

Despite the worldwide efforts of gender mainstreaming, women remain underrepresented in many fields, for instance, diplomacy. According to *AGDA Women in Diplomacy Index 2021* only 20,7 % of the ambassadors are female. Therefore, the problem draws the attention of several scholars, who contribute to accumulating the causes and factors of the status quo. The research concerning women in diplomacy and foreign affairs has become even more popular after the implementation of feminist foreign policy in Sweden and has tackled the problems such as gender patterns and ambassador appointments, obstacles to women's entrance to foreign policy, gender inequality in international negotiation system or the share of women in the institutions of international organizations. Nonetheless, there is very little interest among the scholars in the gendered approach toward the level down to central, this is to say, external actions of sub-state actors.

The project aims to contribute to the flourishing of the field and discipline by providing a broad analysis of the level of women's underrepresentation in paradiplomacy (sub-state diplomacy) both in terms of the number of women involved in its creation and realization, as well as the share and frequency of paradiplomatic implemented policies and paradiplomacy-related decisions targeting women. In order to reach the goal, the analysis will take into account state-like instruments used by the region to conduct their paradiplomacy such as. permanent representations in other countries, the establishment of a special regional ministry responsible for the international affairs of the constituent unit, the foreign engagement of regional leaders, involvement of the region in multilateral frameworks and organizations (Criekemans, 2010; Duchacek, 1990; Kuznetsov, 2015) or committees working with issues related to external actions in regional legislative bodies.

This research project will provide the answers to the following questions: What is the share of women and where are they located and positioned in paradiplomacy? What are the impediments to women's entrance and further engagement in paradiplomacy? How do the political circumstances influence the share of women and their positions in paradiplomacy? What actions are taken to increase women's participation in paradiplomacy and are they effective? What is the approach of women involved in the paradiplomacy toward inclusion and representing other women in external-related aspects? How does the women's descriptive representation impact their substantive representation in paradiplomacy?

The chosen case, which is 17 Autonomous Communities of Spain, is selected due to the inclusion of sub-state actors in Spain's strategy of feminist foreign policy. The strategy assumes the systematic mainstreaming of the gender perspective into all activities of the Foreign Service by introducing structural changes in its working methods and institutional culture. Despite the inclusion in the strategy, sub-state actors in Spain are obliged by law to carry out their paradiplomacy following the state foreign policy. Furthermore, what makes the case more interesting is the level of autonomy possessed by the regions, the occurrence of numerous asymmetries and the state's struggle with recurring centrifugal tendencies, which is also evident in paradiplomacy carried out by the regions.

The project assumes that the data analysis will be performed with the usage of both quantitative and qualitative methods. The main dependent variables are the share of women in paradiplomacy, the share of paradiplomatic implemented policies and paradiplomacy-related decisions targeting women and their frequency, which will help to reflect the level of women's underrepresentation in paradiplomacy. The independent variables consist of impediments to women's entrance and further engagement in paradiplomacy, political factors (the ideology of the ruling majority in regional governments and frequency of gender-related issues in sub-national domestic policies), actions taken to increase women's participation in paradiplomacy, women's approach toward inclusion and representing other women in external-related aspects. After establishing the share of women in paradiplomacy, it will serve as an independent variable to explain the level of substantive representation.