



BACKSLIDING DEMOCRACY



INTRODUCTION

In recent times, a concerning global trend has emerged where previously stable democracies are showing signs of weakening integrity and moving towards authoritarianism. Alarming, this has frequently been accompanied by assaults on the rights of women and LGBTQIA+ minorities.

For young socialists within the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY) both of these developments are unacceptable. The IUSY Feminist Working Group has, therefore, come together to analyze the decline of democratic institutions and human rights around the world and to establish feminist approaches to backsliding democracies.

This booklet is designed to support young socialist activists in understanding the decline of democratic institutions and human rights around the world and to provide guidelines for feminist approaches to backsliding democracies. It clarifies our commitments, values, and goals, and offers practical ideas for implementing barrier-free structures within member organizations of IUSY.

The booklet explores key concepts such as patriarchy, democracy, authoritarianism, and feminism, recognizing their diversity and significance in contemporary discussions. The main part of this booklet presents case studies on different feminist issues and shows both backsliding but also progressive examples from various countries.

In the last chapter, readers can find a simple guide on possible ways to aim for progressive policies and a change for the better in their communities.

We hope you enjoy reading our toolkit and get inspired to get active in your own community!

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1.

DEFINITIONS

Feminism is the belief in complete **social, economic, and political equality between genders.**

Feminism is responsible for the **increased educational opportunities, the right to vote, protections against workplace discrimination, and the right to make personal decisions about pregnancy** in some parts of the world. In some communities, feminism even succeeded in challenging pervasive cultural norms about women. However, many societies still face significant struggles when it comes to gender equality and stereotypes. There is a problem with Western feminism as it ignores realities of women who live in different cultures and it is often accused of being essentialist, monolithic, and ethnocentric. Women globally deal with different issues, and it is activists such as Malala Yousafzai who have highlighted that and issues such as unequal access to education for women globally.

Feminist movement can be traced back to the early 1800s even though that wasn't the beginning of women's and queer people's struggles in their communities. The **"first wave"** of Western feminism began in the **1800s** and climaxed during the 1940s when the main goal of the fight was for women to gain the right to vote in industrialized countries, which meant that women started to become leaders in the public sphere. The **"second wave"** started in the 1960s, and its focus was on the status of women in society and challenging traditional notions of leadership. During that time, the civil rights movements in the USA, women of color and queer people demanded representation in the feminist movement and their struggles got more and more public. With many positive changes for women happening until the 1990s, the **"third wave"** of feminism occurred with a younger generation of women with a different perspective. Feminists started to deconstruct the binarity of men and women, the movements

opened more for intersectional perspectives taking into account the many people who do not suffer only under one, but many dimensions of discrimination such as racism, xenophobia, queerphobia and sexism. Today we see that core values and achievements of our feminist ancestors are being challenged by anti-democratic forces, and feminism nowadays has expanded its horizon and is also concerned with fundamental rights of all minority groups. Thus the struggles of previous generations of feminists remain relevant today.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a term that professor **Kimberlé Crenshaw** came up with in 1989 who described it as a **“prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other”**.

Intersectionality describes how different social groups interact, often resulting in compounding effects and tensions. She argues that discrimination against Black women is different from the general anti-women discrimination or anti-Black racism. Instead, it involves the unique compound experience of both sexism and racism where not everyone is affected by the patriarchy in the same way. Initially the term was used in the context of discrimination law while nowadays it's often used by left-wing activists who broadened the term to include categories like class and sexual orientation. The focus of intersectional feminism is thus to acknowledge and unite the struggles of different minority groups who face discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, class and ability.

But why is intersectionality such an important issue? To break it down into a simple and short answer: Long histories of violence and systematic discrimination have created deep inequities that disadvantage some from the outset. These inequalities intersect with each other, for example, poverty, caste systems, racism and sexism, denying people their rights and equal opportunities. The impacts extend across generations.

Some challenges of feminism in today's world

The patriarchy affects the entire society and there are infinite struggles to deal with. Yet, there are a few that encompass:

- 1. The Division of Domestic Labor**
- 2. Glass Ceiling**
- 3. Social Inequality**
- 4. Violence Against Women**
- 5. Reproductive rights, healthcare access**



Democracy is our ideal, democracy is what we strive for; but why is that? Why is democracy such an important element for our socialist movement?

From the first days on, democracy is an integral part of socialist movements. Democracy demands implementation in every area of life to

truly function. This includes free, frequent, open, fair and secret elections of anyone holding power in state and society. Checks and balances to avoid a concentration of power in single people, groups or institutions are as necessary as an engaged and informed citizenry. To make sure that everyone in a society can partake in democratic processes, they need to be **freed from the constraints of capitalism**, such as wage labor, poverty and wealth inequality which avoid equal participation in democratic processes. Any democracy requires, too, a **free and independent press** that can inform about matters of the state, an **independent and fair judiciary** as well as **the rule of law**. **Free speech, assembly and minority rights** need to be ensured to avoid only a rule of the few.

Socialists striving for democracy don't exclude the economy from their demands. **Workers' self-management**, democratic workplaces and the **joint ownership** of businesses are requirements for a long-term working democracy, realized for instance in a market socialist economy or a decentralized planned economy oriented to the needs of the working people. Together with the labor and union movement, socialists for instance implemented **worker's councils, welfare states** and costs-free education systems on the way to a socialist democracy. Democracies exist without these elements, but struggle to live up to their aspirations.

In opposition to authoritarian regimes, democracies have to ensure everyone's rights and freedoms to be part of decision-making processes. Democracies are often attacked and their institutions may get weaker over years, making it hard to draw a clear line between democracy and authoritarian regimes. Democratic systems themselves have many differences which are analyzed, compared and evaluated by scientists around the world, as well as there are different models of democracy throughout political movements.

BACKSLIDING DEMOCRACY

We know about the characteristics of democracies. But to secure a democracy, constant work is needed; there are anti-democratic forces at work all around the globe. Backslides of democracy happen slowly and incrementally. A slipping democracy is often recognized too late. It is therefore crucial to continuously keep tabs on our democratic systems and support and protect them.

When a democracy is attacked, it usually starts in these areas:

- restriction of free press, dependent press
- restriction of right of assembly
- restriction of judiciary
- restriction of human and citizen rights

Any restriction in these areas needs to be understood as a warning sign. We need to be aware here.

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Democracy is a complex concept that can take on different forms and characteristics depending on the society in which it exists. While there are different stages of democracy, this booklet will define democracy by certain key characteristics such as free and fair elections, a free press, an independent judiciary, protection of human and minority rights, and freedom of speech and assembly.

Here are our chosen key characteristics of democracy:

DEMOCRACY	BACKSLIDING DEMOCRACY
fair, free elections	manipulated/sham elections
free press	journalists are threatened, censorship,
rule of law	no accountability
independent and free judiciary	restriction of judiciary
free speech and assembly	restriction of assembly, persecution
human and minority rights are protected	restriction of human rights, oppression of minorities
social rights and material security	poverty and rising inequalities



2.

**CASES OF
BACKSLIDING
EQUALITY AND
DEMOCRACY**

CASE 1: SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

1.

WHY ARE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS IMPORTANT?

We believe sexual and reproductive health rights are a fundamental right that everyone should have. Unfortunately, this is not the real situation. Gender-based violence occurs all around the world in its many forms, aimed at women and LGBTIQ+ people, often threatening their lives and livelihoods. This oppression often leads to violence, which is not only physical, but also sexual and psychological.

Democracies must therefore implement thorough plans to terminate gender-based violence once and for all. Democracies which are unable to represent the many people who are not privileged by patriarchy aren't democratic at all. Sexual and reproductive health rights are threatened by conservatives, religious fanatics, fundamentalists, fascists and the many other authoritarian movements flourishing around the world right now. We must not stop fighting for a feminist future of free access, health care and rights to our very own bodies!

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2.

DEFINITION OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS

According to the United Nations, **Sexual and Reproductive Rights are related to the freedom of people to decide over their sexuality and how to freely exert it.**

When talking about Sexual and Reproductive Rights for women, there are many topics that must be taken into account, as follows:

To exert sexuality freely and independently from reproduction.

When it comes to freedom within sexuality, we must call on consent as it is the basis to have a sexuality based on respect and dignity towards others.

Since then, when it comes to sexuality, women are **reproductive** whereas men have had a **productive** role assigned. We believe it is time to end this ancient binary stigma and to encourage people to enjoy their sexuality, independently from their reproductive capability.

To be free from discrimination, pressure or violence in our sexual lives and sexual decisions.

The Declaration of the Elimination of Violence against Women defines violence against women: **“as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”**

Physical and psychological harm can be hidden in socially accepted practices. Contraceptive pills, for instance, have a hugely negative effect on health through its side effects. Science tends to avoid putting the burden of avoiding pregnancy on cis men.

To have access to sexual (and effective) education from an early age on, aimed at the responsible exercise of sexuality in a full, free and informed manner.

Everyone needs professional and science-based education on sexuality, gender identity, reproductive rights and sex. Sex education

is an indispensable part of the upbringing of children and youth, so that everyone can understand their own body and defend oneself against gender-based violence. Sex education has proven to drastically reduce the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), avoid unwanted pregnancies and strengthen the acceptance of gender non-conforming people.

To have access to quality, adequate and dignified medical services for the health of people.

Medical services start in establishing universal and free access to menstrual products to end menstrual poverty.

Moreover, a right to safe and legal abortions must be assured. Not only the legalization of, but the availability of doctors and closeby clinics conducting abortions decide whether free abortions are available in a place or not. Lack of funding, political will or the intertwining of the health sector with religious communities can make it impossible to find or afford a gynecologist/obstetrician. Medical staff must, too, have the right to freely inform and counsel both in public and in their practice about pregnancies and abortions without legal prosecution. However, there must not be a mandatory consultation in order to implement truly free abortion rights.

Obstetric violence must be fought against. Defined by WHO as physical mistreatment, verbal humiliation and abuse, coercive or non-consensual medical procedures, failure to obtain informed consent, refusal to administer pain medication, neglect of care, or serious violations of privacy, it's still a common form of gender-based violence.

3.1. Some signs of hope on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

Many countries are notable for their recent progress in upholding sexual and reproductive rights. In fact, sexual consent rights are beginning to become law, an example of this are the 12 European countries surveyed by Amnesty International where we can find laws defining and prosecuting non-consensual sex as rape. Some of the latest European countries to adopt legislation defining rape by the absence of consent are Croatia and Denmark. Meanwhile, recent laws such as Spain's "Solo sí es sí" (Only Yes means Yes) are paving the way for more progressive legislation in favor of women's rights when it comes to sexual consent.

Other improvements on reproductive health include progress, such as the decriminalization and legalization of abortion in Argentina, Colombia, South Korea and Thailand to name some examples. Unfortunately, as we shall see below, other countries have suffered a regression in democracy, which also entails the loss of reproductive and sexual rights, among others.

Another breakthrough in combating violence against women is the 2020-ban on mutilation and circumcision in Sudan. Genital mutilation is still prevalent around the world with African countries being among the most affected. This legislation sets an example, however, we're still far off from a global movement against gender-based violence on children and newborns.

3.2. Setbacks on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

Reproductive rights have come under great pressure in some parts of the world. In many countries in the world, abortion is punished by imprisonment. Often, feminist fights for self-determination haven't reached legal recognition. Other countries such as the United States, where after 50 years of constitutional recognition, abortion is no longer considered a right.

This situation highlights the importance of taking care of the rights acquired through legislation in each country, education, activism and political cooperation. Even when reproductive rights are secured by law, authoritarian backlash is an ever-present risk. Afghanistan is one of the most recent examples where women's rights have been diminished in this case due to the Taliban regime that took control of the country.

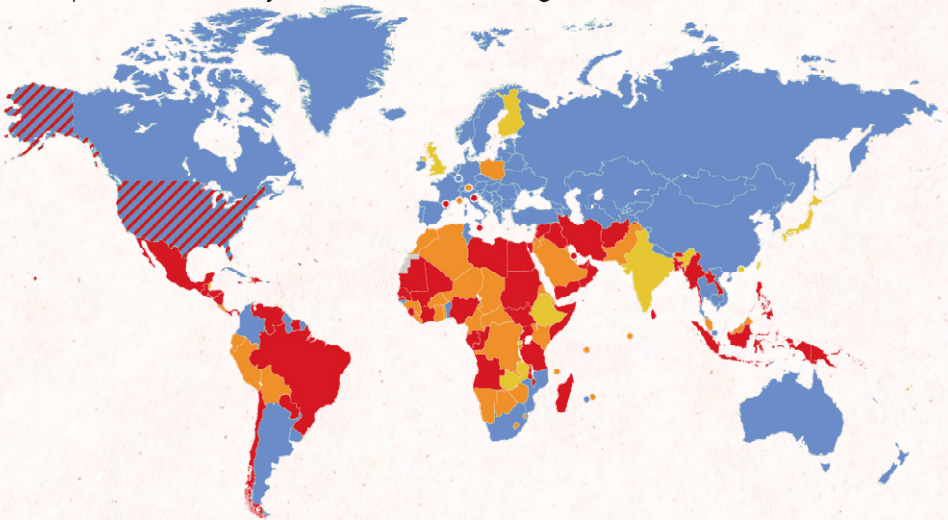
This map shows in which countries in the world abortion is legal as one example of state-imposed gender-based violence. Be aware that this map can't show the real availability of reproductive medicine for people of all regions, classes and backgrounds in the countries labeled blue:



The Legal State of Abortion

International status of abortion law in 2022

- To save the woman's life/
prohibited entirely
- To preserve health
- Broad socioeconomic grounds
- On request*



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As of June 27, 2022 * Gestational limits vary
Source: Center For Reproductive Rights



statista

Source

<https://reproductiverights.org/maps/worlds-abortion-laws/>

We're committed to ending the source of the patriarchy plaguing the world. Everyone, everywhere is always affected by it and it threatens the lives of billions of people. Sexual freedom, choice and consent aren't merely platitudes but fundamental to political activism for democracy.

To achieve this, some - but not all - necessary steps will be:

- Making consent law by implementing "Yes means Yes" principles globally.
- Ensuring that the Istanbul Convention against gender-based violence is ratified and thoroughly put into local law and practice.
- Equipping schools to properly teach sex education.
- Banning genital mutilation.
- Creating and unconditionally funding of safer spaces for women and LGBTIQ+
- Ending all laws putting LGBTIQ+ under pressure, prosecuting them or stopping them from living a full life, including,
 - the right to form families, marry and raise children,
 - full sexual self-determination without fear of prosecution,
 - legal recognition and barrier-free self-determination of name and gender.
- Cost-free and anonymous access to contraceptives and menstrual products.
- Cost-free and local availability to abortion, the right to inform and counsel both in public and to the patient about abortion.
- Combating obstetric violence, both in education and during professional life.

5.

RELIABLE FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS

- [Women's Global Empowerment Fund](#)
- [European Institute for Gender Equality](#)
- [Global Fund For Women](#)
- [National Organization for Women](#)
- [Pro Mujer](#)
- [The Women's Refugee Commission](#)
- <https://unwomen.org>
- <https://www.un.org>
- <https://www.amnesty.org/en/>



CASE 2: ACCESS TO EDUCATION - FEMINISM, THE SHADOW OF GLOBALIZATION?

1.

AT THE DAWN OF GLOBALIZATION AND ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE, IS WOMEN'S EDUCATION REALLY AT RISK?

First of all, what is globalization? According to Sylvain Cariou-Char-ton (2016), "to speak of globalization is to evoke the broadening, deepening and acceleration of exchanges across national borders".

In recent years, growth has been observed in various sectors of edu-cation. This partly explains the increase in enrolments in the educa-tion sector. Unfortunately, it has also highlighted a certain inequality in access to this sector. Globalization has thus become a vector for the massification of education, i.e. a broadening of supply and train-ing. Diplomas have thus become increasingly in demand, leading to what is known as "over-education". This change has created a gulf between those who have the opportunity to access this education.

This has led to other inequalities, such as gender differences. To cor-relate the concepts of globalization and education is therefore to glimpse a global perspective on women's education (in this case). But above all, it's a glimpse into the gulf that is opening up when it comes to the exclusion of this education (women, people with finan-cial problems, etc.).

Through a variety of factors, access to education in some countries can be difficult. Annabel Hervie's book "Girls' access to education around the world: the bad pupils' ' highlights some crucial points that help us to understand this problem. Indeed, one of the first factors is access to school: some girls have to travel many kilometers to reach their school, sometimes in very dangerous conditions.

Secondly, some countries lack the financial means to purchase books, textbooks and school supplies, and to pay teachers.

Thirdly, the customs of some countries, such as forced marriage, restrict access to education for housewives.

Fourthly, gender inequalities are present in access to education, which is marked by the fact that certain aptitudes are specific to a particular sex (women are likely to take up social professions or be housewives, while men are likely to take up professions linked to technology, engineering or management). This is what we call gender stereotyping. In other words, the fact that you know full well that, because of your group, you're supposed to do less well in this or that task or subject, which induces such strong evaluative pressure that it obliterates your chances of succeeding.

Fifthly, positioning oneself as a girl or a boy significantly modulates students' abilities. In particular, girls are convinced that they can do less well than men, and that their self-esteem is lowered in a mixed group, whereas boys are convinced that co-education does not affect their abilities.



Numerous solutions have been put in place by Western countries to improve the global education situation, including France and Senegal, who will be organizing a donors' conference in Dakar for the Global Partnership for Education, one of the main international mechanisms for financing access to education in the world's poorest countries. Girls' education is an invaluable lever in the fight against poverty.

During the conference, it was highlighted that girls' education plays a pivotal role in combating poverty. Investing in girls' education is seen as very important in addressing poverty and its roots.

By ensuring access to quality education for girls, opportunities for economic empowerment and possibilities for all are expanded, leading to more sustainable development. The conference aimed to rally support and resources from donor countries to boost initiatives aimed at improving education access, particularly for girls, in the poorest regions of the world

Proposed general solutions by participants to combat gender inequality in the education sector:

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1. Equal Access Policies: This includes measures such as building more schools in rural areas, providing transportation facilities, abolishing school fees that may disproportionately affect girls' access to education, and ensuring that there are no discriminatory practices in enrollment processes.

2. Gender-Sensitive Curriculum: Developing and implementing a gender-sensitive curriculum can help address stereotypes and biases present in educational materials. This involves incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences of both genders across all subjects,

promoting positive role models for both girls and boys, and teaching about gender equality and women's rights as part of the curriculum. Additionally, providing training for teachers on how to teach in a gender-sensitive manner can be beneficial.

3. Investment in Girls' Education: Investing in programs specifically targeted at girls' education can help close the gender gap. This includes initiatives such as scholarships and stipends for girls, providing menstrual hygiene management facilities to ensure that girls do not miss school due to menstruation, establishing girls' mentorship programs, and creating safe spaces within schools where girls can express themselves freely and receive support. Additionally, providing vocational training and STEM education opportunities for girls can help empower them to pursue diverse career paths.

4. Involving men in the process through awareness: Investing in targeted actions to sensitize and include all genders. Through awareness campaigns we can sensitize the advantages of gender pay equality or why it will help everyone for women to access educational programs. If men are not included in the process, there might be a drop in participation of women in some educational programs because of the weight of patriarchal structures.

CASE 3: HOW AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES CUT BACK ON WOMEN AND QUEER RIGHTS

1.

INTRODUCTION AND ANALYSIS

In the wake of the Corona pandemic, more and more countries have developed in a negative direction. Democratic principles and basic human rights some of us take for granted are under attack every single day. Authoritarian forces are on the rise, and the anti-human movement is more organized, more global and more dangerous than

before. But there is hope. Social democrats and socialists may be their biggest enemy, but we and our policies are also the solution for the negative development. Our core values as solidarity, equality and freedom are the strongest medicine against authoritarianism.

In 2021 only 21 countries in the world were categorized as fully democratic, and only 6 % of the population in the world lived in those countries. This means that the vast majority of the world's population live in countries where their governments do not protect them, do not respect their innate rights and deprive them of freedom.

The authoritarian forces use democratic instruments and institutions they don't even trust or believe in to get power. After they have been mobilizing, they use their democratic given power to then undermine and demolish the democracy piece by piece. The attacks first take place at institutional level so as not to act as a deterrent, but the ripple effects primarily affect individuals and their inherent human rights.

One of the characteristics of authoritarian forces is their alternative perception of reality and image of the enemy. In their world, the traditional family is often emphasized, with a strong family man and stay-at-home mother. The woman must obey the man, and her sexual and reproductive rights become a matter for the state and the community. In their reality, queers and other minorities do not fit in.

Therefore, the rights of women, queers and other minorities are actively attacked when authoritarian forces gain power. Marriage is reserved for men and women. Women's reproductive rights are restricted or prohibited. Religious minorities have their freedom of religion restricted. Queers are deprived of the opportunity to love whoever they want without being prosecuted.

10 signals and developments to be aware of:

- 1 When people in power or parties challenge the principles of power distribution, and when there is intervention across the roles of power. The principle of separation of powers is the very foundation of functioning democracy.
- 2 When people in power or parties attack and curtail the rule of law and legal principles, and when the Supreme Court becomes politicized.
- 3 When people in power or parties attack the free press and undermine journalistic work
- 4 When people in power or parties attack civil society, worsen their conditions and isolate them from public debate.
- 5 When people in power or parties actively attack the rights of human rights defenders and activists.
- 6 When people in power or parties advocate recognized research, they over-politicize the research environment and worsen the conditions for free research
- 7 When people in power or parties persecute other political parties, especially undermining the political opposition.
- 8 When people in power or parties speak up for and work to change the legislation to prevent democratic elections and electoral processes.
- 9 When people in power or parties attack the rights of women, queers and other minorities.
- 10 When people in power or parties actively engage in misinformation, contribute to an increased and aggressive image of the enemy and isolate the country from the rest of the world

The new Man

Autocrats or those who want to become one, often come to power as newcomers when the old elites have become outdated. They don't use the establishment, these men - and we used the term men on purpose since these figures are almost always men - often don't have any political background, so they are a blank sheet of paper to the public and use that in their favor.

Their voters were frustrated and looking for a figure of hope, who is pledging better times to come. That often happens in crises, because especially in these extreme situations the population seeks for a strong and powerful leader figure. Also in countries which have established a full democracy, people tend to seek a strong and dominant leader. In Austria, for example, 15 to 20 percent of the population wants such a strong leader figure.

An Autocrat gaining power almost always goes hand in hand with women and people of the LGBTQIA+ community losing their rights.

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Some examples of dominant men in political leadership include Russia's president Putin. First prime minister in 1999 and then president, with interruption, since 2000. The media-owning oligarchy of the country supported him as well as a population that longed for a strong leader putting an end to the Yeltsin-years often described as chaotic.

Jair Bolosnaro, former president of Brazil, promised to bring order to Brazil too. His rhetoric is anti-women, anti-LGBTIQA+, anti-socialist and attacks democracy, indigenous rights and privileges big business destroying the amazon. Another leader-figure who caused massive

damage in power with a movement still strong.

Narendra Modi, prime minister of India since 2014, is the figurehead of a Hindu nationalist movement which often aims at Muslim communities in India, scapegoating them for many of the country's struggles. Modi's sometimes elevated into the position of a pseudo-spiritual leader and the movement supporting him strengthened sexist and patriarchal structures and customs.

Divide et impera - Separate and rule

Nearly all of the named autocrats were/are national populists. They take advantage of the real or perceived failure of the traditional parties - Conservatives, Centrists,, Social Democrats, Liberals. They appeal to the "left behind" and turn strangers into enemy images.

Trump focused on conservative and frightened whites; Putin on "real Russians", for instance in his war against the Muslim Chechens in the early 2000s.. Modi violently excludes Muslims. Orbán, Hungary's president, and Kaczyński, president of Poland's right-wing governing party, talk about a "Christian Europe."

Populism, especially nationalist populism, needs a "true nation" opposed by immoral, corrupt, liberal elites, including minorities and whoever they consider "foreigners". Trump tried to exclude Obama from the true people by claiming that Obama is not a born American at all. The true nation needs a popular leader who implements the will of the people. This marks the path to autocracy.

Use Democracy - then destroy it

After getting elected, the main goal is to build and strengthen an authoritarian regime, by gradually removing democratic institutions such as fair elections, separation of powers, independent judiciary, free media. It's also almost always seen that women's and LGBTQIA+ rights get restrained soon after the election of an autocrat.

We could see that in the sexist rhetoric Erdoğan, Türkiye's president, is using in all of his speeches and that he portrays the submission of women as something desirable. In Hungary, the oppression and persecution of LGBTQ people was something that Orbán implemented almost immediately after his election.

Authoritarian leaders learnt how to use democratic processes and institutions to gain power. They manipulate the public, use their access to resources like wealth, influence and networks in order to gain public support. Through methods of populism and agitation, they attract people who are, often for a good reason, dissatisfied with their current government. They turn their sentiments into support for their personal movement, slowly but steadily gaining more votes, more power to finally overthrow democracy slow enough that resistance can't function.

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Enemies, Fear and false Information

As leaders gain power, they often rely on creating enemies, spreading fear, and disseminating false information. They do this to maintain control and justify their actions.

These leaders may target certain groups as enemies, blaming them for societal problems or portraying them as threats. This creates fear among the population, making people more likely to support the leader's oppressive policies.

Moreover, these leaders use false information to manipulate public opinion and justify their discriminatory actions against marginalized communities. For example, they might spread myths or stereotypes about LGBTQIA+ individuals and women to justify denying them their rights.:

In Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has utilized rhetoric and false narratives to undermine LGBTQIA+ rights and women's rights. His government has cracked down on LGBTQIA+ events and activists, while Erdoğan himself has made insulting remarks about women, supporting a climate of discrimination and inequality.

Building a kleptocracy while keeping the people calm with social security

Leaders on the path to tyranny often build a kleptocracy, enriching themselves and their allies. To maintain control, they offer superficial social security measures, masking corruption and oppression. This fake stability hides the erosion of democracy and the concentration of power in the hands of the ruling elite.

In Venezuela, the leader, Nicolás Maduro, and his allies are accused of stealing a lot of money from the state. To keep people from getting too upset, the government offers some help, like social programs. To make it more acceptable or less visible, the government has implemented social welfare programs, masking the underlying corruption and authoritarianism.

3.

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AS MEDICINE AGAINST AUTHORITARIANISMS

Social democracy and democratic socialism can be viewed as good weapons against authoritarianism, as they prioritize the preservation of individual rights, democratic institutions, and social justice. This approach, which prioritizes the well-being of individuals and communities, can help prevent the rise of authoritarianism by strengthening democratic institutions and reducing social grievances that can lead to extremism. By embracing these principles, social democrats can build a freer and more democratic world where individuals have the opportunity to thrive and participate in the political process.



- 1 Ensure equal representation at all levels, where women also hold real power and influential positions.
- 2 Strengthening the trade unions, and ensuring that employees have a real influence on your everyday working life.
- 3 Ensure that everyone has good and equal access to sexual and reproductive rights.
- 4 Give the NGOs and human rights organizations a predictable framework and conditions for monitoring the human rights situation.
- 5 Support a newspaper with independent and qualitative journalism.
- 6 Implement a feminist foreign policy, where women's aid is increased to contribute to better equality globally.
- 7 Strengthen democratic institutions and ensure their independence, including the judiciary, media, and civil service.
- 8 Do not compromise on our common international laws and rules of the game. International law and human rights must form the basis of all policies pursued by social democrats.
- 9 Invest in education and critical thinking skills, to help citizens develop the skills necessary to engage in constructive dialogue, question authority, and make informed decisions.
- 10 Promote a culture of open-mindedness, tolerance, and respect for diverse perspectives.



3.

**IMPLEMENTING
CHANGE**

HOW TO AFFECT FEMINIST CHANGE

Previously in this booklet, you have been presented with an analysis and exemplification of how backsliding democracy is affecting the rights of women, the LGBTQIA+ community and other minorities. Now, it is time to affect change and develop political solutions to the problems in your local community, region or country.

In this part of the booklet, we focus on giving you a comprehensive and applicable step-by-step guide that can prepare you for the different challenges you might face as an activist. We acknowledge that all countries are different and that not all steps or tips may be relevant to you. But pick and choose as you like, and adapt the steps to your specific situation.

Our four steps to creating change are: **knowledge, demands, actions/activism** and **legislative pressure**. We hope you find the guide useful and that it helps you achieve your goals! And remember, the guide is not a one way street. You can always go back and revisit the steps as your situation changes or your project progresses.

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STEP 1: KNOWLEDGE

Before formulating the demands for your project in order to make feminist change, it is crucial for you and your collective to seek and gather knowledge on the topic you want to work with. Even though you might think you are already well-educated on the subject, it is always a good idea to do some research first. Depending on your time frame and resources, you could attend seminars or workshops

on the topic. If you are short on time or there are no such workshops available, however, you can check online resources, read books or articles and listen to podcasts. Cooperation with similar organizations from other countries can also be extremely beneficial and an excellent source of knowledge – especially if a partner organization has been through the same process very recently. It is not necessary to reinvent the wheel! Use and adapt existing structures and knowledge as necessary for your purpose.

We are aware that, depending on your country and current situation, you might not have access to reliable sources or have trouble finding them. Therefore, we have created a list with a few criteria that could help you with the selection of your sources.

SOURCE CREDIBILITY

TIPS AND TRICKS

- Use material by a certified and credible authority (NGOs such as the UN, Amnesty International, etc...), experts.
- ALWAYS check the author's background and their political orientation!
- Try to use recent materials.

AVOID!

- Materials created by an anonymous author or by a government that is known to be corrupt/ authoritarian or on the other end of the political spectrum.
- Dated sources with information no longer relevant

When gathering knowledge, always try to see the bigger picture and shift perspectives. Make sure that your collective is as diverse as possible and that everybody feels empowered and safe enough to contribute with their thoughts and ideas. Ask and listen actively to the people who are affected by this issue. Prioritize sources and material created by them. When educating yourself on racism for example, primarily use material from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). Accordingly, in the case of feminism, you should primarily listen to women and queer people rather than straight cis men. If it comes to reproductive rights and topics like abortion, listen to those who actually have a uterus and fight for equality for minorities. You get the idea.

Even though you are surely well-intentioned, you should never push a policy or make a demand without having at least spoken to those concerned. Ask them what they actually need. In the best case, the affected group should also be at the forefront of your campaign/project. Of course, this is not always possible as this kind of exposure could sometimes be dangerous. Do what works best for you but, in any case, make sure to check your **biases**.

WHAT IS A BIAS?

A bias is a personal opinion that influences your judgment in an unfair way. An example of this could be a tech company with a gender bias favoring a male applicant over a female one with equal qualifications. Your biases can depend on your upbringing, your education, your social circle, etc. It is important to note that, growing up in a patriarchal and racist society, we all have biases.

STEP 2: DEMANDS!

Now that you have gathered knowledge on your topic, it is time to make demands and formulate what exactly it is you want to change. Formulating demands is the foundation of political change, but of course demands cannot stand alone and will only be relevant if followed by action. Here, we have gathered some DO'S and DON'TS that will hopefully help you when formulating your demands. Everyone's process will be different, but one idea is to start with a good old fashioned brainstorm. Produce as many ideas as possible and then use these DO'S and DON'TS to guide you and perfect your demands. And remember: you can always go back and change your demand to adapt to a new situation as you learn and progress in the activism process.

WHAT IS THE DEMAND?

The word demand can have a lot of different meanings depending on the context. Here we use it to describe "the political wants or needs" - what is it you want to accomplish or claim politically in order to change our local community, region or even nation.

EXAMPLES: WHAT DOES A DEMAND LOOK LIKE?

Here we present examples of how a demand could be formulated. On the topic of violence against women, a demand could be phrased as follows: **"stop gender based violence against women"** or **"improve the safety of women in the streets"**. In regards to education, one demand could be **"make education accessible to all"**. Other demands could include **"make abortion legal!!"**, **"include gender as a criteria when evaluating the effects of laws"**.

DO



START SMALL

When formulating demands and political statements in general, it is important not to bite off more than you can chew. Start small and expand from there - the whole word can be saved in a single statement.

GET SPECIFIC

The more specific and concrete you get, the better. Making your point focussed and precise will help others understand and thus better the communication.



STAY SIMPLE

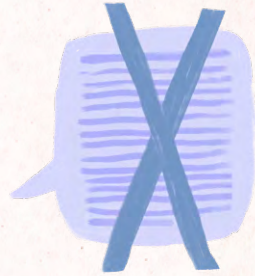
Can the central point of your demand be said in one sentence? Try to cut away as much "fluff" as possible to make your demand easier to understand. KISS (keep it simple stupid)





LOOOOONG WORDS AND SENTENCES

The importance of this cannot be overstated. Long words and sentences will confuse the reader/listener and make your demand less effective. So try your best to avoid them!



RIDICULING THE TOPIC

When dealing with an important, serious or emotional issue, it is crucial that you do not ridicule the topic. You might think you have a cute pun or a nice rhyme, but in reality somebody might take offense. So save your clever word plays for other more light-hearted topics and focus on the substance.

POLITICAL AND SCIENTIFIC TERMS

As young politically minded people we sometimes tend to forget that the rest of the world does not necessarily have the same knowledge as us. Not everyone is familiar with intricate political theories or difficult scientific terms. So when making a demand, get rid of them and use a language that is understandable to everyone.





STRUCTURE YOUR STATEMENTS

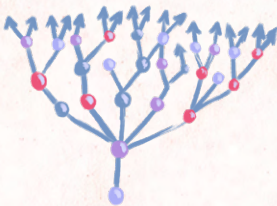
If you are working on several political demands for a certain topic, ensure that they make sense together as a whole. Make your proposals cohesive and create a structure that is easy to follow.

BE INCLUSIVE

When working on a demand, it is important to think about how many people will be able to participate in your political fight. If your demand is too “niche” or if it excludes a lot of people, you most likely will not be able to make a change.

There is strength in numbers, and you cannot fight your battles alone.

So be inclusive.



THINK ABOUT SCALABILITY

As previously stated, it is important to start small and be realistic. But when making a demand, you should also think about whether it is scalable in the future. Can what you are doing be applied to other cities, other regions or at a national level? Can your work help others in the future?



BELITTLING OTHERS TO BETTER YOURSELF

Do not bring other people down to better your own cause. If your agenda is strong enough, it is simply not necessary to step on others. Also consider if your demands affect minorities or challenged societal groups in a negative way. If your demand marginalizes others, change it!



WORKING FOR THE SAKE OF WORKING

There is no need to formulate demands if you do not act on them. Avoid pseudo-work and focus on demands that you actually want to spend your time on and pursue. Do not do something just because you think you have to!



BE ORIGINAL AND LEARN FROM OTHERS

Many demands have been made before, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. Research if other people have experience with working on your topic (locally, nationally or even internationally) and learn from them. Use the insights of others to strengthen your demands.

Furthermore, make sure your idea has not been tried before in your local area. Ask older members of your organization or family and use their experience. Try to avoid repeating past mistakes.

ASK YOUR FRIENDS

When you feel like you have come up with a good demand, it is time to ask around. Ask your friends, your family or maybe your classmates if they think your demands make sense and if they have any improvements to suggest.

It is always good to get feedback from others outside the political community.

CHECK YOURSELF - DOES IT REALLY WORK?

Sometimes you might have an amazing idea that, sadly, does not work in the real world. We know it is hard, but if your idea does not work, you have to abandon it and try again.

Only then can you actually affect change.

STEP 3: ACTIONS AND ACTIVISM

Once you have educated yourself **enough** on the topic, it is time to spread the word



HOW DO I SPREAD THE WORD? BOTTOM UP ORGANIZING METHOD

You should first ask yourself - who are the people who might have an interest concerning this problem? Who is my base?

As you follow the next steps, you might find new audiences and discover a whole wider base.

Yet, we encourage you to start from the people closest to you, convince them to join you and help others become leaders and take responsibility alongside you in your struggle for change. Always keep in mind - **why should they pursue change?**

Talk to your family and friends about it (if possible)

- They might ask you questions you have no answer for. This is good for us. Use this as a tool in order to encourage others to research and explore the topic. Moreover, it reminds us to continue to do so ourselves.
- If they are not convinced - remember that sometimes they might never be convinced and that is okay

Talk about the problem in your local community (if possible)

- Start talking about the issue with the members. Maybe there are social gatherings that the issue is relevant to. If your family and friends were convinced and now they think it is important - do it together!

Talk to your organization about it

- Convince the members of your organization it is a substantial problem so you should topic and you should pursue change together.
- If there is no great support or hesitation about pursuing change about this particular aspect or problem - start advocating for it in one on one meetings or in smaller groups sessions.

Now you have some people who you share ideas with and will to change with. The following question you should ask is **how can we create change?** The answer is always - **together.**

You probably already noticed that some of the people are more enthusiastic about taking the lead than others. Your job is to let them become leaders as well. Meet up and start strategizing your next step **together.**



STRATEGIZING ACTION

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In order to mobilize people and take action, you need to build a community around your cause. Each and every leader is a community organizer themselves.

Before you go out and take the streets you should gather your power and take measured actions that strengthen the community around our cause.

ADVICE FOR FEMINIST LOBBYING

“Lobbying” can for some lead the thoughts towards big international corporations bribing politicians. This is true and it happens, BUT lobbying is also the simple action of reaching out to specific politicians, lawmakers or NGOs with the purpose of making them see why your demand for action is legitimate, thought through and beneficial for society. So, this is a short guide on how to do democratic feminist lobbying.

Firstly, you need to analyze the current political environment. Many of you who read this probably do this all the time not knowing it, but writing your analysis down and discussing it with others is helpful. When doing this, consider the following:

Who are the political parties, what are their priorities and what ideology do they lean towards?

WHO

Which other organizations have the same interests as you and could potentially cooperate with? This could be labor unions, NGOs etc.

Which party (most likely the “mother party” of your organizations, but others could also join the work) or fractions of a party would be most likely to agree with our demands and who has the power to accomplish our demands? This could also be other youth organizations from other political parties.

HOW

How can we convince them with arguments that relate to their current topics of interests, their ideology, or topics you know are relevant for specific members of the political party

What is the most efficient way to get the attention of the politicians that we have analyzed to be most important to make this change, do we know someone inside the parties close to the politicians, do we ourselves have connections to politicians, and do we have connections to organizations that have a relation to the politicians (for instance labor unions, human rights organizations, civil society organizations, companies, etc.)?

When you have considered all these questions, and perhaps more than that (always take into consideration what makes sense in your specific country and for your organization), you need to plan for what to do now. A good start is to make what is called a "one-pager".



WHAT IS A ONE-PAGER?

- A page with texts, illustrations and bullet points that explains the problem, the solution, and the most important arguments for solving it.

The texts must always be easy to understand, but it is okay to use technical terms if you believe that the recipient will understand it.

This is a perfect mean to communicate your demands to specific individuals.



It must **NEVER** be more than one page



4.

FINAL

REMARKS

BEING YOUNG AND UNDERREPRESENTED IN A POLITICAL CONTEXT

Many have probably experienced that they were not taken seriously by people older than themselves when participating in political debates. This is a democratic problem and it hinders our generation from accomplishing goals. However, there are ways to try and stay on top of this.

Firstly, you need to trust yourself in these situations but at the same time not be cocky or disrespectful. The easiest way to be self confident is to prepare, practice and prepare even more.

Secondly, be calm and do not get upset when encountering age discrimination. Remember that others are watching you and your way of reacting. In some cases such as openly sexism, it could make very good sense to call it out and point out the problem, but this should always be up to you to decide in the specific situation.

Thirdly, ally yourself with older and more experienced political figures who appreciate younger and/or feminist activists and political influencers. They can give you support, advice, and perhaps also strengthen your connections within established politics.

If you find it hard to find an ally, go look at social media and see who posts things that are relevant and aimed at a younger audience. Try and write to them directly and be straightforward (if it makes sense in the context). At some point you will find a political figure that will understand the potential of the younger generation.

In general, it is very important to engage established politicians in your political activities and activism. They have connections and the ability to create change to some extent. Even just local members of

your city council, municipality, region, etc. All of them can contribute to make the activism more broadly founded and, in some cases, open doors to otherwise inaccessible politicians, experts or organizations. Remember: all of them have been young once and some of them are hopefully also feminists.

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Previously in this booklet, we looked at activism and demonstrations. These tools can help raise awareness, but they are broad and sometimes it is necessary to affect a very specific small group of decision makers.

When doing so, your communication must “hit the target”, so to speak. To do this, consider the following:

Where are we going to communicate to make sure that the target sees it? Is it on Twitter, in the newspapers, Instagram, etc.

What arguments will the target find interesting/what will make them feel threatened in their political status if they do not react to your arguments?

How do you communicate in a way where it is easy for others to share your post/article/tweet? Here, think of easy reposting options and the use of hashtags, even if you are writing an article - then share it on social media.

The booklet was created by the participants and the team of the project "Backsliding democracy - How does it impact gender equality - Revitalizing Democracy 2022".

Illustrator and graphic designer
Coline Robin
<https://coline.graphics/>

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