A tool for groups to start a process of feminisation of politics

GUIDE

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This guide is an introduction to a process created in order to introduce the concept of feministisation of politics within a group, collectivity, community and provide a common frame for the identification of each organization’s needs and weaknesses in this area.

This work is done in collaboration with the Feministisation of Politics collective, a Europe-wide alliance of non-male persons active in different European municipalist movements and organisations, whose aim is to transform the governance of political processes according to feminist values.

In particular, the guide is a further development of the feminist self-assessment created by the Collective at the beginning of its work and embedded in the first report of the collective. Here, the same questions and issues are presented in a new format, easier to use in the framework of organisations that want to reflect on themselves, with or without the help of sister/allied organisations.

See also the executive summary here:
municipalisteurope.org/ feminisation-of-politics/ post/feminisation-of-politics-report

municipalisteurope.org/ feminisation-of-politics/ post/fop-executive-report
The process developed proposes a sequence of questions, activities and tools with the aim of helping to visualise and self-diagnose the situation in one’s own social and political paths with respect to the feministisation of politics.

The guide is conceived as a questionnaire, where the participants use questions and reflect about the issues they need to act, confronting each other about the ways the feministisation of politics takes place or is missing in their organization.

→ NOTES
Self-diagnosis [p.10 - 12]

municipalisteurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/FoP_Final-Report-VF.pdf

The questions were focused on the concept of feminisation and the elements identified towards feminist practices within the organisations. It works as a collective reflection in each participating organisation, as a way to set up the main directions and ideas.
WHAT IS FEMINISTISATION OF POLITICS?

Radical democracy is key for true and sustainable change in any area of activism, from fighting climate change to defending social rights or implementing a more sustainable economy. It puts decisions in the hands of those who are directly affected by them and, in general, are excluded from the decision-making process. In this context, feministising politics emerges as a sine qua non condition for radical democracy. If organizations continue to be hierarchical and patriarchal, they will keep on excluding some people, because they simply cannot or do not want to adjust to masculine ways of doing. In addition, it will be less likely for our projects to benefit from collective intelligence. Values and practices that have traditionally been underestimated in political life need to be promoted, such as the search for consensus, empathy and cooperation, non-academic experience, collective leadership and care.
The shift from the (more immediate) expression “feminisation of politics” to “feministisation of politics” aims to not to turn politics into something more feminine, but rather more feminist. In some specific national contexts, they would rather use the expression “depatriarchalisation of politics” to underline the refusal of essentialist and binary conceptions of gender that the expression “feministisation of politics” seem to imply; indeed, they explain that “feminisation” reproduces the characteristics attributed to each gender by a patriarchal and macho society, and therefore are looking for other terms to be used as reflection of more diverse identities concerned by the feminist struggles. Here, we keep the expression “feministisation of politics” for the sake of simplicity, while acknowledging the essential non-binary meaning of “feministisation of politics.”
WHY WE SHOULD FEMINISTIZE POLITICS?

The objective of these exercises is to produce a first approach on the topic of feminisation of politics and provide a useful tool, not just for organisations, but also for individual and collective reflection.

It may help you and your organisation to identify where you’re at with respect to the feminisation of politics, which problems your organisation faces and the main lines of action to feminise your organisation further on. It is also a great tool to start a debate, and to involve people in it with a specific outcome.

This guide can be used within a working table or in a group that wants to introduce the topic in their organisation. They are useful to visualise internally the perception and knowledge of the topic and create discussion within an organisation.

If you want to share the results or the process with our project, feminisation of politics, it is also an opportunity to broaden our network and continue learning together.
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE?

Our recommendation is to use this guide to work in a small group in your organisation. The objective is to discuss real practices, ideals and tools to implement the AXES of the feminisation of politics in your organization.

Then, after the process done in the small group, the results of the discussion can be reported back to the whole organization and seek a common decision-making agreement for action in order to implement feminisation of politics. During the process, we recommend that you give the possibility for participants to easily consult the definition of Feministisation of Politics and of the glossary.

You can contact the collective who worked on the project to request further information or to have an informal discussion about the procedure and the issues proposed in this guide. This might help you initiating the process in your organisation. Each of following parts can be done in separate phases. One can consider the long-term work where the questionnaire is a part of the feminisation of politics process.
WHO CAN SUPPORT ME USING THIS GUIDE?

Remember this guide is just a starting point, or an opportunity for a collective reflection. Assessment and diagnose are the first steps to be taken before starting to feministisation of politics. Don’t forget there is a broad number of women and organisations working on the topic that can support and learn from each others, share good practices and grow stronger together. If you want to share the results or the process with our project, feministisation of politics, it is also an opportunity to broaden our network and continue learning together.

Contact our group of feministisation of politics for other information and to be part of our network.

COMMENTS

We would appreciate any comments, suggestions, feedback or proposals to improve this tool. Please do not hesitate in contact us with your comments.

CONTACT

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CONCLUSION
WHERE TO FIND THE PROJECT’S MATERIALS?
Feminise Politics Now
rosalux.eu/en/article/1586.feminise-politics-now.html

Feministisation of Politics Report
municipalisteurope.org/feministisation-of-politics/post/feminisation-of-politics-report

Feministisation of Politics MOOC
municipalisteurope.org/feministisation-of-politics/post/feministisation-mooc

Feministisation of Politics Podcast
municipalisteurope.org/fop/fop-podcast

Feministisation of Politics Fanzine
Link?

European Municipalist Network MAP
municipalisteurope.org.mapping
HOW IS THIS GUIDE STRUCTURED?
This guide contains 6 exercises to help you to visualise and self-diagnose the status quo about your CONTEXT and your ORGANIZATION with respect to the AXES of feministisation of politics. The guide and exercises are based on a questionnaire created and used by the FoP Collective.

To make the exercises easier to read, all questions will be placed at the beginning of the reference area with a description of the area itself. You thus have the opportunity to tick off the questions and related exercises already discussed. This will enable you to keep track of your progress and the exercises you have already done.
Three areas will be explored throughout the exercises:

- **CONTEXT** → exercises nr. 1 + 2
- **ORGANIZATION** → exercises nr. 3 + 4 + 5
- **AXES** → exercise nr. 6

The last exercise is an additional insight that can bring in new tools/practices to apply by your organization and is related to the area AXES.

You can do the exercises proposed according to the level of awareness that your organisation has (in your opinion) concerning feministisation of politics:

- **BASIC** → exercises nr. 1 - 3
- **INTERMEDIATE** → exercises nr. 1 - 5
- **ADVANCED** → exercises nr. 1 - 6

→ LET’S START
The CONTEXT refers to the local environment in which your organization is embedded (Eg.: city, region). You can decide the scale of the context for the purpose of these exercises. The CONTEXT analysis is proposed in order to identify and reflect on the general behaviors and opinions of the social context where your organization works, with respect to gender issues and the principles/axis of the feminisation of politics.
● QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE CONTEXT AREA

☒ What do you think feministisation of politics means?

☒ Which, would you say, is the perception towards feminism in your political context?

☒ Do you consider that feministisation of politics is being discussed/implemented in the political organizations of your context?

☒ What is the general perception in society towards gender issues?

☒ Do you consider there is a strong anti-gender discourse in your context?

➔ EXTRA CONTENT

if you have time you can integrate the discussion with this other question:

☒ Do you have strong links with other organizations to work on gender issues? How do you work on them?
EXERCISE 1

Take a sheet of paper large enough (min. A3) to note the contributions of all participants.

Ask one of the participants to read to all the other participants the example below.

Open the discussion.

Write down the important points.

WHAT IS FEMINISTISATION OF POLITICS FOR THE FOP COLLECTIVE?

Eg.: There are different dimensions of feministisation of politics that you can take into account. For example, the feministisation of politics collective thought of things like:

how many women have apical/representative roles in the organisations/movements belonging to your context?

which importance is given in your context to redistribution of care roles?

NOTES
See definition [pp.4]
WHAT DO YOU THINK FEMINISTISATION OF POLITICS MEANS?
EXERCISE 2

Take a sheet of paper large enough (min. A1) to draw the diagram FIG.1 proposed below. This support must be able to contain answer post-its for each question, and the contributions of all participants.

Please assign a post-it color to each question (there are 4 questions proposed below).

Please on each coloured post-it write the keyword corresponding to each question:

- FEMINISM perception → Question 1
- FEMINISTISATION → Question 2
- GENERAL perception → Question 3
- ANTI-GENDER → Question 4

Each participant should have 4 post-its.

One participant should read to the others one question at a time. As each question is read out loud all participants answer each question individually with a post-it. Each person should answer the questions by putting the post-its (color) on the axes of the large axis-map FIG.1 according to the status quo that they see in your context.
QUESTION

- Which, would you say, is the perception towards FEMINISM in your political context?

- Do you consider that FEMINISTISATION of politics is being discussed/implemented in the political organizations of your context?

- What is the GENERAL perception in society towards gender issues?

- Do you consider there is a strong ANTI-GENDER discourse in your context?
EXAMPLES

You can take the key words contained within the question and write them on the post-it of the color assigned to the question.

It is recommended that you assign a color for each question so that you can get the perception of the theme in its personal and collective declinations. You can compile each post-it with specific examples.

Eg.: concerning question 4 (post-it Thema: anti-gender), you think that the organisations in your context have a lot of interest but very little energy to dedicate. In this case, you should take the coloured post-it with the keyword “ANTI-GENDER” and put it in the upper-left part of the axis-map. Fig. 1

NOTE

Eg.: you can see the example of the correct placement of the post-it ANTI-GENDER example in Fig. 1 depicted by a white square.
EXERCISE 2

FIG. 1

CONTEXT

HIGH

LOW

resources

interest
to invest in this issues
to invest in this issues
The ORGANIZATION refers to the activist environment where you are working. Municipalist organisations can have different forms: NGOs, associations, parties, informal movements, and others. Moreover, each organization is entangled in a network of other organizations (Eg.: national networks, allied organisations, institutional partners...). This part of the Guide focuses on the whole ecosystem represented by your organization and its networks.

→ NOTES
see the EMN mapping: municipalisteurope.org/mapping
QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE ORGANISATION AREA

- What do you think feministisation of politics means for your organisation?

- How would you describe the feministisation of politics efforts on: the level of individual members and the movement as whole and? Are there tensions between these two levels? If yes, which ones? If no, why do you think it is so?

- How would you define the level of your movement development in: introducing feministisation of politics within the membership; integrating the feministisation of politics principles in internal structure and organisation, and the activities of the movement; elaborate on correlation between your movement’s internal policies and practices in regards to feministisation of politics.

- Which specific challenges are you facing in terms of implementing feminist practices in your organisation?

- What, if anything, have you done so far to address the issue of feministising your organisation?
EXERCISE 3

Take a sheet of paper large enough (min. A3) to note the contributions of all participants.

One participant should read to the others the example below and the important points noted during exercise 1.

Open the discussion.

Write down the important points.

WHAT IS Feministisation OF POLITICS FOR THE FOP COLLECTIVE?

Eg.: There are different dimensions of feministisation of politics that you can take into account. For example, the feministisation of politics collective thought of things like:

- are there specific resources in your organisation allocated to processes of women empowerment?
- is variety of languages considered and practiced as a tool to improve diversity in your organisation?
WHAT DO YOU THINK FEMINISTISATION OF POLITICS MEANS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION?
EXERCISE 4

Take a sheet of paper (A4) every question, If you prefer, write the answer on the computer.

You will be asked to write down the status quo as perceived by all participants and come to a common agreement.

One participant should read to the others one point at a time.

Open the discussion.

Write down the important points.

To facilitate you can assign a value from 0 to 5 (where 0 is min. and 5 is max.) to define the level at the time you do the exercise

Keeping in mind that the presence in your process and practice of the FoP AXES determines a good process of feminisation of politics answer each point collectively.
QUESTION

How would you define the level of your movement development in:

- **INTRODUCING** feministisation of politics within the membership;

- **INTEGRATING** the feministisation of politics principles in internal structure and organisation, and the activities of the movement;

- **ELABORATE** on correlation between your movement’s internal policies and practices in regards to feministisation of politics.
EXERCISE 5

Take a sheet of paper large enough (min. A1) to draw the table on the next page. If you prefer, create the diagram on the computer.

You will be asked to write down the status quo as perceived by all participants and come to a common agreement.

One participant should read to the others the titles of feministisation of politics’ AXES.

Keeping in mind that the presence in your process and practice of these AXES determines a good process of feministisation of politics.

Answer each question collectively.

One participant should read to the others one question at a time.

To facilitate the exercise, you find examples at p. 28.

> NOTES

Find the FoP Axes at the end of the exercise 5

A list of these AXES should be readable by participants during the exercise (for example, you can project it on a screen, write it on a flipchart, etc.)
→ QUESTION

☐ How would you describe the feministisation of politics efforts on: the level of individual members \( \rightarrow A \) and the movement \( \rightarrow B \) as whole?

☐ Are there tensions between these two levels?

☐ If yes, which ones? If no, why do you think it is so?
EXAMPLES

A reflects on A
E.g.: missing, in our organizations individuals do not work with other individuals on the feministisation process.

A reflects on B
E.g.: The assembly makes a workshop to understand each person’s privileges of race, of gender.

A reflects on B
E.g.: The assembly adopts a feminist protocol on sexual harassment.

B reflects on A
E.g.: A single member of the assembly runs a workshop on a theme (e.g. I, as a foreigner, make a workshop for the assembly about the privileges of having a EU passport).

B reflects on B
E.g.: The assembly organized a 2 day plenary memento of reflection on the level of depatriarchalization of our internal governance structure and the ways we take decisions.

NOTES
You can use AXES as a keyword in your answers. This will facilitate later exercises.

This E.g.: can be referred to the axis EQUAL REPRESENTATION

Find the description of the FoP AXES at the end of the exercise 5.
EXERCISE 5

INDIVIDUAL SCALE

A REFLECT ON THE

EFFORT

TENSIONS

WHICH TENSIONS

→ A INDIVIDUAL SCALE

EFFORT

TENSIONS

WHICH TENSIONS

→ B COLLECTIVE SCALE

EFFORT

TENSIONS

WHICH TENSIONS

COLLECTIVE SCALE

B REFLECT ON THE

ORGANISATION
Originally the FoP AXES were the result of the collective’s process during Barcelona’s international meeting. On that occasion, organizations participating in the project met and detected the different practices carried out in their organizations in terms of feminisation of politics. In a subsequent process of joint reflection on what aspects are essential in their concept of feminisation of politics, participants collected those common criteria/principles, which they systematized by configuring the FoP AXES of the project. These axes were the key concepts around which the reflection of the group evolved, defining practices or tools to put into practice each of the axes.

The FoP AXES are to be used in teams to create a shared language and to have better conversations and stimulate debate, for ideas and future projects or to question cyclically the level of perception of the status quo.

**FOP AXES**
→ QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE CONTEXT AREA

- Which specific challenges are you facing in terms of implementing feminist practices in your organisation?

- What, if anything, have you done so far to address the issue of feministising your organisation?

→ AXES

  CARE
  EQUAL REPRESENTATION
  COOPERATION
  PROXIMITY TO COMMUNITY
  POWER RELATIONS
  EMPOWERMENT
  DIVERSITY
  CONCEPTS AND LANGUAGE
  STRUCTURE
  RESOURCES
EXERCISE 6

Take a sheet of paper (A4) every question. If you prefer, write the answer on the computer.

You will be asked to describe the status quo in your organization as perceived by all participants and come to a common agreement.

One participant should read to the others the description of the FoP AXES (you can find them at the end of this exercise).

Read the results of Exercises 4 and 5 and write down on a sheet of paper what FoP AXES or key words are recurrent in your texts.

One participant should read to the others the first question.

Please note that answering to this question will allow you to start brainstorming on what are your challenges, and then what axes might be important for your organization to integrate into your future process of feminisation of Politics.

One participant should read to the others the second question.
The answers will allow you to reflect on the efforts and tensions that you found in your organisation concerning each AXIS.

This awareness will give you the opportunity to choose, in common agreement, one or more FoP AXES that correspond with your previous answers.

Keep in mind that it is best not to pick too many AXES together but to decide in agreement on a number that you are able to carry to process or that you want to develop first.

It does not need to be your weakest AXES, but the AXES you want (and can, realistically) work on.

→ QUESTION

☐ Which specific challenges are you facing in terms of implementing feminist practices in your organisation?

☐ What, if anything, have you done so far to address the issue of feminising your organisation?
On the following pages you will find a glossary with a description of the meaning for the FoP collective of each feminisation of politics axis. Next to each axis you will find a reference link to additional tools and practices you can use to implement and potentiate the feminisation of politics within your organization.
A great part of the time invested during the project has revolved around the concept and the politics, ethics and practices of care. Care has been constantly present, both ad-intra and ad-extra. It’s been present not only as a key topic -in fact, the first one arising in every board when addressing common issues to discuss- but also as an element that affects, as could not have been otherwise, the way FOP has worked. Hectic timetables, tight schedules, family duties, job commitments, deadlines, and the management -or lack of management- of physical and mental health, determined times, spaces and ways of working as a team. 

NOTES For further information continue reading at pg. 55 of the “Feminization of Politics” Report.

Equal representation is necessary inside, in its own dynamics, and outside the organization, in acts, panels, media, electoral lists etc. However, the concept worked during the FOP project comprises more than the institutional practices traditionally related to equal representation: in fact, those practices, as some participating organisations asserted, are imposed from different political instances and lack a public reflection, turning mere tools to meet formal, quantitative results regarding quotas and, in fact, sometimes
empowering female voices that bring a conservative, anti-gender discourse.

When addressing feminisation of politics, comprises a broad range of ideas related to the fact that organizations are all embedded in complex ecosystems, diverse and changing contexts, and therefore there is a constant need of knitting networks, sometimes voluble and short-lived, sometimes solid and steady, to tackle challenges together.

Proximity to community is an important issue for organizations with a municipalist perspective. Building good relationships with neighbours and with social movements is essential to carry out municipalism, getting closer to different communities, creating spaces of dialogue and have bidirectional tools for communication and proposals; ideals that every organization of this project seeks to achieve. However, it becomes apparent that our organizations are too homogeneous in terms of social class, race, studies, etc. In order to go further, not only to address problems with them but to learn how intersection affects
our struggles, so that better demands can be proposed. The conclusion drawn is the need to work harder to find best practices to approach nearby communities, build bridges, create common strategies to complement the struggles (be on duty) and learn more from each other. It becomes essential to create new spaces within organizations and communities to better communication and to define an agenda close to shared interests.

**NOTES** For further information continue reading at pg. 58 of the “Feminization of Politics” Report

Power relations is actually a key concept in philosophy and feminism. Power can be defined as an exercise of power over - usually related to subordination-, against those who define it as the ability or a capacity to act, that is, as a power to do something. Subordination perspective analyses intersections between sexism and other forms of subordination such as racism, heterosexism, and class oppression; envisioning the possibilities for both individual and collective resistance to such subordination power is clearly a central concept for feminist theory as well. The discussion on this issue and how feminist power works generally takes a binary perspective, on the one hand, the attributes of feminist power are related to cooperation, care,
non-confrontation, etc., which means that feminist power is framed in the ability to act. On the other hand, the idea of women's "right to evil" means working in the opposite position of gender stereotypes or the imposing face of power. When practising empowering procedures, the discussion reveals that this type of behaviour is generally constructed in contexts where dynamics and codes are related to competition and are difficult to be respected. Although these organizations work on feminisation, they are aware that there's still a dominance of men and greater power of executive bodies, compared to ordinary activists. Fighting becomes essential to include equal representation for men and women in local government and in all boards.

\*NOTES\ For further information continue reading at pg. 65 of the "Feminization of Politics" Report

'Empowerment' has become a key concept in a changing context, although it is sometimes difficult to know how best to apply it and understand what it really means in our organizations. In fact, the term is turning a ductile concept, easily adaptive for the logics of neoliberalism. In brief, the term empowerment has entered the mainstream discourse. FOP project has, since its beginning,
considered Empowerment from a feminist perspective. This involves regaining its origins, when feminists throughout the global South in the 1970s and 1980s fostered alternative forms of development along with women’s liberation. ➔NOTES For further information continue reading at pg. 60 of the “Feminization of Politics” Report

The debate on diversity has not been as deep as it should be; the structure of the axis and the dynamics carried out during the project show that there is no consensus regarding the contents of each axis, in fact, sometimes the contents intersect with others. This is partly explained by working remotely and asynchronously with no face to face spaces to debate around some topics. The first conclusion drawn from it is the need to take the time to continue working on these results and systematize them with better and more inclusive categories. ➔NOTES For further information continue reading at pg. 67 of the “Feminization of Politics” Report

The debate on the use of language reached a different point of analysis when considering the different languages that coexisted during the project and, therefore, the different uses and meanings that the idea of inclusion or genderfair language imply.

DIVERSITY

feminise-politics-now.html

See p. 104-111
Info in DE, SP, EN, FR

CONCEPTS AND LANGUAGE

ajuntament.barcelona.cat/
guia-de-lenguatge-no-sexista/
es/

Info only in Catalan and Spanish
Gender-neutral language is a generic term covering the use of non-sexist language, inclusive language or gender-fair language. The purpose of gender-neutral language is to avoid word choices which may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or demeaning by implying that one sex or social gender is the norm. Using gender-fair and inclusive language helps to reduce gender stereotyping, but, as some participating organisations affirm, sometimes the use of it is much more a “cosmetic” measure than something that comes out of reflection and conviction. NOTES For further information continue reading at pg. 69 of the “Feminization of Politics” Report

The diverse range of structures present in FOP project -dependent on multiple variables such as size, level of formality/ institutionalization, horizontal/vertical structures of power relations, decision making processes, etc. shows a broad sample 71 of how feminist politics have taken roots in the organizations. But, how does feminisation interacts within the different structures? Different types were identified when putting feminist politics in the core of analysis, but some common ideas appeared. NOTES For further information continue reading at pg. 71 of the “Feminization of Politics” Report

STRUCTURE

These tools are disseminated throughout the “Feminization of Politics” Report, identified with the letter (C).

See the instructions at p. 12
Resources are really important to implement deep feminization practices in terms of feminisation, if there are no resources the burden falls on those who really need and want to change the model, i.e. women. That is why the organization must save resources to cover this line. 

For further information continue reading at pg. 73 of the “Feminization of Politics” Report

RESOURCES

municipalisteurope.org/
feministisation-of-politics/
podcast/post/resources-
how-to-reach-the-means-for-
feminist-objectives/

See FoP MOOC
Info in EN

rosalux.eu/en/
article/1586.feminise-
politicsnow.html

These tools are disseminated throughout the “Feminization of Politics” Report, identified with the letter (R).

See the instructions at p. 12
The feministisation of politics collective (FoP) is a Europe-wide alliance of non-male persons active in different European municipalist movements and organisations working in education and research-action (mainly in Madrid, Belgrad, Naples, Zagreb, Valencia and France). These municipalist actors are grounded on a practice of collaboration and aggregation of different actors at the local level. They aim to transform the institutional structures according to values and purposes such as self-government and local scale autonomy; social rights (or justice); (radical) democracy and participatory procedures; de-commodification of life; feminist, ecological and decolonial principles. Within this context, the FoP collective aims to promote feministisation as a precondition for radical democracy, along with ten axes: Empowerment, Diversity, Structures, Resources, Concepts and Use of Language, Cooperation, Proximity to the Community, Equal Representation, Care, Power Relationship.

METHODOLOGY AND TOOL DESIGN
MARTINA DANDOLO

Eco-social designer collaborates and works for grassroots organisations, non-profits, informal groups and small enterprises or institutions, creating strategies and toolkits, from an inclusive perspective, and applying facilitation and co-design methods. Her work focuses on community and mutual economies, form of activism, feminist theory and self-determination processes.