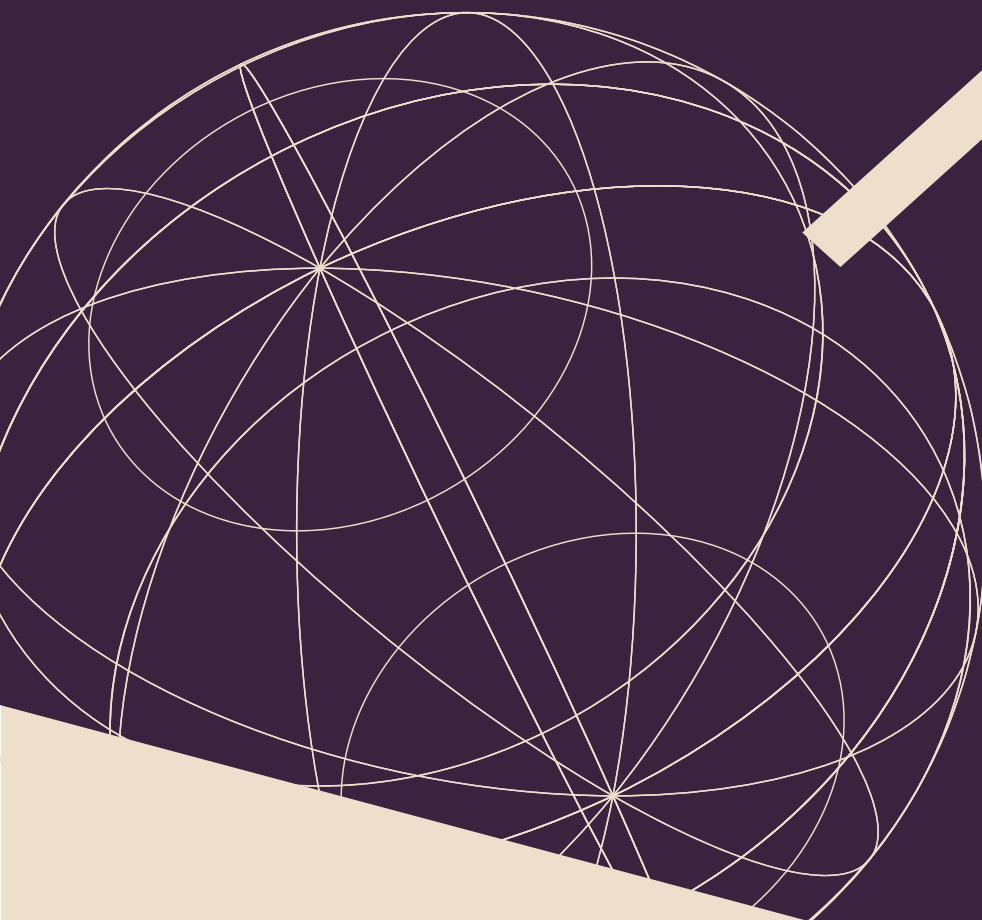


**Recognize
Resist
Rise up**



**Recognize, Resist, Rise Up:
Tackling Gender-Based Violence
against Women in Politics
Comparative Report**



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the European Union**

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FÓRUM 50 %

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List of terms and abbreviations

CEDAW	– Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
EIGE	– European Institute for Gender Equality
GREVIO	– Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
GBV	– Gender-based violence
MP	– Member of Parliament
NGO	– Non-governmental organization
ODIHR	– Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
VAWP	– Violence against women in politics

1. Introduction

Gender-based violence against women in politics (VAWP) is a persistent and increasingly visible obstacle to achieving gender equality and inclusive democratic governance. Across Europe and beyond, women involved in public life – especially those who are elected or in leadership positions – are often subjected to a range of violent, hostile and discriminatory acts designed to silence, discredit or exclude them from the political space.

This comparative report presents findings from five [national country reports](#) – the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany, Hungary and Ireland – conducted as part of the Recognize, Resist, Rise Up: Tackling Gender-Based Violence against Women in Politics project. The project aims to improve understanding of VAWP, strengthen institutional responses and increase the capacity of politicians, political parties and parliaments to respond adequately to the incidence of VAWP through research, advocacy, training, education and awareness-raising campaigns.

The project is being implemented by a consortium of five organizations dedicated to promoting gender equality and addressing gender-based violence against women in politics:

- **Fórum 50 % (Czech Republic):** an NGO focused on achieving balanced representation of women in politics. The organization motivates women to enter politics, supports female leaders, and addresses structural barriers, including (online) violence. It acts as a watchdog and think-tank organization with experience in national and international advocacy and educational projects.
- **Women for Election (Ireland).** Founded in 2012, this organization delivers tailored training, mentoring, and events to support women's election at local and national levels. It leads feminist, rights-based advocacy campaigns, addresses online hate speech, and involves male politicians in promoting gender equality.



- **JÓL-LÉT Foundation (Hungary).** Active since 2002, JÓL-LÉT is one of the few remaining feminist organizations in Hungary. It engages in research, counselling, and advocacy to promote women's empowerment in the labour market, entrepreneurship, and public life. It specializes in political education, GBV research, and strategic advocacy.
- **Možnosť voľby (Slovakia).** Established in 2001, this is one of Slovakia's leading advocacy organizations defending gender equality and reproductive rights. It systematically works on GBV prevention, empowerment training, policy advocacy, and public mobilization through campaigns.
- **EAF Berlin (Germany)** is an independent research and consulting institute working at the intersection of politics, business, and academia for over 25 years. It promotes gender diversity, equal opportunities in leadership, and democratic participation. Among other areas of expertise the EAF Berlin focuses on supporting women politicians, particularly at the local level, strengthening advocacy networks, and producing quality research and evidence-based recommendations.

2. Categories of gender-based violence against women in politics

Gender-based violence against women in politics comprises various forms of harm that are gendered in nature and specifically target women because of their political engagement. This violence undermines women's participation, silences their voices, and reinforces structural inequalities in political life. The following categories are based on international standards, including the Istanbul Convention, ODIHR, EIGE, and the EU Directive on violence against women.

Physical violence

Defined by Article 35 of the Istanbul Convention, physical violence includes any intentional act causing bodily harm. In the political context, it may involve physical assaults during public appearances, campaign events, or as acts of intimidation linked to a woman's political role.

Psychological violence (including verbal, symbolic, and semiotic violence)

Article 33 of the Istanbul Convention defines psychological violence as intentional conduct seriously impairing a person's psychological integrity through coercion or threats.

Examples include:

- Threats of death, rape, or other harm.
- Bullying or mobbing.
- Incitement to hatred or violence.

Symbolic and semiotic violence further includes:

- Delegitimizing female politicians through stereotypes or erasure.
- Rendering women invisible or incompetent in political discourse.

These forms aim to portray women as unfit for leadership and to diminish their public legitimacy.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment

Under Articles 36 and 40 of the Istanbul Convention:

- Sexual violence includes acts such as rape or coerced participation in sexual acts.
- Sexual harassment encompasses any unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that undermines a person's dignity and creates a hostile environment.

In political settings, women may face inappropriate comments, sexual advances, or unwanted physical contact by colleagues, opponents, or the public.

Economic violence

According to EIGE definition, it is any behaviour causing economic harm. In VAWP, this includes:

- Withholding campaign funds or compensation.
- Denying access to offices, equipment, or support services.
- Restricting opportunities for political advancement or visibility.

Cyber violence

Recognized in the upcoming EU Directive on Violence Against Women (Articles 6-8), cyber violence uses information and communication technologies (ICT) to inflict psychological, reputational, or physical harm.

Types of cyber violence include:

- Cyberstalking: Persistent digital surveillance causing fear or distress.
- Cyberharassment: Threats, coordinated online attacks, or sending explicit content.
- Doxxing: Publishing personal data with intent to provoke real-world harm.
- Cyber incitement to violence or hatred: Online content inciting violence or discrimination based on gender.

3. Legal framework and definitions

While international legal and normative frameworks addressing violence against women, including women active in political life, have grown and evolved over the decades, the same does not always apply to the situation in individual countries. Country reports reveal major inadequacies in existing legislation as well as (in case of at least three of the five countries included in the project) a significant lack of political will to address the issue or even to respect and implement their obligations under international treaties.

International obligations

There are two key international frameworks for women's rights and gender equality: Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**) and the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women by the Council of Europe (**the Istanbul Convention**). The following table shows the state of recognition of these two legal instruments by the five countries:

Recognition of international legal instruments¹

	CEDAW	Optional Protocol to CEDAW (OP-CEDAW)	The Istanbul Convention	
	Ratified in		Signed in	Ratified in
Czech Republic	1993	2001	2016	
Germany	1985	2002	2011	2017
Hungary	1980	2000	2014	
Ireland	1985	2000	2015	2019
Slovakia	1993	2000	2011	

CEDAW and its implementation

In its Article 7, CEDAW stipulates the obligation of the State Parties to *eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life*, including ensuring their right to hold public office and participate in political decision-making on equal terms with men. All the five countries ratified CEDAW, as well as the Optional Protocol to CEDAW – an international treaty which establishes complaint and inquiry mechanisms that allow individuals and groups to submit complaints to the CEDAW Committee regarding alleged violations of their rights under CEDAW.

¹ <https://www.coe.int/en-GB/web/conventions/full-list?module=signatures-by-treaty&treatyenum=210;>
<https://indicators.ohchr.org/>

However, the implementation of international obligations varies across countries, from genuine cooperation to only formal compliance.

Hungary has failed to systemically incorporate CEDAW obligations or recommendations into its domestic legal framework and policies. While the country is formally committed to submitting periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee every five years, Hungary did not submit its tenth periodic report, which was due in 2022. CEDAW's Concluding Observations² have repeatedly highlighted **the lack of effective enforcement, institutional safeguards, gender-disaggregated data, and political will** to advance gender equality in political life. It also criticized the dismantling of national gender equality machinery and the rollback of protections for women's rights. The Committee is particularly emphasizing the country's extremely low level of women's political participation and the lack of legal or policy tools to address gender-based violence in public life.

In its periodically issued Concluding Observations, the CEDAW Committee has included specific recommendations for the government of **Slovakia**. In the latest Concluding Observations from 2023³, the Committee addressed the representation of women in politics and VAWP in several instances. One section was focused on **countering gender-stereotypes, preventing hate-speech and gender-based discrimination on social media** and the need to criminalise gender-related hate speech against women politicians. The Committee recommended implementation of targeted measures such as increased quotas or more balanced candidate electoral lists (by using for example the zipper system and intentional financing of pre-election campaign) to ensure more equal representation of women on all levels of politics.

Czech Republic regularly submits official reports on the implementation to the Committee. In 2023, the Czech government approved and submitted the seventh periodic report. In Concluding Observations on the previous (sixth) periodic report of the Czech Republic⁴, the CEDAW Committee was concerned that a proposed amendment to the electoral law that would have instituted a zipper system for ensuring at least one female candidate in every trio of political candidates, together with sanctions for non-compliance, was rejected. The Committee was further concerned that **women, in particular Roma women, continue to be significantly underrepresented** at all levels of decision-making, including in both chambers of Parliament, regional and local assemblies, the Government, especially at the ministerial and vice-ministerial levels, and in mayoral posts, and recommended to the Czech Republic to adopt temporary special measures requiring a minimum quota for the representation of women on electoral lists of political parties.

Ireland was examined by the CEDAW Committee in February 2017 – the first time since 2005. Its Concluding Observations⁵ commended the introduction of gender quotas in candidate selection for national parliament elections but encouraged their use in other areas where women are underrepresented, including local government elections. It noted the **low level of participation of Traveller, Roma and migrant women in political and public life**. The Committee also outlined its concern at the lack of gender-disaggregated data on gender-based violence as well as what it then saw as a lack of legal protection against emerging forms of gender-based violence, such as online stalking and harassment. Ireland will be examined by the CEDAW Committee again on 20 June 2025. In advance of the hearing the National Women's Council of Ireland issued a shadow report covering a range of women's rights

2 <https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/HUN/CO/9>

3 <https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/SVK/CO/7>

4 <https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/CZE/CO/6>

5 <https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/IRL/CO/6-7>

and including a call for the introduction of a gender quota for local election candidates to ensure women's equal representation in politics and increase the current number of TDs⁶ (25%) and local Councillors (28%) to at least 40%.

Germany is also a party to CEDAW as well as its Optional Protocol. The 9th periodic report was submitted in 2021, and the Concluding Observations were released in 2023⁷. The **absence of mandatory electoral quotas for women**, despite the introduction of such quotas in other areas and their demonstrated positive effects, is noted with concern by the Committee. The observations specifically emphasize the importance of Parliament in implementing CEDAW's recommendations, for example by amending legislation to allow for positive measures. Taking note of the state courts of Brandenburg and Thuringia's findings that parity laws are unconstitutional, the Committee strongly recommends judicial training on the non-discriminatory nature of temporary special measures. Additionally, despite legislative improvements specifically against cyber violence, it is emphasized that **women public leaders are still subject to pervasive online violence**. The Committee also expresses its concern that as the number of femicides continues to rise in Germany, reporting mechanisms for gender-based and domestic violence are not adapted to the needs of women in their diversity. In particular, those affected by intersecting forms of discrimination face significant challenges in reporting incidents, leaving women with disabilities, trans* women, and women who do not speak German more vulnerable.

Istanbul Convention: implemented – or ignored, even opposed

All the five countries also **signed the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women by the Council of Europe, known as the Istanbul Convention**, the most comprehensive international legal instrument addressing gender-based violence, but only **two of them have ratified** it – Germany in 2017 and Ireland two years later in 2019. In the other three consortium countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary), political will to ratify the Convention has been lacking.

In the **Czech Republic**, the ratification process has remained politically contested and stalled, despite repeated calls from international organizations and civil society. In January 2024 the Senate narrowly failed to approve the Istanbul Convention (it fell just two votes short of being approved for ratification). The political debate on the Convention has been shrouded in many myths and the document has been labelled by its opponents as part of a “dangerous gender ideology”.

In **Slovakia**, the public discourse around the Istanbul Convention became increasingly polarized under the influence of a broad anti-gender movement that framed the Convention as a threat to traditional family values and national sovereignty. This rhetoric, initially pushed by ultra-conservative and religious actors, conspiracy media, and certain civic associations, was eventually adopted by several mainstream political parties, including some that had previously supported ratification. The Convention thus became a symbolic target in a wider backlash against gender equality, women's rights, and democracy itself, often labelled as part of the so-called gender ideology. The organization *Možnosť voľby* led a nationwide advocacy campaign to reframe the public debate, emphasizing the Convention's role as a crucial tool to combat gender-based violence. Despite these efforts, in 2020 the Slovak Parliament formally rejected ratification.

6 TD – A member of the Dáil or Lower House or Parliament in the Republic of Ireland; a Dáil member's official Irish title is “Teachta Dála” which in English means “Deputy to the Dáil”.

7 <https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/DEU/CO/9>

Also in **Hungary**, the Istanbul Convention has not been ratified, and the national country report points out that instead of progressing toward implementation, the government turned the Convention into an ideological battleground. On May 5, 2020 — during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, when domestic violence was on the rise — the Hungarian Parliament, at the initiative of the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), adopted a political statement formally rejecting ratification. The stated reasons were ideological: objections to the term „gender“ and to recognizing asylum based on gender-related persecution. The Hungarian government maintains that existing domestic legislation already provides sufficient protection. However, this position disregards the structural, symbolic, and political dimensions of gender-based violence — especially within public life — which are not covered under current laws. Hungary's rejection of the Istanbul Convention is part of a broader anti-gender political agenda, where the government has instrumentalized the treaty to oppose gender equality and women's rights, as evidenced by its framing as “a threat to traditional family values”.

Ireland ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2019. The first baseline evaluation of Ireland's implementation of the Convention was published by the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) in 2023. One of its findings pointed to the inadequacies in data collection on the various forms of violence against women saying that official figures do not provide the true prevalence of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women, and describing them as „insufficient, disjointed and incomparable“.

In **Germany**, the Istanbul Convention entered into force in February 2018, following its ratification in October 2017. Germany submitted its first national report to GREVIO in 2020, and a subsequent evaluation visit was conducted in the following year. GREVIO's (Baseline) Evaluation Report⁸ was published in 2022. The Expert Group specifically welcomed Germany's provisions against cyberstalking and unauthorized photography of intimate body parts. It criticized, however, the lack of a National Action Plan or federal strategy. Additionally, it noted that the fragmented nature of data collection in Germany falls short of the requirements of Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention. Specifically, all data should, at the very least, be disaggregated according to gender, age, and type of violence of victims as well as perpetrators.

Legislation on the EU level: a much-needed step forward

At the European level, several non-binding European Parliament resolutions have previously drawn attention to the issue of violence against women in politics. These documents underscored the recognition that gender-based political violence is not merely a personal issue but a threat to democracy itself.

- The 2018 resolution⁹ highlighted the pervasiveness of sexism and harassment, especially targeting women in politics and the media.
- The September 16, 2021 resolution¹⁰ called for a reinforced legal framework to address gender-based violence in politics and urged Member States to act.

Since the consortium countries lack definitions and systematic specific regulation of violence against women in politics, transposition of **Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence** into their legal

8 <https://rm.coe.int/report-on-germany-for-publication/1680a86937>

9 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0331_EN.pdf

10 <https://www.oieurope.org/ep-resolution-on-gender-based-violence/>

systems will be crucial for improving the protection of women in politics. The directive explicitly highlights that women in public life — such as politicians, journalists, and human rights defenders — are particularly vulnerable and calls on Member States to adopt specific preventive and protective measures. The directive was supported by European Women's Lobby in its manifesto "Europe at a Crossroads – Equal Participation of Women at All Levels: Prerequisite for Peace, Prosperity and Societal Change" which called on EU Member States to fully implement the directive.¹¹

The directive was **adopted on 14 May 2024 and entered into force on 13 June 2024**. Member States are required **to transpose its provisions into national law by 14 June 2027**. The directive aims to harmonize definitions and criminal penalties for key forms of violence that disproportionately affect women across the EU. It covers, among others:

- cyber violence, including cyberstalking, cyber harassment, and the malicious publication of personal data;
- sexual violence and harassment, including verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct violating a person's dignity;
- abetting gender-based hatred and violence.

National legislations: VAWP not as a specific category

In principle, women engaged in political life in all five countries may rely on a variety of legal instruments to protect themselves against different forms of violence, including physical, psychological, symbolic, semiotic, sexual, economic, and cyber violence. However, the legal framework is fragmented and inconsistent. Crucially, **violence against women in politics is not recognized as a distinct legal category, which significantly limits the effectiveness of protection.**

Exceptions to this – to a certain extent – are the situation in Ireland and Germany. **Germany's** Penal Code specifically covers some forms of violence against politically exposed persons. Politically motivated crimes are registered at the Criminal Police Reporting Service for Politically Motivated Crime in the Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt, BKA). Nevertheless, data on reported violence against elected officials are not disaggregated by gender. The focus on political violence in general is also present in **Ireland**. In May 2024, in advance of the local and European elections, Ireland's national police and security service commenced a policing operation (Operation Rialtas) in response to growing concern around the safety of public representatives. It was established to monitor incidents associated with threats or criminal acts against persons seeking to participate in political life.

There is a **lack of legislation that specifically addresses gender-based violence aimed at hindering women's participation in politics**. Existing legal frameworks in the consortium countries — such as Criminal Codes, Anti-Discrimination Acts, Civil Codes — prohibit harassment, defamation, threats, crimes against human dignity in the sexual sphere, abetting hatred, stalking and discrimination in general terms but do not explicitly recognize these acts when they occur in the political sphere and systematically target publicly active women on the basis of their gender. The specific nature of the political space — such as public attacks, power asymmetries, and the closed structure of party organizations — is not reflected in legislation. As a result, women affected by gender-based violence in the context of political engagement are often left without adequate legal tools or effective protection. However, the situation should change with the required transposition of the EU Directive as mentioned above.

¹¹ <https://womenlobby.org/Manifesto2024/>

The legislation in all five countries does not define VAWP specifically. The **definition that we recommend for incorporation into national legal frameworks** comes from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR): *“Violence against women in politics is understood as any act, threat, or attempt of gender-based violence, leading to or resulting in physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm or suffering directed against a woman in politics (candidate for office or in an elected or appointed position or member of a political party), because she is a woman and is aimed specifically at undermining her rightful representation, voice, and agency in politics. Violence against women in politics is a form of discrimination which seriously inhibits women’s ability to enjoy full rights and freedoms. Additionally, violence against women in politics can have a symbolic effect, rendering women incompetent, irrelevant or invisible in politics, and deterring other women from seeking to enter politics for fear of becoming a target.”*¹²

Cyberspace as a domain of violence

The incidence of gender-based violence against politicians has been accelerated by the development of the internet and social networks. Cyberspace allows for the rapid dissemination of information and direct access to people active in politics, which greatly facilitates the perpetration of psychological violence and the spread of hate speech. It is therefore important to pay attention to online space when addressing VAWP.

In December 2022 **Ireland** enacted the Online Safety and Media Regulation (OSMR) Act that provides a **regulatory framework for online safety** to be enforced by Coimisiún na Meán (a new regulator) through the making of binding online safety codes. These codes will require designated online services to take measures to tackle the availability of defined categories of harmful online content. Coimisiún na Meán outlines that platforms have a legal obligation under the Online Safety Framework to have rules about acceptable content and include them in their terms and conditions or community rules. Those rules must be enforced and a mechanism provided to allow users to report content that they consider to be in breach of the rules. Large social media platforms also have a duty to assess a range of risks that their services may pose, including risks to civic discourse and electoral processes, and have to implement measures to mitigate them.

In **Germany**, over the last few years both media coverage of the issue and the attention of lawmakers have increased, leading to relatively recent discussions on creating laws specifically addressing political stalking and reforming laws on cybercrimes. In December 2024, a **draft bill on digital violence** was introduced by the former government. The current coalition treaty of the new government sets out to pass such a law under its chapter on violence against women. The planned law is described as aiming to improve victims’ legal standing and to block anonymous accounts that spread hate speech and other forms of cyber violence. Moreover, communication with platform providers and coordination with law enforcement is to be improved and sped up.

Effective since January 2025, **Hungary** has the **Act on Combating Online Aggression** that aims to address digital threats, harassment, and hate speech. It is potentially relevant in VAWP cases, especially those involving cyber violence and psychological abuse, including doxxing, threats, and hate speech directed at women in politics. The law theoretically enables sanctions for such acts. However, a key shortcoming is that the law fails to recognize attacks against women in public life as a specific category, overlooking the gendered nature and democratic implications of such violence. The effectiveness of the Act is limited by institutional reluctance and a lack of specialized protocols to address gender-based cyber violence, leaving women politicians without effective recourse against online harassment.

In the cases of the **Czech Republic and Slovakia** there is no specific legislative and institutional framework for cyber violence.

12 ODIHR, 2022: Addressing Violence against Women in Politics In the OSCE Region: Toolkit <https://www.osce.org/odihr/530272>

4. Institutional framework, strategies and policies for preventing and addressing VAWP

The active participation of women in politics can only be encouraged when political parties and public institutions themselves implement favourable measures and mechanisms. There are significant differences in how the five countries approach the issue on the institutional level, how they address women's exposure to violence and provide access to reporting mechanisms, and how they define investigation procedure and possible sanctions.

The following concerns are shared by the national country reports for **Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic**:

- Not much information or evaluation is available, demonstrating the **limited ability and willingness of governmental and public institutions to improve women's position** in political life and decision-making. This suggests that public commitments to supporting women are merely declaratory.
- There is a significant **lack of institutional mechanisms** aimed at tackling VAWP, as well as reporting and investigative mechanisms.
- Another shared issue is the **lack of gender-sensitive and gender-responsive codes of conduct**, which would contain a clearly defined set of values and guiding principles as well as behaviours and actions that will not be tolerated.
- There are **no systematic tools for data collection within public institutions and political parties**, due to the absence or ineffectiveness of reporting mechanisms and the lack of clear definitions, rules and codes of conduct.

At the other end of the spectrum, **Germany and Ireland** provide examples of good practice, yet they are still evolving and struggling in some areas. For example, while political parties in Ireland “have made efforts to strengthen women's participation in politics and are generally aware of the need to prevent and combat violence against women in politics, their policies, procedures and current practices are not yet fit for purpose”, according to the research report of the National Women's Council of Ireland. In Germany, the national country report points out a lack of publicly available information and transparency regarding existing programmes and training.

A common theme across all countries is that women in politics may be subjected to violence and abuse not only by the public but also **by their fellow politicians and party members**. Especially the country reports for Slovakia and Hungary highlight the lack of accountability for perpetrators, and emphasize the fact that many of the perpetrators are politicians themselves. In Slovakia, several cases were noted where coordinated gendered attacks were used by political party members, affiliated influencers or representatives of disinformation media against women politicians from opposing parties with the aim of discrediting them, driving them out of political life or damaging their reputation. Both reports draw attention to the increasingly authoritarian efforts of some constitutional and governmental officials, which go hand in hand with anti-women political culture and tolerance of sexist comments from the highest-ranking political representatives. Similarly in Germany, 29% of respondents to a 2025 survey by HateAid claim that online violence directed at them was carried out by party colleagues. All five countries comment on the **lack of internal support and prevention mechanisms**.

Czech Republic: institutional mechanisms and strategies existing but fragmented and ineffective

The most important institutional body in the Czech Republic is the **Government Council for Gender Equality**. It is a permanent Government **advisory body** in the area of creating equal opportunities for women and men that was established in 2001. Yet it has no enforcement power and is mostly active at the policy level. The Council has four advisory committees and three working groups. The most relevant of these are the Committee for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women, which is responsible for the **Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence for 2023-2026**, and the Committee for the Balanced Representation of Women and Men in Politics and Decision-Making, which currently focuses on violence against female politicians.

Although some **strategic documents** at a national level recognise gender-based violence as a key issue, the **defined goals are too general to be effective**. The same applies to existing mechanisms and policies, both in the Parliament and political parties. The **Rules of Procedure** (for both parliamentary chambers) and the **Code of Conduct** (adopted only by the Chamber of Deputies) include **only general provisions**, such as good morals, dignity and respectful behaviour, and do not address VAWP specifically. While there is a special authority – Mandate and Immunity Committee – for handling complaints and conducting disciplinary hearings, detailed information (e. g. type of complaints submitted) is not publicly available.

Only two (out of seven) **political parties** represented in the Parliament of the Czech Republic have a **code of conduct with basic rules and principles** concerning practicing politics in a moral, ethical and respectful manner, with no specific attention to protection of their women members.

In general, the national country report concludes that there is little political will in the Czech Republic to address gender-based violence or implement relevant prevention mechanisms.

Slovakia: formal commitments but specific mechanisms and actions lacking

The **Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality of Slovak Republic** is the expert, consultative and advisory authority to the government in matters of human rights protection, civil and political rights, minority rights and gender equality, responsible for monitoring and reporting on implementation of international obligations. Several other authorities and expert bodies share responsibility for monitoring the implementation of CEDAW and other international obligations, and for development of public policies, frameworks and strategies of gender equality and equality of opportunities.

Strategic documents, such as the most recent **National strategy for equality of men and women and equality of opportunities for the period of 2021-2027** express formal commitment to political and economic participation of women and their participation in decision-making but contain **no concrete and measurable goals**. They also lack measurable indicators to determine the success of the activities and implementation plans, and no budget is indicated for the envisioned activities.

Out of six parliamentary political parties, only two parties have published a code of conduct or ethical code, the rest of political parties publish their party rules (bylaws). Only **one code makes a reference to behaviours** which are considered to be in conflict with the ethical code and are not tolerated, such as discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, humiliation and other disrespectful behaviours. The same ethical code also outlines the investigation procedure and responsible organs (Arbitration Committee and the party Secretariat).

There is no valid Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament – a draft code of conduct was created in 2015 but has never been adopted. A Code of Conduct of Public Officials was drafted and submitted to legislative process by the Director of the Office of the Government of Slovak Republic in 2025. The national country report observes that despite formal commitment to eliminating VAWP and increasing women's representation in politics, specific actions, clear and measurable targets and indicators by governmental and public administration bodies are missing.

Hungary: persistent and gendered pressure undermines women's political participation

The national country report provides deep insights into the general erosion of the rule of law in Hungary and specific forms of violence directed at women in public life, aiming to highlight how such violence is not merely a byproduct of political polarization, but a deliberate tool of governance. Moreover, the dissolution of the Equal Treatment Authority in 2021 has further weakened institutional mechanisms for addressing gender-based discrimination.

While legal and institutional frameworks contain formal references to equality and non-discrimination, their enforcement is obstructed by a lack of political will and women politicians facing harassment, exclusion or abuse – especially those in opposition – are left without effective legal or institutional recourse. The country report further states that complaints are routinely dismissed, and those responsible face no consequences.

This approach is illustrated on the example of the Hungarian Parliament:

The **Rules of Procedure** aim to ensure the orderly, dignified, and uninterrupted functioning of the National Assembly and provide enough disciplinary tools to the presiding officer (including issuing warnings, withdrawing the right to speak, calling to order, exclusion from the session, and reducing or withholding a member's remuneration). Yet these **have never been applied to address sexist or misogynistic behaviour**, reflecting a significant institutional failure to protect women MPs. For example, sexist remarks like 'What are you yapping about, little mom?' directed at MP Tímea Szabó in parliamentary sessions highlight the lack of regulation and accountability for such behaviour.

The only thematic institutional mechanism addressing women's issues in the Hungarian Parliament – the **Subcommittee for the Dignity of Women** operating under the Cultural Committee since 2015 – has a mandate that includes providing policy recommendations but it **lacks any binding authority** and cannot initiate investigations, enforce recommendations, or intervene in specific cases. Notably, the subcommittee has not convened at all since 2018.

According to information available at the official websites and party statutes, Hungarian **political parties rarely address the issue** of violence against women in politics or public life. At best, they support efforts to combat gender-based discrimination or address the issue of violence and harassment against women in their programs and communications but mostly (with the exception of one party having a special formal mechanism) their internal regulations and official party documents do not contain specific provisions addressing violence or harassment against female politicians.

Ireland: constantly evolving legislative and institutional responses

Based on continuing research and consultations, policies and mechanisms in Ireland keep evolving, according to real needs. The case studies described in the national country report show effective investigative and prosecution mechanisms: all four cases resulted in successful prosecutions of perpetrators. As demonstrated by examples of the latest positive developments, Irish institutions and existing mechanisms address specific issues and particular vulnerabilities.

In May 2023, the Speakers of both houses of the **Irish parliament** established a **Task Force on Safe Participation in Political Life** in response to reports of increasing levels of abuse, harassment and intimidation being directed towards those in political life. The Task Force examined the collective response of the Government, its agencies and other stakeholders. It received written submissions and oral testimony from a range of interested parties. This was followed by wide consultations and research, resulting in a comprehensive set of **recommendations drawing on best practices from other jurisdictions**.

Ireland's national police and security service **An Garda Síochána** commenced a specific policing operation (Operation Rialtas) in May 2024, in response to growing concern around the **safety of public representatives**. In addition, the police participate in a forum seeking the views of stakeholder organisations such as Coimisiún na Meán, the Association of Irish Local Government, Women for Election and the Houses of the Oireachtas Service to help ensure a consistent level of service across the country.

The government department that leads on cross-government policy to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls – the **Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth** – is currently finalising an **update to the National Strategy on Women and Girls**.

There is also an independent public body accountable to the national parliament – the **Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission** which addresses human rights and equality issues in a variety of ways ranging from engagement to enforcement. The Commission aims to bring about change through legal means, policy and legislative advice, awareness and education and partnerships across civil society.

The national country report also includes outcomes of the research on how **political parties** address VAWP. All of the parties that responded indicated that their party constitution or code of conduct addresses threats, abuse, intimidation, bullying, harassment, and violence against or by party members. All respondents also stated that they have codes of conduct regulating members' online behaviour, but only four of those specifically address protecting female members from online abuse. There were considerable differences between the parties on **reporting mechanisms**. None of the parties reported any procedures to collect data on online abuse against women members.

Germany: information on existing prevention courses and trainings is scarce

While Germany may in many aspects serve as an example of good practice in addressing VAWP, it seems to share two main problems with other countries, namely:

- insufficient internal support and prevention mechanisms (especially in political parties);
- the fact that information on institutional programmes, trainings and policies (if and where they exist) is publicly unavailable.

The national country report commends the fact that there are more discussions and draft bills aimed at creating a safer political environment that would help attract new party members and promote democratic

participation (especially in the area of better protection and reporting measures online). A number of initiatives and programmes focused on providing information, counselling and support for those affected have been implemented as **joint projects at the institutional level (ministries/civil society)**. The examples include a nationwide independent complaints office and contact point for local politicians, the “Starke Stelle” (Strong Point), or the online platform “Stark im Amt” (Strength for Office-Holders).

However, at purely institutional level, while some training programmes exist, the relevant documents are not publicly available, despite signals confirming deteriorating character of political environment, as illustrated by the box below:

During **parliamentary sessions**, it is one of the President’s (or their proxies’) tasks to monitor the procedure of the current sitting. The President of the previous legislative period, Bärbel Bas (Social Democrats, SPD), has commented on a significant deterioration of the discussion climate since the party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) entered the Bundestag in 2017:

“It has become more aggressive; it has become more discriminatory towards the MPs themselves. And I think that’s a big difference compared to previous years”.

She added that one of the consequences of testing the waters with sexist comments, discriminatory, and disrespectful language is a shift of the boundaries towards what can publicly be said. Ultimately, this would also result in action that goes beyond verbal attacks. Never before has the German national parliament seen as many calls to order as in the previous legislature (2021-2025): 135 calls to order were issued, 85 of those were attributed to the AfD.

Federal authorities offer **training on hybrid threats and the IT security situation** for MPs, their employees, and parliamentary groups. These trainings cover prevention measures for accounts and mailing as well as information on reporting and receiving support in case of an emergency situation or attack. This might help (women) politicians to raise awareness about reporting mechanism. On the other hand, there is no information publicly available on preventing sexual harassment, gender-based violence, discrimination, or hate speech in the Bundestag that would apply for all members and across parliamentary groups.

Many political parties and their parliamentary groups however **provide their own training offers**, materials, and resources to improve security. Moreover, **Ombuds Offices** responsible for dealing with complaints exist in almost all parties. Alternatively, there is an arbitration commission or a control commission. One political party – the Greens – has a specific “**Code of Conduct** for Dealing with Violations of Sexual Self-Determination and/or Sexualized Violence”. Yet the mechanisms in place are frequently regarded as inadequate, with the lack of emotional and psychological support and solidarity within the party or communities being the main complaint points that are mentioned by those affected.

5. Existing research overview

Despite significant shortcomings in the collection of data, all the consortium countries report similar patterns of violence against women in politics, with the **online environment** being the dominant arena and **psychological violence** (especially threats, harassment and symbolic violence) being the most common form.

While the **Czech Republic** reports key gaps in data collection, the absence of regular statistics, and lack of relevant research, the available information confirms that women politicians face various forms of violence and hate speech and suggests correlations between the intensity of violence and factors such as age, political position, or public visibility.

Hungary also lacks systematic tools for data collection as well as relevant research. However, media analysis and case studies show that gendered disinformation and online abuse are systematically used to target women in politics.

A growing body of research exists on violence against politicians in **Germany**, yet gender-specific analyses are only partially available. Psychological violence appears to be the most commonly experienced form of VAWP. It most often takes the form of insults, discrimination or threats via telephone, email, fax, in person or on social media. Online violence is particularly pervasive.

In **Ireland**, research highlights the prevalence and gendered nature of political violence across all levels of public life, with particular vulnerabilities identified among women in local office and candidates from minority and migrant backgrounds.

Although **Slovakia** acknowledges the absence of representative data on VAWP, existing studies have reported targeted and coordinated attacks on female politicians, particularly those associated with progressive, liberal and democratic values. Such attacks have also been linked to support for Ukraine, LGBTQ+ rights, and minority rights.

All country reports emphasise the **need to improve data collection mechanisms** and **create gender-sensitive monitoring systems** in order to identify challenges and threats faced by specific groups, and thus address their needs and barriers effectively.

Available research studies included in country reports also confirm that **changing behaviour or retreating from politics are severe consequences of experiencing or fearing threats of violence as a politician**. This can lead to self-censorship in public discourse or a lack of opposition and differing opinions in order to avoid becoming a target. These effects appear to be experienced more acutely by women than by men. Many women feel insecure, even at home, and fear for their friends and family. **Women in local politics are particularly likely to receive threats of violence against their loved ones**, which further decreases their sense of security. This has a serious inhibitory effect on pluralistic discourse and the independence of the political mandate.

6. Women from marginalized groups in politics: underreporting and data gaps

Women from historically excluded or oppressed communities across all five examined countries are identified as being particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence in politics, often facing intersectional forms of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion, migration background, disability, or sexual orientation. However, the availability of systematic data specifically capturing the lived experiences of women from marginalized groups is extremely limited.

In **Germany** and **Ireland**, qualitative evidence and public discourse recognize the disproportionate targeting of women from racialized or minority backgrounds – such as women of colour, Muslim women, or members of the Traveller community – yet data disaggregated by ethnicity or minority status is either lacking or not systematically collected. The Irish Task Force on Safe Participation in Political Life acknowledged this data gap while also highlighting the severe impact of online and offline abuse on minoritised women's engagement.

Similarly, in Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, the absence of targeted data on minoritised women politicians mirrors broader institutional neglect of their specific experiences. In **Hungary** and **Slovakia**, Roma women are particularly marginalized, and anecdotal accounts suggest high exposure to hate speech and harassment, yet official statistics remain absent. In the **Czech Republic**, there is no disaggregated data or tailored support mechanisms in place, despite some acknowledgment of increased vulnerability among young women, women with disabilities, and those from minority ethnic groups.

Overall, across the consortium countries, the lack of data significantly hampers the development of effective responses, highlighting the urgent need for intersectional data collection and analysis within both research and policy frameworks.

Ireland: personalised violence and election vulnerability

Ireland provides the richest data on minoritised women's experiences in politics. A 2022 study titled *Different Paths, Shared Experiences* based on 45 interviews found that all minoritised women involved in or interested in politics experienced both racism and sexism. The study stressed that such abuse is more impactful at the local level, where proximity and personalisation amplify the threat.

Subsequent data from the 2024 local elections highlight the magnitude of the problem:

- 120 candidates of migrant background ran (up from 53 in 2019), 55% of them women; 20 were elected.
- Over **30 violent incidents** occurred during the campaign; **1 in 3 targeted migrant-background candidates**.
- **74% of these candidates** experienced racism and harassment; **1 in 3** reported frequent abuse.
- Impacts included:
 - **41% changed their campaign strategy**, reducing canvassing or social media presence;
 - **50% took unplanned mental health breaks**, with higher incidence among women;
 - 25% limited poster usage and 17% avoided community events.

These findings demonstrate how racialised and gendered political violence directly undermines political participation and democratic representation.

Germany: intersectional dimension and reporting patterns

In Germany, while comprehensive data is lacking, several statistics highlight the disproportionality:

- **20.8% of women with a statistical migration background** faced online sexist comments vs. 16.8% of all respondents.
- Women under the age of 45 receive the highest rate of online abuse: in 2021, **35.7% of respondents were affected**.
- **33.7% of people with a migration background** reported filing criminal complaints.
- Overall, **roughly a third of local politicians** in large cities changed their behaviour due to threats – most significantly women, people of colour, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

The political climate – especially in eastern Germany – is described as “rougher,” with implications for safety of minorities and marginalized groups in public life. Additionally, non-binary individuals seem to experience **cyber violence in the majority of cases**, with **31% reporting threats of physical or sexual violence** (although samples are small and non-representative).

Slovakia: political abuse of minority advocates

In Slovakia, no quantitative data is available specifically for women from marginalized groups. However, qualitative evidence shows that **women advocating for minority rights (e. g., LGBTQ+, Roma, migrants, Ukrainians)** are targets of coordinated political and online abuse. The Government Council for Human Rights, Minorities and Gender Equality has acknowledged these attacks.

Hungary: state-led suppression and media attacks

Hungary lacks legal or institutional recognition of VAWP and has no disaggregated data on minoritised women. However, public narratives, media discourse and political rhetoric often feature **targeted symbolic violence against women from marginalised or oppositional groups**, including disinformation campaigns and institutional exclusion. Cases such as MP Tímea Szabó highlight how media portrayal can include racialised, dehumanising language without systemic accountability.

Czech Republic: institutional awareness, lacking data

While the Czech country report does not provide disaggregated data on women from marginalized groups in politics, the **Government Commissioner for Human Rights** covers cross-cutting agendas including Roma, national minorities, disability, and gender. The report explicitly recommends to “regularly monitor the occurrence of violence against women in politics, including research on its impact on women from minority groups, and track intersectionality.” This recommendation indicates a recognition of the issue, though no data collection systems currently implement it.

Power Dynamics and Consequences

Women from marginalized groups in politics are subject to **horizontal** (from peers), **vertical** (from superiors/subordinates), and **third-party violence** (from the public or media). They also face structural obstacles such as lack of access to resources or party support. Notably, **many women limit their public activity or withdraw entirely** due to safety concerns and psychological harm – undermining not only gender equality but democratic legitimacy.

Conclusion

Women from minority backgrounds face uniquely intensified forms of violence in political life. The evidence from Ireland and Germany is strongest, while Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic indicate serious gaps in recognition and response. Without targeted interventions, the compounded violence experienced by minoritised women will continue to suppress their political participation – and with it, the representative capacity of European democracies.

A recurring issue across all country reports is the **lack of disaggregated and comparable data** that would allow for a precise understanding of how VAWP impacts women from marginalized groups. Most national data collection systems, where they exist at all, do not track intersectional characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, or disability. As a result, the scale and patterns of violence against minoritised women in politics remain largely invisible in official statistics.

7. Elections

Across the five countries studied, elections emerged as **critical periods of heightened risk for women in politics**. During campaign seasons, women candidates and political figures are frequently subjected to gendered forms of violence, including online harassment, threats, defamation, and physical intimidation. These incidents not only affect individual candidates, but also discourage political participation, particularly among young women and women from minority backgrounds. The extent and impact of such violence vary by country, shaped by differing electoral systems, institutional responses, and media environments.

Czech Republic

Although the Czech country report lacks detailed research or statistical monitoring of violence against women in politics during elections, anecdotal evidence and testimonies suggest that women often experience verbal and online abuse, especially when addressing controversial topics such as gender, migration, or LGBTQ+ rights. There is no formal institutional protection, and political parties offer little to no support. Civil society, particularly the NGO Fórum 50 %, has stepped in to provide support and raise awareness, publishing recommendations for safe campaigning.

Slovakia

In Slovakia, elections have become a flashpoint for increased online and verbal attacks against women politicians. President Zuzana Čaputová and several MPs have received death threats and sexist abuse, especially in pre-election periods. The civic campaign „Zakrúžkuj ženu“ (Circle a Woman) aimed to counteract this hostile environment by publicly supporting women candidates. Artistic interventions such as the theatrical reading „I will cut off your head“ brought visibility to the issue by publicly performing real threats sent to women politicians.

Germany

Germany presents a more structured response to violence during elections. While women candidates still face significant challenges, such as targeted online hate speech, gendered disinformation, and unequal campaign funding, initiatives have been introduced to counteract these issues. Local authorities in some

regions offer security support to candidates, and the online platform Stark im Amt provides legal advice and crisis support to politicians under threat. The federal government and local institutions have introduced measures to remove personal address data from public records and improve digital safety. Additionally, political parties have begun to sign voluntary codes of conduct promoting respectful campaigning.

In 2024, 3,964 offenses against politicians and party representatives were reported to police forces. Likely, the number of actual incidents is much higher, as studies indicate that only a fraction of affected individuals (between 11% and 13%, with some surveys reporting up to 30%) seek legal redress. For the federal police registry, however, there is no gender-disaggregated information on criminal offenses against politicians available, nor is data available on the nature of the offenses women politicians are specifically targeted for (e. g., on gender-based violence, including, e. g., sexual harassment).

During the 2024 elections, violence against public officials rose by 30%. Female mayors and district officials were especially affected in European and regional elections in Eastern states (Thuringia, Saxony, Brandenburg). Verbal abuse, defamation, threats, property damage, and discrimination were most common. Some women reported stalking, sexual harassment, and threats of rape.

Gendered disparities in campaign financing were also evident, particularly in the CDU (Christian Democrats), where women direct candidates for the 2021 federal elections, on average, had €10,000 less at their disposal than their male party colleagues. Male candidates in the CDU were also found to be more likely to receive higher party contributions, and secure more/higher private donations, while women in the CDU and the SPD (Social Democrats) contributed more private capital than men.

Another issue was the continued publication of candidate addresses on ballots in some federal states. In May 2024, the Interior Ministry submitted legislation to restrict public access to this data for candidate protection purposes. However, due to the collapse of the previous government's coalition, the draft bill has ultimately not been passed.

Hungary

The Hungarian context is shaped by broader political repression, limited media pluralism, and a shrinking space for civil society. Women candidates, especially those affiliated with opposition parties or minority groups, face gendered disinformation, intimidation, and exclusion from media platforms. The Momentum party is the only political party that has implemented an internal complaints mechanism (Zavit Committee) to handle harassment, though it does not directly relate to election-specific incidents.

Furthermore, The Sovereignty Protection Law severely restricts civil society organizations' ability to support women candidates or monitor VAWP during elections, labelling such organizations as 'foreign-funded actors' and undermining their credibility.

Ireland

Ireland has taken significant steps to address the issue of violence against women in politics during election periods. The 2023–2024 Task Force on Safe Participation in Political Life acknowledged the increased targeting of women candidates during campaigns. Many women reported online abuse, threats, and a lack of institutional support as reasons for considering withdrawal from political life.

Ireland's electoral system (PR-STV) increases the pressure on candidates to be publicly available and personally visible, often requiring disclosure of personal contact details. This openness, while democratic, exposes women to greater risk.

The national police (An Garda Síochána) launched Operation Rialtas to monitor and respond to threats against candidates. By February 2025, the operation led to 18 arrests and 13 charges. Women and minority candidates were disproportionately targeted. Officers distributed safety guidelines and contact lists to all candidates, and a coordination forum with media, local authorities, and NGOs was established.

Additionally, a joint report by the Hope and Courage Collective and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue documented 55 incidents of violence and threats during five weeks before the November 2024 elections. 90% of incidents occurred online, mainly on X and TikTok, and included racist, misogynistic, and anti-Muslim abuse targeting women and minority candidates.

Summary and comparative insights

Election campaigns are consistently identified as high-risk periods for women in politics across all five countries. Key patterns include:

- Increased online and psychological violence against women candidates.
- Disproportionate targeting of women speaking on human rights or progressive issues.
- Lack of systemic institutional responses, with Ireland as a positive exception.
- Civil society plays a crucial role in supporting and protecting women candidates, especially where state institutions fall short.

While Ireland and Germany have introduced structured responses, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary rely heavily on ad hoc civil society efforts, leaving many women candidates vulnerable during elections.

Specific recommendations included in the five country reports mention adopting monitoring mechanisms, enforcing candidate protection policies, and ensuring that political parties implement gender-sensitive campaign protocols.

8. Solutions and good practices

This report has so far pointed out the gaps in available data on VAWP and described the shortcomings of existing legal regulation and institutional frameworks in consortium countries. However, there are also some positive trends and practices to be shared. There is a discrepancy in the number of good practices. Germany and Ireland are several steps ahead in terms of existing measures, policies and strategies, compared to the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

Putting VAWP on the agenda

In the **Czech Republic**, a cooperation among the two of the relevant authorities has been crucial for putting VAWP on the agenda and incorporating the issue into a strategic national document. The Committee for Balanced Representation of Women and Men in Politics and Decision-making suggested to newly include the topic of gender-based violence towards women politicians into the **Action Plan** for the Prevention of Domestic and Gender-based Violence for 2023-2026 for which another authority – the Committee for Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women – is responsible. The Plan focuses on violence against women in politics as an individual category of gender-based violence that is recognized

as a serious problem which needs to be focused on. As there is not enough relevant data available, the Government Office (according to the Action Plan) should **conduct a study** focused on women and men in politics, including the issue of online violence.

The Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) in **Germany** monitors political crimes in which the suspect might be biased according to the victim's gender or sexual identity, sexual orientation, or physical appearance. In the latest report on violence against women covering the year 2023, politically motivated crimes against women are covered as a **subsection under hate crimes – misogyny**. However, this report does not monitor or include data on politically exposed persons, elected officials or campaign helpers.

Parliaments: ways to make improvements

While most of the consortium countries document rather lacking political will to create safer and more inclusive parliamentary environment for women politicians, Ireland provides an example of good practice.

In May 2023, in response to reports of increasing levels of abuse being directed towards those in political life and in recognition of the serious risk such abuse poses to democratic participation, especially for women and minority groups, the Speakers of both houses of the **Irish parliament** established a **Task Force on Safe Participation in Political Life**. Based on extensive research and consultations, the Task Force presented not only key findings such as that abuse is widespread, intensifying, and often gendered or discriminatory, and driven by misogyny, racism, and intolerance, but also made a series of detailed recommendations on what was required to improve the situation. Recommendations included that:

- An opt-in social media monitoring service should be created for members of parliament which would identify and respond to online threats.
- Members of parliament codes of conduct should be reviewed and updated to address abusive and discriminatory behaviour, both offline and online.
- Ireland's national police and security service should adopt a structured, intelligence-led approach to protecting political figures.
- Routine reporting of abuse should be encouraged and a zero-tolerance approach applied across political and civil society.
- Political parties should develop internal codes of conduct, promote respect and diversity, and offer confidential reporting mechanisms for abuse.
- Social media platforms must proactively moderate abusive content and ensure safer political discourse.
- Local authorities should provide psychological support services to local representatives, similar to those provided for members in the national parliament.
- It should no longer be a requirement for the home address of election candidates to be published.

Political parties as key stakeholders

All five country reports examined the situation across political parties with regard to the support mechanisms available to female members, as well as the policies and procedures used by parties in response to complaints raised by members. The reports also looked at safety measures and protocols to protect women performing their public duties in politics. Across the consortium countries, this seems to be the one area with the biggest gaps, but there are also examples of good practice here.

Political parties in **Germany** widely use their own Ombuds Offices, on various levels (from federal down to regional). Federal **Ombuds Offices responsible for dealing with topics such as discrimination, hate speech, or sexual harassment** are available for the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Liberals (FDP), who also have Ombuds Offices at the level of their regional associations. The Greens have not only

federal and regional association Ombuds Offices but also a specific “Code of Conduct for Dealing with Violations of Sexual Self-Determination and/or Sexualized Violence”. For the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Left, Ombuds Offices exist at the regional levels.

Germany also provides an example of rare collaboration of political parties in more general terms:

After the previous coalition of Social Democrats (SPD), Greens, and Liberals (FDP) fell apart in November 2024, ahead of finishing their term, these parties, together with the Christian Democrats (CDU)/(CSU) and the Left, committed to an **Agreement on a Fair Election Campaign** (Vereinbarung zu einem fairen Bundestagswahlkampf). The agreement aims at constructive debate without personal insults or derogatory comments. The parties also agreed to **adhere to ethical standards in their digital campaigning and to refrain from disseminating disinformation or utilizing false information** for campaign purposes. A peaceful campaign atmosphere was stated as the goal, promising not to resort to violence against political candidates, campaign helpers, or to damage competitors’ campaign materials. The AfD and BSW declined to commit to the agreement.

In February 2022 in **Ireland**, the National Women’s Council of Ireland published research it had commissioned on how political parties respond to violence against women in politics. The survey responses indicated a **range of different approaches to protecting female members**. All of the parties that participated in the study said that they **provide training to female candidates** regarding their online presence, including on social media. Two parties stated that they offer **counselling support** to women candidates impacted by online abuse.

Slovakia reports a welcome implementation of the zipper system¹³ by at least one political party:

One political party, Progressive Slovakia, introduced gender quotas in their candidate list, featuring 75 women and 75 male candidates. The implementation of the **zipper system** (with a woman candidate as no.2) resulted in 15 elected women candidates out of 33 total elected women candidates in the most recent parliamentary elections in 2023. The same political party implemented the zipper system for elections into the European parliament, resulting in three women representatives from the party.

In **Hungary** political parties mostly do not include any reference to harassment or violence specifically targeting female politicians in their foundational documents. Nevertheless, one political party (Momentum) has established formal mechanisms to address harassment within its own ranks:

Within Momentum, there is a so-called **Committee for Investigating Harassment (Zavit)**, which primarily deals with harassment cases originating from inside the party, not with attacks targeting female politicians on external platforms.

Regarding the operation criteria and protocol of Zavit, the party particularly emphasized that:

- their anti-harassment protocol should comply with the most up-to-date knowledge;
- during an investigation following a report, the perspectives of both the complainant and the accused should be understood as thoroughly as possible;
- the investigative committee should act as objectively as possible and draw appropriate conclusions based on the evidence presented;
- the concept of harassment should be interpreted broadly, allowing for investigations not only into sexual harassment.

¹³ The so-called zipper system, also called vertical parity, in the context of candidate lists refers to alternating order of male and female candidates, meaning that 50% of candidate list is made up of women, increasing the number of elected women as a result.

Civic society initiatives

A number of measures addressed to support politicians and people affected by sexism and gender-based violence in the public sphere were initiated and are carried out by civil society organizations.

In **Germany** the alliance „Together against Sexism“ was established by the EAF Berlin and funded by the federal Ministry for Education, Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth in 2022. It aims to raise awareness about sexism in the workplace, public spaces, and within culture and the media. More than 850 organizations, companies, and institutions have signed the „**Joint Declaration against Sexism and Sexual Harassment**“, forming a cross-industry network. The entire federal cabinet of the previous government (2021–2025) became a signatory to the Declaration in 2023. While not directly geared towards political actors and parties, there are also several local party chapters, regional chapters, and state parliamentary groups, as well as the Social Democrats' (SPD) women's wing and a regional Christian Democrats' (CDU) women's wing among the signatories.

Some other concrete programmes and initiatives in Germany have been implemented to provide information, advice, and support for those affected by political violence. For example, there are around **50 mobile counselling teams** organized under the umbrella organization “Bundesverband Mobile Beratung” across Germany. They advise interested parties and affected individuals, including politicians, on right-wing extremism, racism, antifeminism and other relevant issues.

In **Ireland**, in advance of the 2024 election, Women for Election – an NGO that encourages and supports women in Ireland to run for politics, distributed a **booklet to all candidates** with advice on safety measures for both online and offline political activity and canvassing and with details of the designated Garda liaison inspectors as well as other sources of support.

In 2023, Fórum 50 %, an NGO promoting equal representation of women and men in politics and decision-making positions, made the topic of gender-based violence against female politicians and public figures more visible in the **Czech Republic**, particularly through the successful **#StopHate social media campaign**, in which female politicians read out the hateful comments they had received. The final slogan was “Don't write what you wouldn't say to their faces”. The campaign had a significant reach, effectively raising public awareness about VAWP.

A civil-society initiative Circle the Woman is the most recent and the most relevant initiative with a specific focus on women politicians in **Slovakia**. The aim is to increase women's participation in politics by encouraging people to **use preferential voting to select women candidates**. This initiative encouraged public discourse on the importance of equal female representation in politics and decision-making, while also drawing attention to the biggest challenges, such as continued sexism, stereotypes, misogyny, and the lack of prioritisation by political parties.

In **Hungary**, good practices primarily originate from civil society actors. While The Hungarian Women's Lobby, the only umbrella organization advocating for women's rights, does not operate a formal, institutionalized complaint mechanism for **reporting political harassment or abuse**, it has recently managed a project that documented such cases and raised awareness among women politicians of gender-based violence in the cyber space. In this context, it is important to note that many civil society organizations have been listed by Hungary's Sovereignty Protection Office as “foreign-funded actors.” This designation severely limits their operating space and politically stigmatizes them in the public sphere, which undermines their credibility in the eyes of public institutions. As a result, the very structures that could support and protect women facing abuse from those in power are weakened and delegitimized.

9. Recommendations

Violence against women in politics remains an inadequately addressed issue, despite its significant implications for democracy, rule of law and equality. Drawing on the outcomes of available research and on the analysis of existing policies and strategies, we recommend the following steps and practical actions when addressing the issue of VAWP:

1. Mobilizing political will and accountability

- Strengthen political will as a fundamental prerequisite for addressing gender-based violence in politics.
- Actively engage male politicians and parties' leadership – for example, through a pledge (a public commitment to support equality, respect, and zero tolerance for violence).
- Ensure broad cooperation across political parties in building a common culture of respect and safety.

2. Mapping the situation and data collection

- Regularly monitor the occurrence of violence against women in politics, including research on its impact on women in different political roles (e. g., candidates, local politicians, women from minority groups), and track intersecting categories and their distinct effects.
- Ensure that data monitoring political violence are gender-disaggregated.

3. Adopting legislation and institutional framework on VAWP

- Adopt a legal definition of VAWP and introduce specific provisions recognizing violence against women in politics as a unique and punishable criminal offence.
- Establish a dedicated police unit and ensure that the police adopt a gender-sensitive approach when dealing with victims, in order to avoid gender stereotyping and inappropriate remarks during investigations.
- Implement international obligations in the field of gender-based violence (CEDAW, Istanbul Convention, Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence).

4. Anchoring rules, adopting policies and report mechanisms

- Adopt or update the codes of conduct of parliaments and political parties and include clear definitions of both online and offline violent behaviour and harassing and their gendered aspect.
- Incorporate the investigation procedure and sanctions.
- Establish institutional reporting and complaints mechanisms and create safe, accessible, and confidential channels for reporting VAWP, ensuring victim protection and legal support.

5. Hold perpetrators accountable

- Ensure timely investigation and punishment of offenders, including public officials and political leaders who perpetrate or incite violence.

6. Provide trainings and support services for victims

- Provide trainings for women politicians and ensure support for unelected party affiliates on VAWP, including online hate speech. This should cover the manifestations and impacts of VAWP, as well as specific measures to counter it, including IT and legislative options.

- Provide tailored psychological, legal and security support for women in politics who experience violence.

7. Response to cyber violence and hate speech

- Strengthen the legal framework for regulating the online space and media environment.
- Ensure accountability of social media platform operators for content, including the implementation of relevant EU legislation (e. g., the Digital Services Act).

8. Preventing and awareness-raising measures

- Implement mandatory training for new Members of Parliament focused on the prevention of harassment and inappropriate behaviour, inspired by the model used in the European Parliament.
- Implement mandatory trainings on the prevention of harassment and inappropriate behaviour for party leadership, staff, and internal disciplinary bodies.
- Organize nationwide awareness-raising campaigns focused on the negative impacts of VAWP and on available tools and mechanisms for protection and redress.

9. International cooperation and exchange of good practices

- Make use of best practices and standards from other countries.
- Share experiences within the EU, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Council of Europe, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and other relevant bodies.

10. Promote gender quotas and electoral reform

- Advocate for gender quotas and incentives for parties to improve the representation of women candidates and implement measures to foster a safe and inclusive environment for all MPs.