



Summary of the ninth high-level
EU Diplomacy Lecture

EU International Relations and
Diplomacy Studies

College of Europe, Bruges

13 October 2022

ANNUAL HIGH-LEVEL
EU DIPLOMACY LECTURE



EU INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
AND DIPLOMACY STUDIES

Gender Equality in EU Foreign and Security Policy: A Question of Leadership

**Ambassador Stella RONNER-GRUBAČIĆ, Ambassador for Gender
and Diversity, European External Action Service**

The Rector of the College of Europe, Federica MOGHERINI, welcomed the audience and expressed her gratitude to Ambassador Stella RONNER-GRUBAČIĆ, Ambassador for Gender and Diversity, for accepting the invitation to come to Bruges and address the students of the College of Europe. Professor Sieglinde GSTÖHL, Director of the Department of EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies, introduced the speaker.



Ambassador RONNER-GRUBAČIĆ began her remarks with a video and awareness-raising note on the role of biases. She invited the audience to pay attention to individual biases and how those shape our judgment about gender and gender roles, and furthermore of foreign policy. Ambassador RONNER-GRUBAČIĆ drew attention to the report “Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2022” published by UN Women and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). This analytic document states that under the current situation, we would require 300 years to achieve gender parity internationally. Among the reasons for such a bleak picture are the cascading global crises.



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe

Brugge



NatoLin

Department of EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies

Dijver 11 BE-8000 Brugge T +32-50-47.72.51 F +32-50-47.72.50

www.coleurope.eu/ird



Leadership and gender equality are inter-related, especially in the current geopolitical context. Gender equality is challenged by antagonistic actors triggering further polarisation in and between nation-states. The war waged by Russia has caused a sea of change. Ambassador RONNER-GRUBAČIĆ observed an increased divide between democracies and illiberal countries that oppose the international order's core values. These dynamics are captured by disinformation and influence operations. Gender equality has been distorted as a Western notion, and portrayed as something that is

against the so-called “traditional family values”. Women journalists and female opinion leaders are being discredited. Attempts to incite fear and hatred against LGBTIQ+ are witnessed. These were among some of the examples mentioned by the speaker to draw the audience's attention to the amplitude of worrying developments on gender equality that have resulted from the campaigns that challenge Europe and its values.

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also referred to as the Istanbul Convention, has as well been targeted by the disinformation campaigns and is thus experiencing a diversion of attention from gender equality to gender identity. The EU, as a whole, has not been able to be a party to this convention, and one neighbour of the EU has even withdrawn from it.

Several policy frameworks served as reference points to explain to the audience the tangible steps taken in Europe to address the challenges and alarming trends. The EU Gender Action Plan 2021-2025, or GAP III, is a key policy document defining the mainstreaming of gender. It incorporates a focus on intersectionality and the most disadvantaged women, and mentions that it should be read together with the EU LGBTIQ equality strategy. Ambassador RONNER-GRUBAČIĆ noted that not all Member States have endorsed GAP III. She explained that, in essence, an intersectional lens towards gender equality is about leaving no one behind, including such groups as migrant women, women with a disability and so forth.





Ambassador RONNER-GRUBAČIĆ noted that the war in Ukraine demands a new type of leadership. She drew attention to Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, namely, the freedoms everyone is entitled to. Among other relevant policy frameworks, she named the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU action plan on human rights and democracy 2020-24. These frameworks provide a compass.

Global inequalities persist. For example, women worldwide perform three times more unpaid care work. Much effort is required to implement many of the commitments and translate them into routine actions. It is about convincing, insisting, and avoiding that gender equality is treated as an 'add-on' matter that could be dealt with when all the other pressing issues are resolved. Internationally, this EU commitment and persistence towards addressing gender equality matters without any deferral is, for instance, mirrored in the EU support to the Afghan Women Leaders Forum.

Some EU Member States like Sweden and Spain have defined a feminist foreign policy, but on the EU level such an approach has not yet been discussed. The mentioned frameworks show, however, that ample support measures are in place to proceed with concrete actions. What is vital is a gender-responsive leadership. To illustrate that with a prominent example, Ambassador RONNER-GRUBAČIĆ referred to the 2022 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen. In this speech, the Commission President referred to her meeting with young people gathered in Taizé and the importance of putting the aspirations of this generation of dreamers and makers at the heart of everything the EU does. In 2019, during her speech at the European Parliament ahead of the elections of the Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen referred to the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention. Ambassador RONNER-GRUBAČIĆ concluded the lecture by inviting the young people attending the lecture to join these efforts by taking action and influencing the security debate.





The lecture was followed by a stimulating question and answer session with the audience on topics ranging from questions about how recipient countries perceive the EU efforts, gender parity quotas put in place in some Member States, the role of gender in EU trade policy and foreign aid, and whether female leadership differed from male leadership, among other topics.

It was a good moment to stress the importance of a tailor-made approach to each country. Ambassador RONNER-GRUBAČIĆ shared insights from close cooperation with the EU Delegations and the EU's receptiveness towards the advice given by different women's civil society representatives.





Stella RONNER-GRUBAČIĆ was on 1 July 2021 appointed as the Ambassador for Gender and Diversity at the European External Action Service.

After having obtained her Master's degree (European Studies) at the University of Amsterdam in 1989, and having finished post-graduate studies of International Relations at the Clingendael Institute in The Hague, Ms RONNER- GRUBAČIĆ started her diplomatic career at the Dutch Foreign Ministry in 1991. She worked in the Foreign Ministry's multilateral department, after which she was posted at the Embassy in Belgrade. Her following posting in Paris was preceded by a year ('cycle international') at the Ecole Nationale d'Administration in Paris.

In 2001, Ms RONNER- GRUBAČIĆ was seconded to the OSCE Mission to the Former Republic of Yugoslavia. Following that, she became Spokesperson to former Foreign Minister Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, at the time when the Netherlands had the OSCE Chair. In 2004, she took up the position of Spokesperson for the Dutch EU Presidency. Following various other positions in the Ministry in The Hague, including as Ambassador for the Millennium Development Goals, she was appointed Ambassador to Croatia in 2010. After having served in The Hague as Director of Communication, Ambassador RONNER- GRUBAČIĆ was accredited as Ambassador to Romania and the Republic of Moldova. From Bucharest, she moved to Athens, where she was accredited as the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Hellenic Republic in September 2019 until her appointment to her current position.



College of Europe
Collège d'Europe



Natolin

Department of EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies

Dijver 11 BE-8000 Brugge T +32-50-47.72.51 F +32-50-47.72.50

www.coleurope.eu/ird