 'feminist turn in foreign policy', this policy brief reflects on the opportunities and challenges of more clearly linking the external action and (gender) equality agendas into a European feminist foreign policy and put forth some policy recommendations to contribute to current debates.

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