Tool 3

Addressing Violence against Women in POLITICAL PARTIES

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Addressing Violence Against Women in Politics in the OSCE Region Toolkit

Tool 3: Addressing Violence Against Women in Political Parties

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

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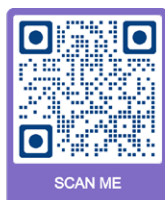Designed by Michael Lusaba
Illustrations by Aida Herceg

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Contents

Toolkit for Addressing Violence against Women in Politics in the OSCE Region

Violence against women in politics is a human rights violation, a barrier to women's political participation, and a serious challenge to the democracy, peace and security of the OSCE participating States. There is a need to respond to and eradicate its different manifestation in all areas of political life.

The 2018 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women acknowledges that "women engaged in professional activities with public exposure… are likely to be exposed to specific forms of violence or abuse, threats, and harassment, in relation to their work". It also "encourage(s) all relevant actors, including those involved in the political process, to contribute to preventing and combating all forms of violence against women, including those engaged in professional activities with public exposure and/or in the interest of society, by, inter alia, raising the issue in public debates, and developing awareness-raising initiatives and other appropriate measures, also considering the chilling impact of such violence on young women."

This Toolkit for Addressing Violence against Women in Politics in the OSCE Region aims to raise awareness and strengthen knowledge and capacities of OSCE participating States towards effective measures for addressing and responding to this type of violence. It offers five separate tools:

ODIHR's Toolkit for Addressing Violence Against Women in Politics in the OSCE Region

- **Tool 1 – the Introduction** defines violence against women in politics and describes solutions for effective prevention, protection of victims, the prosecution of perpetrators and coordination of policies.

- **Tool 2 - for Parliaments** provides data and examples of promising practices to guide parliaments towards measures which address violence against women in parliaments and beyond.

- **Tool 3 - for Political Parties** assists political parties in taking internal steps to tackle violence against women within their structures.

- **Tool 4 - for Civil Society** explores the role that civil society and women's movements can play in combating violence against women in politics.

- **Tool 5 - for Women in Politics** is a guide for women affected directly or indirectly by such violence about how to seek protection, remedy and support.

Introduction

Violence against women in politics[1] is increasingly recognized as a barrier to women's political participation. There is a need to respond to its manifestations in all areas of political life, including in political parties. That women should be involved, along with men, in decision-making is not just a question of fairness, but it is their right to participate equally. Without the presence of women, their interests and needs are less likely to be addressed in politics and in political parties, and women's perspectives will be missing in laws and policies that affect them and their communities.

Political parties are the main route into politics and they act as the gatekeepers of democracy. They are fundamental to participation in political life and therefore play a pivotal role in promoting equal participation and creating a violence-free political environment. Tackling violence against women in politics and political parties is essential for achieving gender equality in political life.

Every political party should have measures in place to address violence against women both within their structures and perpetrated by external actors towards party members, even when incidents of violence may not be apparent. This is because incidents are often only known about by those affected and there are significant disincentives to report violence. If there are no dedicated measures in place to report violence, hold perpetrators accountable and support those affected by such violence, it remains hidden and continues.

This tool is primarily a practical document to assist political parties in taking internal steps to tackle violence against women within their structures. It provides information on violence against women in political parties and what we know about its prevalence and effects, and how reporting could work within party structures. The tool also sets out steps that political parties can take individually and with other parties to address violence against women. The tool is illustrated throughout with examples of promising practices.

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1   This toolkit limits the definition of 'women in politics' to those serving in formal political roles, like candidates, members of political parties as well as elected and appointed officials.

Prevalence of Violence against Women in Political Parties

The UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences highlights that there is a dearth of data and indicators for measuring violence against women in politics at all levels. Acts of violence against women in politics may often be treated as isolated incidents rather than manifestations of structural discrimination against women in political and public life. Reasons for this include the difficulty in defining the concept as well as a lack of mechanisms to record incidents.[2]

Specific data on the experiences of violence among women political party members is rare. While there has been some evidence collected about violence against women in parliaments, much less is known about experiences in political parties. There is some evidence that women do not report incidents with political parties, as reporting within protected party structures and against a party member carries additional disincentives; for example, women fear that confronting male party colleagues could jeopardize their status or position.[3]

In 2018, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) undertook the first comprehensive survey of political party members on their experience of violence within party structures.[4] While the data was collected outside the OSCE region, namely from Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Tanzania, and Tunisia, the NDI survey findings provide invaluable insight into violence against women in political parties:

2   "Report on violence against women in politics", UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, 6 August 2018, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1640483?ln=en>.

3   "Political Participation and Violence against Women in Politics in Southeastern Europe", National Democratic Institute, Sarajevo 2021, <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Preliminary%20Report%20-%20Violence%20Against%20Women%20in%20Politics%20in%20Southeastern%20Europe.pdf>.

4   National Democratic Institute (NDI). 2018. No Party to Violence: Analyzing Violence against Women in Political Parties. Compendium Report of Country Pilots in Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Tanzania, and Tunisia. <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI_No_Party_to_Violence_ReportFinal.pdf>.

CASE STUDY - PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS: NDI SURVEY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICAL PARTIES[5]

The NDI findings demonstrated that women experience and witness violence within their parties more often and in different ways than their male counterparts, with violence occurring mainly on the municipal level in the form of psychological attacks and economic violence. The occurrence of violence increased as women rose to higher positions within the party. It was perpetrated most often by male fellow party members, followed by members of the party leadership. While certain reporting mechanisms existed within parties, they were regarded as inaccessible and inefficient, with a large share of violence going unreported. Demonstrating the protected party culture, women reporting violence did so mainly internally to party authorities and not externally to police. Party leadership was seen as needing to assume responsibility and do more to address such violence.

In 2018, the National Democratic Institute (NDI)[6] published a ground-breaking survey on Violence against Women in Political Parties, offering insight into the magnitude, type, perpetrators, and reporting of such violence within political parties.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WITHIN THE PARTY

- Party members think that women are more likely than men to be victims of violence within political parties (combined response; 46.9% of women respondents and 40.3% of men respondents).

- Women are more likely than men to witness the following forms of violence against others in the party: psychological attacks, threats and coercion, and sexual harassment.

PREVALENCE AND TYPES OF VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED WITHIN POLITICAL PARTIES

- More than half of the women surveyed (54.7%) experienced some form of violence within their parties while doing their party work.

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5   "No Party to Violence: Analyzing Violence against Women in Political Parties", National Democratic Institute (NDI), 2018, Preliminary Findings from Pilots in Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Tanzania, and Tunisia. National Democratic Institute (NDI). 2018, <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI_No_Party_to_Violence_ReportFinal.pdf>.

6   Sandra Pepera and Bridget Rittman-Tune from NDI have kindly provided their survey findings to ODIHR, for the purposes of this Toolkit.

- Women reported that psychological attacks, including threats and coercion (48%) and economic violence (36%) were most commonly experienced within political parties, followed by sexual violence (23%) and physical violence (20%).

- Women faced violence mainly when serving in higher positions within the party, whether as party officials (21.9%) or party candidates (18.8%). Women aspiring to be candidates or women party volunteers appear to be targeted less, pointing to the notion that women are increasingly targeted when gaining an increasing share of political power.

LOCATION AND PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE

- Women experienced violence mainly on the municipal level (66.7%), and to a much smaller extent at regional level (22.2%) and national level (11.1%). Perpetrators were also mainly working on municipal level (69.6%).

- The perpetrators were mainly male fellow party members (54.3%), followed closely by party leadership (45.7%).

Reporting and sanctioning of violence against women in political parties:

- Nearly one-third of women experiencing violence within the party (28.6%) had not reported the incident to anyone.

- Women respondents referred to various mechanisms available within the party to address such violence, 67.2% referring to party guidelines, and about half pointing to party rules, by-laws, and codes of conduct. However, the effectiveness of the party reporting and sanctioning systems seems questionable, with almost half the women respondents (48.4%) stating that such mechanisms were used only occasionally and only about a third of women found them somewhat accessible, useful and effective.

- If reporting the incident, most women turned to the party authority (25.7%) or the party's women's wing (20%), with only a small portion telling their family members (5.7%) or reporting to the police (8.6%).

■ **Percentage of women experiencing a particular type of violence while doing their political work**
Source: NDI Survey, 2018
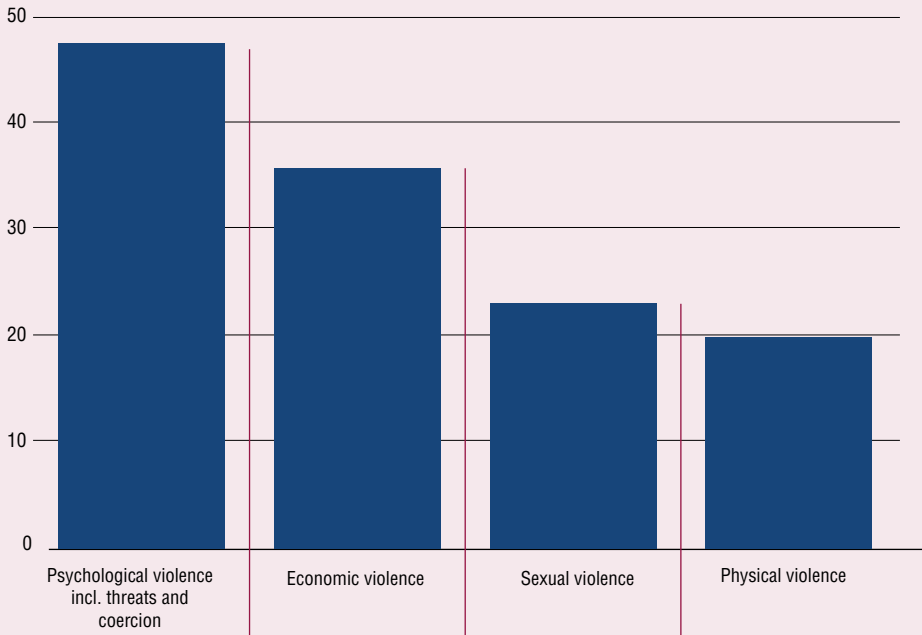
Examples in order of frequency, from highest to lowest

- Hate speech
- Defamation, slander, or character attacks
- Insults equating women's political participation with immoral practices
- Harassment by the media
- False accusations
- False assessment of environment (wrongly saying it is safe or unsafe)
- Harassment and threats online or on social media
- Threats
- Intimidation or blackmail
- Threats online or on social media

- Denial or delay in providing financial resources available to men
- Using money or other resources to control women party members
- Damage to personal property

- Unwanted sexual contact
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual exploitation
- Rape/unwanted sex

- Any

Challenges to Addressing Violence against Women in Political Parties

Political parties are one of the main entry points to politics and they act as gatekeepers of democracy. When political parties adopt effective gender equality measures within their own structures, they widen their support base, increase women's access to local government and parliaments, and contribute to better laws and policies for all.[7] As the starting point for getting involved in representative politics is often a political party, it is essential that violence against women within political parties is tackled. It must be addressed in all its forms (see the Introductory Tool on all forms of violence against women in politics).

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND PROTECTION OF THE PARTY'S REPUTATION

While some actions will be common to other areas of political life, it should be noted that there are specific challenges related to political parties. Political parties operate in a competitive environment, seeking electoral advantage and therefore there are legitimate reasons why some internal discussions and processes are not transparent or open.

The nature of political life also makes it difficult to collect reliable information. Sharing information publicly about violence experienced by members is likely to be detrimental to the reputation and public image of a political party. There is a strong disincentive to making it public, unless the information is accompanied by measures taken to tackle the issue.

Nonetheless, there are requirements for political parties to abide by specific laws and, whether or not the law requires it, political parties should be encouraged to give out more information publicly about the conduct of their members. Being clear about standards of behaviour and the actions taken where members fail to comply, will not only encourage more reporting of violence but also improve the party's public image.

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7   "Handbook on Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties", OSCE/ODIHR, 7 July 2014, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/120877>.

FEAR AND INTIMIDATION

Some women normalize this violence as simply the "cost of doing politics", while others choose to remain silent for fear of further victimization, retaliation, and blame for either the abuse or for reporting it. [8]

Due to their specific nature and the concept of party loyalty, political parties tend to play down any violence experienced within the party and discourage victims from reporting it, particularly if there is a power gap between the victim and the perpetrator.

REPORTING A 'FAMILY MEMBER'

There are also specific reasons that can make it difficult for women to raise a complaint within a political party against a party member. For some members of a political party, the experience is similar to being part of a family. Being a long-time member, having campaigned with people and shared similar visions, can make it very difficult to complain about another member.

TOO FEW WOMEN AND LACK OF SUPPORT

The fact that most political parties have more male members than female members also poses problems. The Gender Equality Observatory of the Institute of Public Affairs in Poland has described the situation facing women subject to violence as a vicious circle. "….The smaller the number of women in political parties and public authority bodies, the more difficult it is to raise this topic in the debate. On the other hand, the low level of women's participation in politics is caused, (…) also by the fear of violence against politically active women."[9]

NEGATIVE IMPACT ON A POLITICAL CAREER

In countries where there are only a few successful political parties, leaving the party may not be a realistic option for a woman. This may be the only party that reflects her political beliefs and leaving could have a devastating impact on her political career. Complaining may lead a woman to be viewed as weak or a troublemaker, which can also inhibit her political career. It is clear also that party members engaged in tackling violence against women in political parties may face the same risks, as well as accusations that such activities are damaging to the party's reputation.

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8   Mona Lena Krook, Violence against Women in Politics, (USA, Oxford University Press 2020), p. 3.

9   Małgorzata Druciarek, Aleksandra Niżyńska, "'It has become so pervasive that I keep forgetting about it', Violence against women on the Polish political scene", Institute of Public Affairs, 2021, <https://www.isp.org.pl/en/publications/it-has-become-so-pervasive-that-i-keep-forgetting-about-it-violence-against-women-on-the-polish-political-scene>.

Actions for Political Parties

RULES AND POLICIES

It is essential that political parties have in place suitable rules, processes and structures[10] to identify and respond to acts of violence against members of their party. These policies and measures should be adequately staffed and financed. If not, it will be impossible for a political party to ensure that it is clear that acts of violence are not tolerated.

Ideally, political parties will have in place wider gender equality commitments and measures to ensure that women have equal rights and opportunities in the party and that they are meaningfully represented within the party's governing bodies.[11] The principles of gender equality and non-discrimination are laid out in various international human rights standards and, for example, the Beijing Platform for Action encourages political parties to consider setting up specific measures to ensure women's equal and full participation in party decision-making and leadership. Furthermore, it encourages political parties to assess party structures and policies, including recruitment, appointment and career advancement systems, to achieve gender equality. Parties should also include gender issues in their political agendas.[12]

Additionally, there must be a clear policy that violence against women is not acceptable. This may be achieved in a number of ways. It could be included in a code of conduct that also covers other issues. **Codes of conduct are an important way to influence the culture of a party**. Some parties may prefer to make this clear within their founding documents or rules. It is important to review policies regularly and update them to reflect new and emerging violent behaviour. There should be comprehensive definitions of violence against women in politics and effective measures to address violence within the party. Parties should publish these policies on their websites to encourage transparency and openness. This will also help to raise awareness and encourage other political parties to take similar steps.

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10 See for example, the Inter-American Commission of Women. Model Protocol for Political Parties: Preventing, Addressing, Punishing and Eradicating Violence against Women in Political Life. 2019. Available at: <http://www.oas.org/en/cim/>

11 "Guidelines on Political Party Regulation, second edition", OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission, 14 December 2020, <https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2020)032-e>.

12 "The Beijing Platform for Action", Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September 1995, Arts. 191-192, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>.

SAFE SPACES AND ALLIES

Political parties should support creating safe spaces for women. Many political parties have women's wings or organizations and these can provide a safe space, solidarity and support. In addition, an organization of women members can ensure that women members can speak collectively for fellow women members. Men also have a role to play and can act as male allies by supporting the introduction of structural measures, attending and promoting training and awareness-raising activities.

REPORTING AND COMPLAINTS SYSTEM

There must be a confidential reporting system within the political party that ensures women can have the confidence to report violent incidents, knowing they will be taken seriously. An independent committee or party governing body could handle reporting and complaints. This will build the confidence of women members to report to the party. It is essential that members' databases and records related to individual complaints are private and secure.

There must be rigorous processes to hold members to account for violent behaviour which meet standards of fairness while protecting those reporting the behaviour. The prohibition of reprisals against complainants and witnesses should be ensured. These processes need to recognize also that, in certain cases, the behaviour may also be a criminal offence so that contact with the police or other authorities may be necessary. Investigation and hearings must be conducted in a way that gives confidence to complainants and those accused. This means that those carrying out the processes must be independent from any direct or indirect instructions from the party leadership or structures. It could also mean ex officio proceedings.[13]

It is also important to consider the gender balance of those engaged in investigation and hearings. Depending on the particular circumstances, other diversity issues, such as ethnicity and disability, may need to be considered to ensure fair processes. In cases of gender-based violence and harassment, international standards also prohibit mandatory alternative dispute resolution processes, including mediation and conciliation.[14] The process should end with a detailed report on the case, the proceedings, conclusions and follow-up measures (see below: Effective sanctions and reparations). Parties should ensure implementation of and accountability for follow-up measures and be sure that the violence has stopped. An appeals mechanism should be also put in place and applied in cases of dismissal or where there has been a procedural irregularity, where new evidence has emerged, or where there is a conflict of interest or bias.

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13   See for example, the Inter-American Commission of Women. Model Protocol, *op. cit.*, note 10.

14   See for example, Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), Council of Europe, Istanbul, 11 May 2011, Art. 48, <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e>.

Parties should consider putting in place safety and protection measures to prevent further violence against complainants, providing advocates for complainants and referral to support services. Facing violence from a fellow party member is distressing and can be compounded by the complaints procedure. Providing safety, advocacy, support, and up-to-date information on the process helps the complainant and safeguards a comprehensive and fair process.

If no formal party mechanism exists for reporting violence by fellow party members, or by other perpetrators — be they from another party, the media, the general public, or the online community — parties should at least be able to inform, advise, guide, and support their members, confidentially, on the options for reporting and recourse. This can take the form, for example, of an information guide, to include contacts to relevant police or security services, or by designating a focal person within the party to provide information and support.

CASE STUDY - GREEN PARTY OF FINLAND: MEASURES AND TOOLS TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS[15]

The Finnish Green Party has introduced concrete measures and developed tools to end violence against women in their party and beyond:

PREVENTION

- **Contract for Candidates:** When becoming a candidate for any elections for the Finnish Green Party, candidates must sign a candidacy contract which also prescribes that they are not to use any discriminatory themes in their campaign or harm other Green candidates in any way.

- **Safety and Security Training**: The Finnish Green Party provides training on safety and security for candidates running for elections. The training is offered to all party candidates, but as harassment and violence in politics are gendered, this training largely benefits women and minorities' candidates.

- **Online Safety Training**: The party offers a training session for all its candidates about online safety, best practices, prevention, and responses to violence.

15   Green Party of Finland. 2022. Information kindly provided by Aiski Ryökäs of the Finnish Green Women's Association.

- **Safe Spaces:** The Finnish Green Party aims to implement safe space policies in many of its events. Safe spaces aim to ensure that all participants in an event or meeting agree to follow safe space guidelines, creating an atmosphere where everyone feels welcome and not discriminated against. The guidelines are often presented in the event invitation or at the start of the event. The goal is for those participants who are often discriminated against to feel welcome to participate in discussions and social change. Safe spaces are inherently beneficial for all participants; however, because of the gendered nature of harassment, the policy largely protects women and minority members.

PROTECTION

- **Online Support Service for Candidates:** For victims of online violence, the party offers a discount deal for the service or a free subscription for people with special needs, for example young candidates. The service is offered to all candidates, but as online violence in politics is gendered, this service largely supports women, youth, and other minorities' candidates.

- **Safe: Green Women Guidebook against Online Violence**[16] .This guidebook was prepared by the Green Women supporting women in combating online violence.

- **Safety Training for Green Women Candidates:** A women-specific safety training course is organized by Green Women during campaign periods for women candidates running for elections.

- **Referral to External Support Services:** Contacts of various support services for women victims of online violence are listed in the Safe: Green Women Guidebook against Online Violence.

REPORTING

- **Designated Reporting Points in the Party:** The Finnish Green Party has designated contact people to whom any harassment or violence occurring during its events should be reported. This is for the benefit of all participants. However, because of the gendered nature of harassment, the process is mainly by women and other minorities.

- **Designated Reporting Liaison in the Police:** A direct phone number and email address to a liaison officer of the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service is provided, for reporting cases of harassment or violence for all candidates and politicians of

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16 This guidebook was originally published by Vihreät Naiset (Green Women) for a Finnish audience. It has now been adapted and translated by Green European Foundation and its partners for European readers.

the Finnish Green Party, as needed. This service is not women-specific, but with an adequate understanding of women-specific issues and types of violence against women in politics.

- **Guidance for Reporting Online Violence:** Guidance on how and whom to contact (internally and externally) for reporting online violence is listed in the Safe: Green Women Guidebook against Online Violence.

- **Individualized Response to Violence:** The Party's response to a reported incidence of violence is determined on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with those experiencing it. It might involve internal or external conversations or mediation, support to reporting the incident to the police or the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service, or mental support.

PARTNERSHIPS

- **Cross-party advocacy to end violence against women in politics:** The Green Women is a member of a cross-party NGO, Nytkis, a women's rights advocacy organization connecting women's organizations from every Finnish parliamentary party. To end violence against women in politics, collaborative advocacy campaigns, pledges, statements, and calls to action are organized under the umbrella of Nytkis and with women's organizations of other parties. Nytkis also runs a specific campaign during election campaign periods, addressing violence against women in politics.

GREEN PARTY OF FINLAND: MEASURES AND TOOLS TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

PREVENTION	PROTECTION	REPORTING	PARTNERSHIP
• Contract for candidates Safety and security training • Online safety training • Safe spaces	• Online support service for candidates experiencing online violence • Safe: Green Women Guidebook against Online Violence • Safety training for Green women candidates • Referral to external support services	• Reporting points in the party • Reporting liaison in the police • Guidance for reporting online violence	• Cross-party advocacy • Campaigns during election periods • Joint pledges, statements, calls to action

EFFECTIVE SANCTIONS AND REPARATIONS

There must be effective sanction mechanisms, imposed by the independent body that hears complaints. Depending on the law of the country, party rules and the nature of offence, these could include financial penalties, suspension from the party for a period of time or expulsion; a ban from representing the party or standing for elected office. The party complaint and sanction mechanism is separate from any legal remedies that a person can pursue within their national legal framework.

Similarly, women affected by violence should have the right to reparation for verified harm and violence. This can include, for example, compensation or restoration of political duties or positions.

DATA COLLECTION

Political parties must collect information on cases of violence against their members. This is essential to understanding the situation and to reassuring all members that the issue is being taken seriously. It is important to recognize that it will remain difficult for women to report their experiences, because of the distress caused by violent incidents and the many disincentives to reporting incidents within political parties. To improve understanding of the extent and nature of the problem, political parties should regularly undertake confidential surveys of women members.

There should be clear responsibility for oversight and data should be passed regularly to the highest body of the party. Parties should consider publishing annual numbers and details of the measures in place. This will show that the party takes violence against women seriously, will raise awareness of the issue and increase knowledge and understanding. Parties should also consider how they can continue to improve policies and procedures to reduce incidents and support victims.

LEADERSHIP

Political parties should show leadership in tackling violence against women. This means leaders being clear about the unacceptability of violence; ensuring that rules and procedures to address violence against women in politics are in place, and that there is regular training and activities to raise awareness of the issues. The attitude of the party leadership and the measures they take are key to changing behaviours and the organizational culture of a party. A number of political parties have gender quotas for leadership positions. Ensuring that there is equal representation in leadership roles within a party can help promote an inclusive culture for men and women, as well as signify the value placed on women's leadership.

AWARENESS-RAISING AND REGULAR TRAINING

Political parties need to raise awareness of the problem of violence against women party members. Consideration should be given to providing training to all party members. This should cover issues related to structural discrimination and gender equality as well as specific focus on violence against women in politics. Party members who investigate and hear complaints about violence against women should receive specific training to ensure they are both knowledgeable and capable of acting in an independent manner and forward cases of violence pursuant to criminal offences to the authorities.

It could be a requirement for those holding office or seeking to become candidates for local and national elections to complete training. The party should hold events to raise awareness and publicise its actions. One option is to use national and international events such as International Women's Day to promote awareness.

> ◉ In Sweden, the National Federation of Social Democratic Women (S-kvinnor) has published a handbook, the Power Handbook[17], which promotes ways to resist men's use of dominance techniques. The handbook articulates ways for women to obtain, keep and utilize power. The book not only explores how power is accessible and can be achieved within institutions, but also in everyday interactions and personal relationships. It has been published in eight languages. In general, the idea of domination techniques — as well as the strategies to combat them — has been disseminated to many political parties and organizations across the country.

GENDER AUDITS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

A party's response to violence in their structure often closely reflects the party's broader attitude towards transparency and inclusion. Parties which place high value on intra-party democracy, accountability, gender equality, or non-discrimination would likely be less tolerant of violence or sexism within their ranks or from their party members, because violence against women is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. Violence experienced within political parties is not an isolated event, but rather a product of a party's broader policies, procedures, and culture. In turn, making parties more gender sensitive makes them less prone and better prepared to address violence against women in their ranks and beyond.

ODIHR's Online Gender Audit Tool for Political Parties can support parties which want to improve gender equality within their structures, ultimately improving their policies and cultures to prevent or respond to violence against women in their ranks and beyond.

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17   Available at: <https://s-kvinnor.se/var-politik/political-program/the-power-handbook/>, (accessed on 25 May 2022)

The Gender Audit provides a set of questions intended to identify the level of gender equality in political party structures, processes, procedures, and formal and informal practices. The results can help political parties identify their strengths and areas for development as well as provide examples of good practice. A tailor-made digital report is produced for the party, serving as a roadmap for gender equality development within the party. [18]
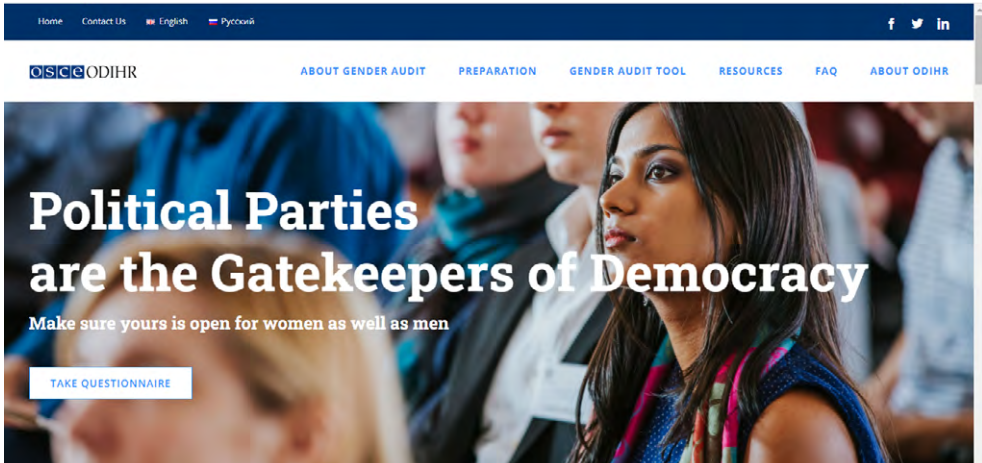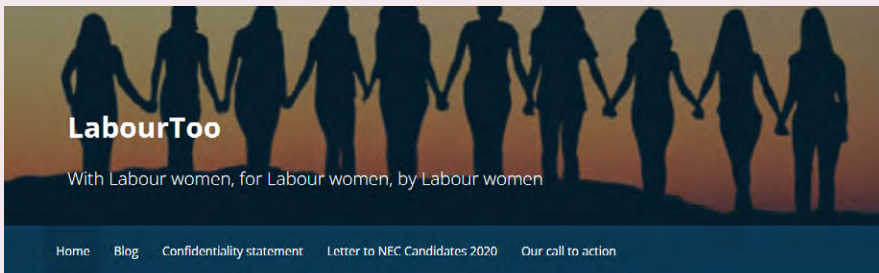

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS

Political parties can also engage in and support advocacy campaigns to tackle violence against women in their structures and in politics more broadly. Social media provides an easy way to participate and amplify messaging by using hashtags. Some examples of previous and current advocacy campaigns addressing violence against women in political parties and in politics are given below:

CASE STUDY - #LABOURTOO

The public debate and actions to address violence against women in politics intensified in United Kingdom in 2016 after the murder of a woman MP, Jo Cox. A Parliamentary Liaison and Investigations Team established by the Metropolitan Police and a study on abuse and intimidation of parliamentary candidates aimed to assess the prevalence of such violence in parliaments and provide additional security to parliamentarians. These initial efforts to address such violence in the parliament, also encouraged by the global #MeToo movement, eventually led to targeted actions in the UK to address violence within political parties as well.

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18   Gender Audit Tool for Political Parties, OSCE/ODIHR, 2020, <https://genderaudit.osce.org/>.

LabourToo was established in late 2017 by a group of Labour women, providing a platform for exchanging experiences of sexual harassment, abuse and discrimination faced by women in the Labour Party and advocating for change to policies and cultural norms within the party. These efforts demonstrate the resolve of the Labour Party women to address violence against women in the party. They are shedding light on the experiences of fellow party women, assessing the party and gathering evidence on the magnitude of violence. Furthermore they are seeking collaborative change to improve policies, the complaints mechanism, and support for those experiencing this violence in the Labour party.

- **What is LabourToo?** LabourToo is a platform where Labour party women can safely "share their stories of sexual harassment and abuse within the Labour Party anonymously, so that (they) could build a compendium of the types of abuse women face which all too often are unseen, ignored or swept under the carpet."[19]

- **Who is LabourToo?** It is an informal and anonymous group of Labour party women and not an official party organ. All LabourToo members are Labour Party members, all with current or previous positions of responsibility in the party and with strong commitment and loyalty to the party.

- **Why is LabourToo anonymous?** Because it is difficult to speak out about violence experienced within the party and those doing so should be provided with highest levels of confidentiality and safety.

- **Where can you find LabourToo?** Online, at the LabourToo website.

- **Is LabourToo only for women?** Though this project was aimed at gathering evidence of violence against women in the party, men were also encouraged to record their stories.

19   About the LabourToo Project, 2017, <https://labourtoo.org.uk/>.

- **What is the LabourToo survey and what did it show?** The LabourToo website offered a confidential survey, where women (and men) could anonymously report their experiences of sexual harassment, abuse and discrimination in the Labour Party. The survey collected 43 anonymised stories from Labour women party staff, activists, politicians and candidates at national and local level and shared it with party leadership, requesting action and a better response to complaints.

- The survey identified some common themes. In particular, it highlighted that it is well known who the perpetrators are within the party, yet they face no consequences for their actions. There appeared to be routine abuse of women by senior people in positions of trust. The party's formal complaint or sanction process was seen as inefficient and women intending to report violence within the party were either dissuaded from filing a formal complaint or did not feel adequately supported in doing so. Guidance and safeguards to prevent or reduce the risk of violence were lacking. There was poor understanding among Labour men as to what constitutes harassment or violence.[20]

- **Does the Labour Party have a formal complaints mechanism on violence against women in the party?** Yes. The Labour Party has dedicated policies aiming to "provide a safe space for people to engage in campaigning and other political activity. The Party has a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and will take all complaints of this nature extremely seriously."[21] The Labour Party has a formal Sexual Harassment Procedure, a Code of Conduct on Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination, and a specific Complaint Form available on the party website, including the possibility to complain about sexism or misogyny, or sexual harassment.

- **What is LabourToo's Call to Action?** LabourToo is calling for a number

  of measures to address violence and harassment in the party, including compulsory training and improved party policies to support victims and shift the party culture. LabourToo has campaigned most actively — also in a Twitter campaign — for the introduction of a fully independent sexual harassment complaints process within the party, to ensure that cases of violence are adequately investigated and sanctioned.

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20 "LabourToo calls for change to complaints process following submission of report into sexual harassment, abuse and discrimination in the Labour Party", LabourToo blog page, 28 February 2018, <https://labourtoo.org.uk/blog/>.

21 Labour Party Sexual Harassment Procedure, <https://labour.org.uk/complaints/sexual-harassment/>.

LabourToo

Anonymous website and sharing of women's experiences

Informal platform of Labour Party Women to shed light on violence aginst women in the party

Survey gathering evidence on violence against women in the party

In addtion to the Labour Party's formal complaints mechanism

Advocating for an independent sexual harassment complaints process within the party

Call to Action, including compulsory training and better party policies

CROSS-PARTY WORK

Political parties not only need to address the issue within their own parties but they should be advocates for wider engagement. Joint work with other political parties is an opportunity to improve the situation collectively. This can be prompted by particular events such as election campaigns for local government bodies and parliaments; for example, cross-party codes of conduct can be agreed and signed. Supporting national and international campaigns on violence against women in politics also provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the issue, such as International Women's Day (8 March) or the 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-based Violence (25 November – 10 December). Outside an election, one can cooperate on developing codes of conduct or signing up to behavioural contracts within particular institutions such as parliament or local councils.

These activities should not be used to denigrate particular political parties. For example, one political party may accuse another of not taking the situation seriously as they refuse to sign up to a cross-party code of conduct. This often leads to the issue of violence against women being lost among other political battles, especially where there are tensions between political parties.

Political parties, leaders, and representatives, such as MPs, mayors and councillors, should consider taking part in activities alongside other parties to promote awareness and increase understanding.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Political parties should look at working with civil society organizations engaged in preventing violence against women (in politics). Activities could include learning from their knowledge and experience and working on awareness-raising, training and events. Additionally, specialized women's organizations often provide the best support services to those affected by violence against women.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

International political party organizations can also play a role. One example is Liberal International, the world federation of liberal and progressive democratic political parties, which promotes the need to improve the response to women members experiencing violence. The foreword to its handbook, "Beyond the Numbers: Building Inclusive Political Parties for Success, also states, "Even though we never have witnessed as many women in powerful political positions as we do today, we also know that female politicians are being threatened, persecuted and silenced every day, simply because they choose to speak up."[22] It goes on to state, "It is therefore important that the party provides strong institutional support for women to ensure that they feel safe, secure, and empowered to pursue their full potential. For this purpose, it is important to introduce a code of conduct, an anonymous whistle-blower function for reporting cases of harassment, threats and/or physical violence, and clear sanctions for perpetrators." [23]

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22   "Beyond the Numbers: Building Inclusive Political Parties for Success", Liberal International Inclusivity Handbook, Liberal International et al, 2020, accessed on 14 March 2022, <https://liberal-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/WIPPI-Handbook-2020.pdf>.

23   *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Conclusion

As the "gatekeepers of democracy", political parties have a responsibility to ensure that all citizens, women and men in all their diversity, can participate in parties and in politics without fearing or experiencing violence, and can receive due protection and support in case such violence occurs. While it is clear that political parties compete with each other for electoral success and thus require a certain level of confidentiality regarding their internal processes, parties cannot ignore or tolerate violence against women in politics for the sake of loyalty or the party's reputation. Parties that are able to provide a violence-free environment and culture will demonstrate accountability and build trust, ultimately attracting talent and votes.

Studies show that violence within political parties appears to be under-reported. Women experience violence within political parties differently to their male counterparts. Women in higher positions within a party experience violence more frequently, perpetrated mainly by male fellow party members. Reporting mechanisms within parties are often inefficient and, in turn, victims largely refrain from reporting violence. Party leadership needs to assume more responsibility for addressing violence against women in political parties.

Whether required by law or not, political parties should have in place adequate rules, processes and structures to identify and respond to acts of violence against members of their party. Without these, it will be impossible for a political party to ensure that there is clarity that acts of violence are not tolerated.

Ideally, political parties will have in place wider gender-equality commitments and measures to ensure that women have equal rights and opportunities in the party and that they are meaningfully represented within the governing bodies of the party. An inclusive party environment with clear and transparent rules and procedures, such as Codes of Conduct or Member Commitments on Non-Violence, can prevent violence from occurring in the first place and can provide adequate protection, support, and guidance to those experiencing it.

A confidential and efficient reporting system should be in place within a political party, ensuring that victims have the confidence to report incidences of violence and know they will be taken seriously. A rigorous and independent investigation process that meets standards of fairness should hold members to account for violent behaviour while protecting those reporting such behaviour.

Effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions should be in place. These processes need to recognize that, in certain cases, the violent behaviour may also be a criminal offence, and that the police or other authorities may have to be contacted.

A positive and inclusive party culture will help to address violence against women in political parties. The party leadership should speak loud, and clear, about zero-tolerance to any form of violence within the party, accompanied by awareness-raising, training courses, and advocacy campaigns. Working with women members and women's wings to empower and facilitate women's voices and agency within the party, collaborating with civil society, the media, or across parties are key elements in ensuring that violence against women in political parties is addressed.

Annexe 1: Checklist for Political Parties to Prevent Violence against Women in Politics

TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WITHIN POLITICAL PARTIES POLITICAL PARTY ACTION CHECKLIST

POLICIES & PROCEDURES	Yes / No	Comments
Comprehensive definitions of violence against women in political parties and politics		
Party policies published on website, such as codes of conduct, member commitments on non-violence, or complaints process		
Policies and measures are accompanied with adequate human and financial resources		
Complaints process available with confidential reporting		
Safety measures, support, guidance, and information provided to complainants		
Independent and rigorous investigation into incidents		
Prohibition of reprisals against complainants and witnesses		
Forwarding of complaints to authorities outside the party, as necessary		
A fair and robust disciplinary process with effective sanctioning of perpetrators and reparations for complainants		
Implementation of sanctions and reparations, and ensuring that violence has stopped		
Regular review of policies and procedures to update for new or emerging violent behaviours		

POSITIVE CULTURE		
Party leaders are clear about the unacceptability of violence; e.g., speeches, statements		
Regular awareness-raising events		

Training for members on recognizing and responding to violence and on party processes		
Safe spaces for women		
Regular surveys to identify the experiences of members		
Gender audit of political party, assessing broader gender equality		
Advocacy campaigns		
Engagement with civil society organizations		

CROSS-PARTY ACTIVITIES		
Codes of conduct		
Joint cross-party events		