



Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Code of Conduct

Combating violence against women in politics and in the electoral process

We, the undersigned representatives of political parties, by signing this Code, demonstrate our strong political will to oppose violence against women in politics, the type of violence against women that intensifies, strengthens and multiplies during election campaigns.

Preamble:

- I. Violence in politics and the electoral process is the deliberate use of force or intimidation by public office holders, party officials and their followers to achieve political goals. Violence in politics violates human rights, prevents the development of democracy and undermines trust between politicians and voters. It seriously affects both men and women in politics;
- II. Violence against women in politics can take multiple forms, such as physical attacks, verbal and psychological harassment (including attacks on women's private life, physical appearance, age, clothing, marital status), threats, stalking, sexual and sexist comments, online abuse and hate speech and sexual harassment;
- III. Violence against women engaged in politics and in the electoral process does not only affect them, but also their families and children;
- IV. Political violence against women in politics and in the electoral process is directed against women elected officials and women who are visible and have influence over the public and social life and are public opinion-makers;

Implemented by:



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for Electoral Systems

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- V. Violence against women in politics and in the electoral process constitutes a serious obstacle for women's political participation undermining their visibility, active positions and durability of women in political offices, thus strengthening convictions that politics is reserved exclusively for men;
- VI. Due to increased polarization of politics, levels of political violence are growing worldwide. Electoral campaigns is an environment where gender-based harassment and hate speech proliferate;
- VII. Active and visible women, young women and women from vulnerable groups are especially targeted by political violence against women in politics and in the election campaign;
- VIII. By offering anonymity, the on-line environment and artificial intelligence greatly contribute to creation and spread of violence against women in politics and in the election campaign;
- IX. Silence encourages violence. Violence against women in politics and in the electoral process can be countered by public condemnation by the political parties and civil society organizations, by speaking out against it publicly and increased participation of active, powerful and visible women in politics.
- X. Presence of the violence against women should not discourage women politicians' commitment to foster an environment of open and respectful debate surrounding political issues, solutions, and policies. To advocate for constructive discourse that encourages diverse perspectives and promotes the exchange of ideas for the betterment of society.

Recommended measures:

We, the undersigned representatives of political parties, through the following measures, advocate to:

1. Recognize that violence against women in politics and in the electoral process is an existing phenomenon that negatively affects political participation of both women and men and the representation of voters;
2. Acknowledge that violence against women in politics and in the electoral process is a phenomenon that negatively affects all parties and that there are no winners from having it perpetrated against anyone, even the political opponents;
3. Raise the voices of both men and women against violence against women in politics and in the electoral process, by publicly exposing evidence of violence and fully supporting persons who are brave enough to publicly speak up against violence, and to renounce the view that speaking out against violence in politics is a sign of weakness;

4. Ensure readiness to provide personal protection, legal and psychological support to women present in public life, who hold higher political offices, and who are often disproportionately targeted by violent messages;
5. Designate a focal point or a body within the political party to serve as a confidential channel for counseling and support in the instances of violence against women in politics and in the political process with a right to involve legal advice and party leadership in more serious cases. These focal points or bodies will cooperate with the law enforcement agencies on behalf of women against whom violence was perpetrated;
6. Give sufficient space to women candidates in elections and electoral campaigns, thus purposefully creating positive narratives about women in politics. Encourage the visibility of women's expertise in various fields, vigorously debating views, opinions and policy proposals. Engage the support of party communications to ensure respectful and professional merit based representation of female candidates in the media;
7. Take special care to address and prevent violence against vulnerable groups such as young women, women from smaller ethnic communities, women with disabilities and others;
8. Elaborate internal political party guidelines for addressing violence against women in politics and conduct a training for all candidates, campaign workers, volunteers and everyone involved in elections on how to recognize violence against women in politics and how to prevent and deter it by the own actions – blocking the spread, reporting to law enforcement bodies, supporting the attacked;
9. Recognize that the online environment and artificial intelligence are particularly fertile ground for acts of verbal and psychological violence and abuse against women in politics and in the electoral process and thus to prevent any engagement in the spread and proliferation of violence against women in politics and in the electoral process in the online environment, even if it affects women who are political opponents;
10. Provide candidates from the election lists with basic instruction of how to deal with cyber-harassment, including information security and how to deal with any online harassment or intimidation;
11. Unmask and do everything possible to stop the spread of disinformation and artificial intelligence generated deepfakes that include violent messages and images against women in politics. Refrain from spreading fake and false messages and images that contain abuse of women in politics and to immediately address the platforms to stop their spread;
12. Recognizing that perpetrators of violence against women in politics and in the electoral process can also come from inside the party, commit to appropriately address such instances without attempting to silence them. Include the prohibition to engage in violent attacks against women in politics in the political party statutes or the code of conduct, envisioning sanctions for misconduct;

13. Create a simple on-line assessment tool for the internal party organizational climate evaluating how conducive internal party culture is to guaranteeing security and safety to women members, candidates and officials;
14. Establish communication and create a common concept with law enforcement authorities, through joint actions to counter violence against women in politics and in the electoral process;
15. Prevent, stop, report and speak out publicly against violence that is perpetrated against women who are active and visible in the public life – politicians, journalists, civil society activists, administrative officials, officials engaged in the electoral process and other groups;
16. Recognize their role and collaborate with civil society organizations monitoring violence against women in politics and use their avenues for addressing it; To notify the Macedonian Women's lobby of cases of violence against women in politics and cooperate with them in countering violence.