

# **Empowered diplomacy: bridging the gender gap**

## **Final report of a joint Iceland- Slovenia study**



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Iceland-Slovenia study**

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This publication forms part of the project “Equal opportunities in national diplomacies”, which is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Grants.

Design: Prelom d.o.o.

Cover photo: Gunnar Salvarsson

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# Foreword

Many landmark moments for gender equality in the international fora are being marked in 2020, most notably the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Conference, 20 years since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325, and UN Women celebrating its 10th anniversary.

Furthermore, we have ten years ahead of us to reach our sustainable development goals, including the fifth one, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. It is imperative that we redouble our efforts to reach our goals and fulfil our global commitments.

A vision for a fairer and a more equal world, where gender equality is fundamental, is shared by Iceland and Slovenia alike. Gender equality is a foreign policy priority for both countries, which also enjoy a favourable reputation in this field. This also leaves us responsible for leading by example and acting as agents for change within the international community. Moreover, our foreign services must also reflect this priority.

The time is ripe to share key findings and best practices, transfer knowledge and expertise, and compare tools and ideas to instigate change.

As the Foreign Ministers of Iceland and Slovenia, we take great pride in presenting the findings of our joint study on gender equality and equal opportunities within our respective national foreign services. When our ministries first started discussing this joint research project, we knew that the findings might not necessarily be flattering. We were also aware that it might reveal a situation where further action would be needed to reach parity. Flattery was not our goal. Instead, our goal was to acquire a genuine insight into the state of gender equality in our ranks, identify key challenges, and above all, learn and improve.

The study offers a first-hand insight into our diplomats' views and their perceptions of gender equality, discrimination, and work-life balance in their profession. The findings indicate many opportunities for improvement and provide various starting points from which we can work towards enhancing gender equality within our services. Despite both cultural and organisational differences between the MFAs of our two countries, the challenges that both foreign services experience are remarkably similar.

Furthermore, the findings highlight several challenges that seem to be endemic to the diplomatic profession, such as the difficulties foreign service poses for diplomats' families or the persistent gender biases reflected in professional roles and hidden power structures. But they also demonstrate that we have seen progress over the past few years. We agree that only by recognising these culturally or structurally embedded biases can we address them. By mapping the way, we can pave new roads for the benefit of our foreign services and the women and men who shape them.

We welcome the recommendations put forth by our team and the support offered by the experts of Capacent Iceland and the Slovenian Ekvilib Institute that conducted the research. We have set out to deliver reform in the spirit of making our foreign services more competitive, fair, and progressive. In this way, we can increase our efficiency and effectiveness by allowing our staff to reach their full potential and attracting a broader array of talent. We also hope to inspire others to join us in working to push the gender equality agenda forward globally.

Just as the milestones marked in 2020 remind us of the need to increase our efforts to achieve gender equality, so do the present circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. To counter stagnation and the risk of setbacks in global efforts to reach our goals, we need to empower our diplomats worldwide to lead the way.

**Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson**

*Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iceland*

**Dr Anže Logar**

*Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia*

# 1. Introduction

Gender equality is a foreign policy priority for both Iceland and Slovenia<sup>1</sup>, demonstrated by the countries' engagements in the field of human rights, as well as through gender mainstreaming in other foreign policy areas. For the two diplomacies remain strong and successful proponents of gender equality in international fora, efforts need to be reinforced by a high degree of credibility, derived from both domestic policies and practices as well as the attributes of the diplomatic service itself. In order to act as an agent for change, it is essential that diplomacy itself embodies gender equality.

The arguments in favour of reinforcing gender equality within the diplomatic services are convincing. The benefits of pursuing equal opportunities within an organization are clear and go far beyond solely enhancing its credibility. Gender-balanced teams perform better<sup>2</sup> while the impact of women on peace and security processes has been both universally recognized<sup>3</sup> as well as proven in practice.<sup>4</sup> Ensuring good work-life balance, preventing discrimination, and improving organizational culture all contribute to establishing a productive, quality work environment for the benefit of both employees themselves as well as the organization's results. Gender equality, furthermore, widens the talent pool for any given organization.

In 2014, only 15% of the world's ambassadors were women.<sup>5</sup> Why has it been so challenging to achieve gender balance in diplomatic services, particularly in high-level posts? Is career pursuit in diplomacy still "gender-blind"<sup>6</sup> or functioning as an "old boy's network",<sup>7</sup> despite the global progress in women's political and workforce participation and the changing nature of diplomacy as a profession?<sup>8</sup> What are the factors preventing positive change to occur at a greater pace and what would enable greater gender diversity within the foreign policy arena?

While the subject of gender equality in diplomacy has received increased academic attention in recent years,<sup>9</sup> the search for answers to these questions begins with the diplomats themselves. In 2009, Slovenia conducted its first study<sup>10</sup> on equal opportunities in its diplomacy, which offered a first-hand insight into diplomats' views on and perceptions of gender equality, discrimination, and work-life balance in their own profession. Revealing important differences in attitudes of female and male diplomats, the study highlighted the complex nature of the gender gap in diplomacy, with factors such as power, culture, awareness, family/caring responsibilities as well as the prevalence of sexual harassment all playing important roles.

Ten years later, Iceland and Slovenia initiated a bilateral dialogue with a view to repeat, expand, and modernize the 2009 study. The initiative was driven by the ambition to improve the state of play, address different aspects of discrimination as well as utilize all potential human resources in these two small diplomatic services in the best way possible. Set up as a joint Icelandic-Slovenian collaboration, the study was designed as a reciprocal peer-review exercise—identifying country specific as well as general challenges that modern diplomatic services face in pursuit of gender equality within their ranks, while also providing an insight into individual good practices.

Marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for Equality, Development, and Peace (BPfA), the study hopes to make a contribution to global efforts to enhance gender equality by empowering diplomacies in Iceland and Slovenia, as well as elsewhere, to pursue this goal with greater credibility, efficiency, and effectiveness.



## 2. Approach

Building on the experiences and results of the 2009 Slovenian study, the dialogue between Iceland and Slovenia sought to identify key areas where the gender gap is most prevalent, ensuring that the subsequent analysis would concentrate on the most relevant issues. Government officials from both foreign ministries discussed the gender-equality efforts and policies already in place, drawing on personal views, experience, and knowledge. Each country formed its steering group, made up of diplomats as well as non-diplomatic staff of various ranks, positions, ages, and caring responsibilities. Men and women were represented corresponding with the general gender balance in the ministries. The process was supported by expert implementing partners on both sides.<sup>11</sup> A number of dialogues took place within the span of one year, from July 2019 to July 2020.

The starting point was to examine where the gender gap most visibly manifests itself: the top staff categories, namely the ministries' leadership and ambassadors. This is also the indicator most often used as a reference in academic studies or international reporting.<sup>12</sup> While the so-called power gap is one of the key indicators of gender (in)equality, it does not, however, tell the whole story, nor does it provide full insight into the underlying factors of gender inequality within an organization. As the 2009 study points out, perceptions, stereotypes and biases, organisational culture as well as factors affecting the work-life balance of diplomats all play an important role when efforts are made to explain the low share of women at top positions in diplomacy. It further begs the question of whether a low share is a consequence of direct discrimination or if it arises from lower levels of ambition among women to compete for top jobs due to a variety of factors. Lastly, does the gender ratio in top staff categories reflect the share of women in all ranks?

The complexity of these questions makes identifying the best avenues for action challenging. Should Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) apply positive discrimination to bridge the "power gap"? Is it more beneficial to work structurally, addressing factors such as awareness, organisational culture, or appropriate incentives that would alleviate the burden of caring responsibilities, which are disproportionately carried by women? What combination of relevant policies and instruments would be most suitable to achieve desirable results?

In order to answer these questions, Iceland and Slovenia decided to complement the analysis of the power gap with analysis of diplomats' views on gender equality, differing roles of women and men in diplomacy, the impact of caring responsibilities on their careers, as well as their own experiences with sexual harassment and discrimination.

In the study preparation process, Iceland and Slovenia also discussed similarities and differences in both systems, relevant for the analysis. A notable difference is the process of selecting new ambassadors; whereas in Iceland the nominations are at the foreign minister's discretion, in Slovenia there is a prescribed application process, which consists of applying for any number of advertised ambassadorial positions on the basis of a written work plan.<sup>13</sup> This is a relevant difference because it allows one to analyze the success rate of women candidatures, while also revealing the gender differences in application rates.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.1 Nearing equality: five gaps

The dialogue between both steering groups highlighted a broad set of factors impacting gender equality in both MFAs, largely revolving around five areas.

**POWER:** Visibly manifested as the share of women in different levels of management, the power gap is, in a way, a reflection of all other factors affecting gender equality in an organisation. The power gap in itself can be seen as a factor influencing gender equality, as it reflects organisational culture and it portrays the "glass ceiling" of the organization. Also, power gaps can be seen as a reflection of gendered identities, legacies of past sexist division of labour, and have an impact on how female "role models" serve as an inspiration to others.

**CULTURE:** In addition to the asymmetrical distribution in powerful positions, hierarchical gender patterns contribute to consolidating inequalities. Career preferences can be the result of individual career choices that are also shaped by gender stereotypes and expectations. They can also reflect biased recruitment patterns, outright or subtle discrimination, the gendered division of unpaid work,<sup>15</sup> and institutional gender norms about appropriate “male” and “female” behaviour.<sup>16</sup>

**AWARENESS:** One of the aspects of culture that counteracts gender equality is the lack of sensitivity to gender differences in power, resources, and opportunities. This can manifest in a gender-blind organisational structure that bases its policies and structures on seemingly objective and performance-related dimensions that render mechanisms for promoting gender equality obsolete. In reality, such structures fail to take into account gender differences among workers and thus perpetuate gender inequality. Moreover, gender inequality can be perceived as a women’s issue, so that the “objective” organisational structure is not obliged to promote equality. This can be reflected in a lack of awareness of gender equality in management, as managers and senior officials might fail to promote gender equality or are not held responsible to do so by institutional policy.

**FAMILY:** Life- and family-friendly policies help alleviate the conflict between an employee’s domestic and professional duties. In the context of gender equality and equal opportunities, this is a crucial mechanism to support women’s career advancement.<sup>17</sup> The 2009 Slovenian study found that almost 70% of all survey participants were convinced that women have more problems with work-life balance. This is mainly due to their disproportionate load of housework and caring responsibilities,<sup>18</sup> which consequently leads to their overburdening, career breaks, and unequal positions in the workplace. By consolidating a system of life- and family-friendly policies, institutions can contribute to the formation of gender-diverse identities and roles.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT:** The organisation’s first responsibility should be to protect the integrity of its staff and create a healthy and safe working environment. The emotional and psychological toll of sexual harassment, which affects women disproportionately, can lead to them becoming less involved in diplomatic careers or even giving up their careers altogether.<sup>19</sup> Cases of harassment can be mistakenly treated as isolated incidents and as deviant actions by certain actors.



## 3. Gap analysis

What follows is an overview of research findings constructed in five areas. Every area is influenced by background variables such as gender, nationality, and personal circumstances like having dependent children. The findings are drawn from the research conducted, semi-structured interviews,<sup>20</sup> and an online survey.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.1 Power

The study sought to analyse the power gap in both MFAs. This was achieved by first defining the organizational “pipeline,” which is defined as the various hierarchical levels of the diplomatic service that shape the decision-making system as reflected in the different steps in diplomats’ career progressions. Pipeline power gaps were analysed for four reference years in the period after 2009, the year of the first Slovenian study.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, possible reasons for women to be less represented at higher levels of management were examined by analysing application and selection rates for both genders in Slovenia during the period 2016-2020. Since experience in serving on posts abroad is considered by both MFAs to be an important criterion when competing for management positions,<sup>23</sup> the reservations were analysed that men and women, correspondingly, have in applying for posts abroad.

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#### 3.1.1 Pipeline

The broader trend of over-representation of men at higher ranks can be observed in Iceland and Slovenia, with the pipeline being male heavy in higher positions as displayed in Figures 1 and 2.<sup>24</sup> The progress made from 2009 to 2020 in terms of gender parity was greatest in **top-level management** for both countries. In 2020, the share of women in this category is 38% in Iceland and 40% in Slovenia.<sup>25</sup> There has been considerable progress in both countries, with the share of women at the highest positions more than doubling in only ten years.

Nonetheless, it must be noted that in Slovenia in 2020, women compose 58% of all diplomatic staff, while this proportion is 54,5% in Iceland. Moreover, the share of women in Slovenian diplomacy has been steadily increasing – 51% in 2009, 54% in 2013 and 57% in 2017. Therefore, the rise in the representation of women at higher ranks occurred while the overall share of women in diplomacy increased as well, although to a lesser extent.

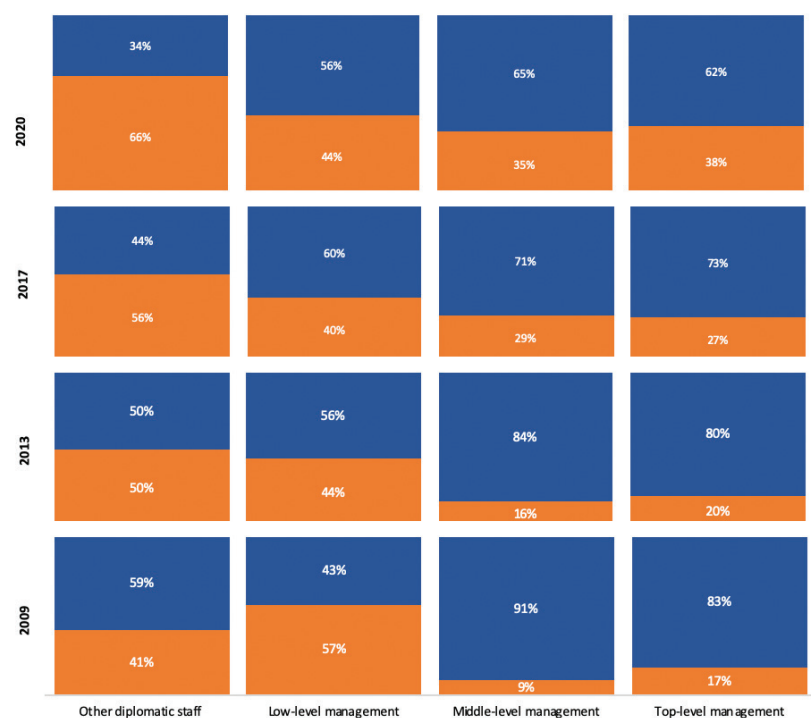


Figure 1: Organisational pipeline — ICELAND

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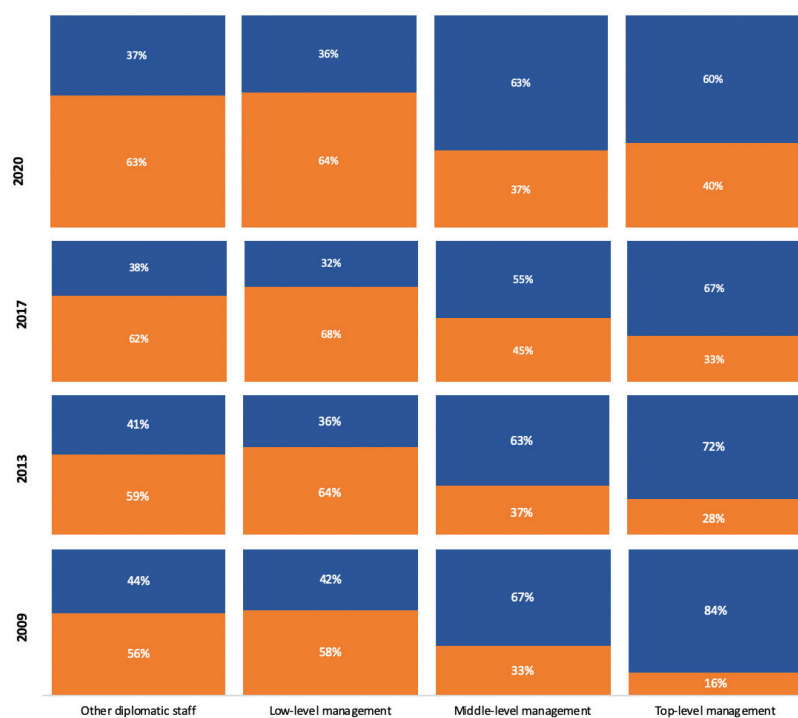


Figure 2: Organisational pipeline — SLOVENIA

This may be related to the fact stereotypes persist that men are better in military and defense matters, which prevents women from making progress in these areas of MFAs. However, further research would be needed to confirm this claim.

### 3.1.2 Applying for top posts

By examining applications for ambassadorial positions in the Slovenian MFA, the study sought to determine whether there is a gender gap in candidacies for these top jobs, as well as whether the gender balance upon selection of candidates reflects the gender balance at the level of total applications. It looked at the selection process in Slovenia over the past four years (2016-2020) as a reference sample.

Table 1: Applications for diplomatic posts and success rate by gender, Slovenia, 2016-2020

	Head of mission posts		Other diplomatic posts		All posts	
	In total applications	In the selection	In total applications	In the selection	In total applications	In the selection
Share of female candidates	36,9%	41,0%	57,8%	59,6%	49,7%	54,7%

As Table 1 shows, female diplomats applied proportionally less than their male counterparts for posts abroad. In the analysis period, they made up 49,7% of all applicants, while the total share of eligible female candidates in the Ministry is 58% of all staff. Female diplomats applied more proportionally to their share when it comes to posts other than the head of mission. However, their share dropped significantly when applying for top posts, e.g. for heads of diplomatic missions (36,9%).

It should be noted that at the level of selection, it is evident that female candidates were more successful than their male counterparts. 41,0% of all selected heads of mission and 54,7% of all selected positions were filled by female candidates. Nonetheless, considering that the current share of women holding top positions in Slovenia—as demonstrated in the pipeline analysis above—stands at 40%, the success rate of their applications at 41% means that **the trend of the last decade is bound to slow down and that the ceiling is nearly reached.**

Comparatively, in Slovenia, the share of women at top-level posts increased gradually, while the increase was more exponential in Iceland.<sup>26</sup> While the Slovenian MFA never formally adopted a strategy to achieve gender parity at top posts, it could be argued that the 2009 study made an important contribution in raising relevant awareness of this issue. In Iceland, a more general strategy has applied to gender parity at all levels. Progress on gender parity between 2009 and 2020 was much better in **middle-level management**; in Slovenia the proportion of women increased by only 4% while in Iceland the proportion increased by 26%.

The interviews also showed a trend towards the so-called **clustering of women in sectors that are seen as feminine or soft areas**, while those that are seen as masculine are dominated by men<sup>27</sup>.

This analysis might imply that, rather than discrimination at the level of selection, one would need to look at the reservations female diplomats have concerning serving abroad in a leadership role to explain their current under-representation in the MFA pipeline. It is also important to note that **the fact that women apply to a lesser extent for leadership roles but are more successful in their applications is not widely recognized**, with some perceptions in the MFA still suggesting there is gender-based discrimination at play. As one interviewee pointed out:

*The Ministry is trying to paint a picture of equality. I wouldn't say that only men are given the stage, but in general, they are still given priority. (Slovenia)*

### 3.1.3 Serving abroad

Serving abroad is a key steppingstone to higher levels of management, both as a factor when determining candidates' experience and qualifications as well as a criterion for top-level posts. According to the interviewees, the perception remains that it is **more difficult for women than men to be posted abroad** and more difficult than acquiring posts in the capital. As one of the interviewees indicated:

*I think that with regard to foreign service, there's still this deep-rooted perception that a woman won't be able to cope, especially when it comes to a more demanding posting—either due to her family situation or simply because she's a woman. (Slovenia)*

This perception is complemented by the fact that the **decision to go abroad is often considered harder for women and single parents to make**. As explained by one interviewee:

*This obligation to move abroad on a post is more difficult for women and families. I have seen very presentable women quit, possibly because of that. (Iceland)*

The survey showed that there are several reservations in applying for posts abroad that are relevant for both genders and in both countries (such as location-specific factors, education and integration of children abroad as well as partner's career in the home country). In Iceland, there is a notable difference between genders when it comes to concerns over partners' careers, care responsibilities to the extended family, and family planning, which are considerably more important factors for women than for men. On the other hand, Icelandic men are relatively more concerned about financial reasons.

The situation is similar in Slovenia, although it should be noted that according to the survey, male diplomats are relatively more concerned about partners' home careers than their female counterparts. Since respondents in the survey were asked to choose up to three factors they considered most important, rather than making an assessment scale, the results only show how comparatively important reservations concerning their partners' employment are for men, which does not necessarily mean that this is a more challenging reservation for men than for women.

● Female ● Male

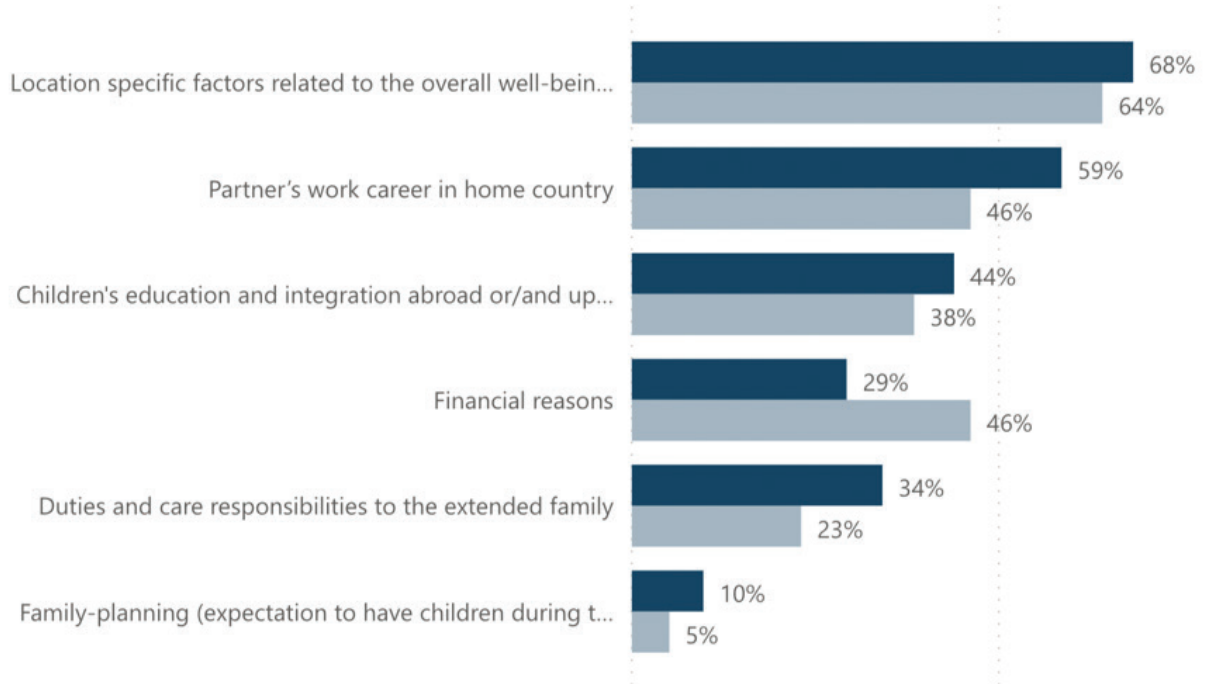


Figure 3: Reservations for being posted abroad — ICELAND

● Female ● Male

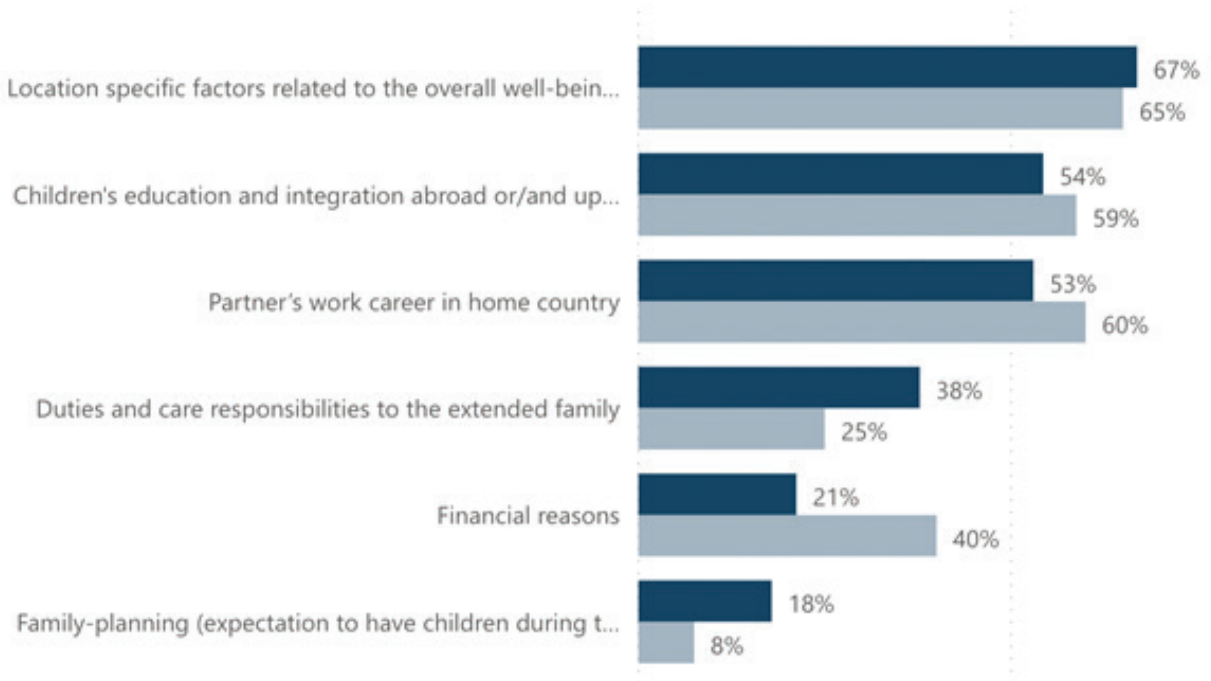


Figure 4: Reservations for being posted abroad — SLOVENIA

A similar picture emerges from the assessment of aspects of life abroad that should be improved (Figures 5 and 6). *Managing workload and employment opportunities of partners* are seen as the most important factors in both countries. Female diplomats in both countries are more concerned than their male counterparts about managing workload, which stems from the greater share of caring responsibilities that they usually carry. There is also a wide gender gap in both countries in terms of the impact of their partners' social security, which is more important for men. This may be related to the lack of social security systems for partners, especially when the partner is a woman and accompanies her spouse abroad.<sup>28</sup>

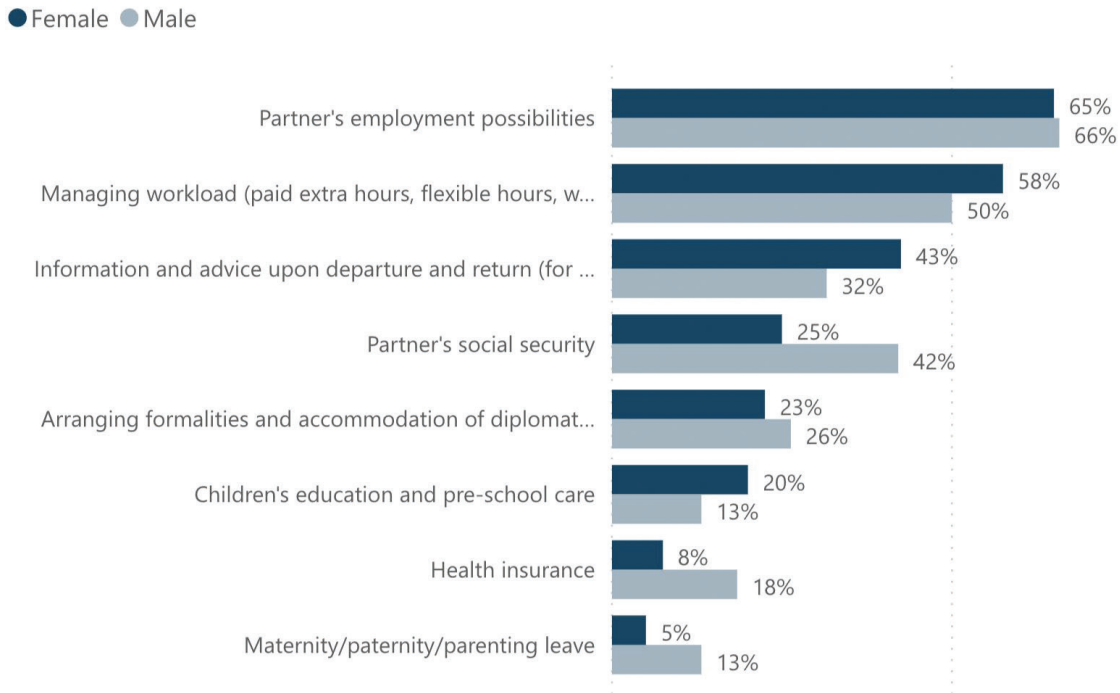


Figure 5: Aspects of life that need to be improved — ICELAND

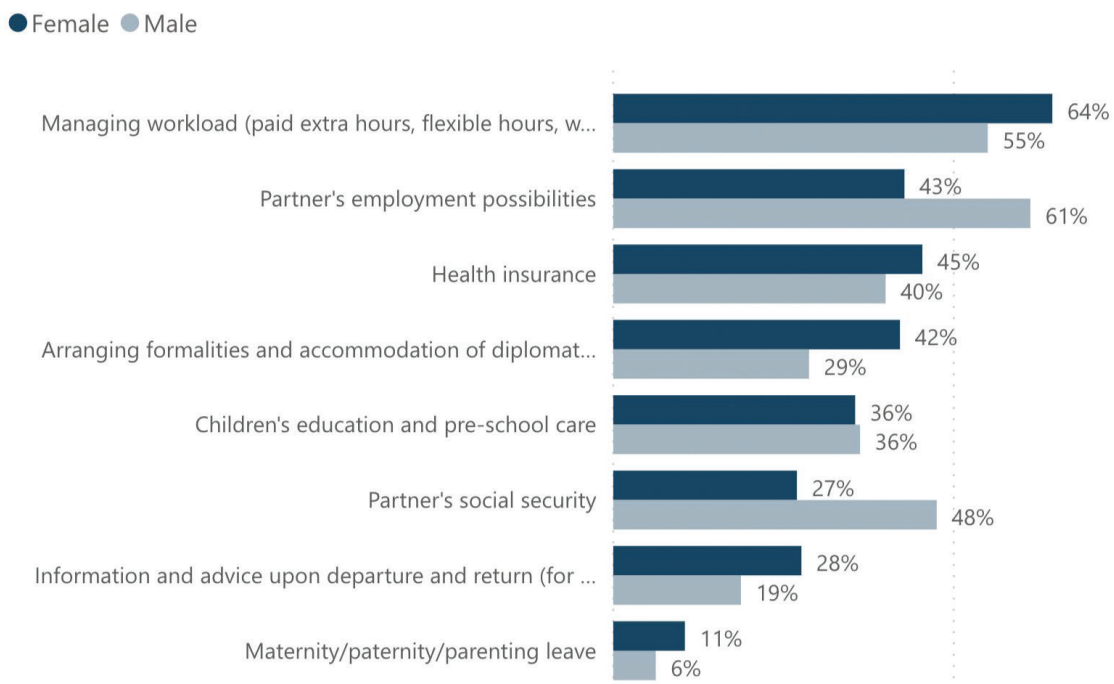


Figure 6: Aspects of life that need to be improved — SLOVENIA

Overall, survey results highlight that factors stemming from care responsibilities for children and extended family are comparatively more important for women, while men are comparatively more concerned about financial reasons, their partners' employment, and their partners' social security.

The greater burden of caring responsibilities is also relevant in terms of the perceptions of women's capabilities to serve in challenging posts. As was described by an interviewee:

*Even if the “single parent” is a man and takes one or two kids with him, this concern is never raised. But when it comes to women, people always wonder “how will she manage, as a single parent, to take care of the family and to competently perform the work tasks awaiting her abroad?” (Slovenia)*

In fact, some noted that the spouse's part of the job abroad is developed around the idea that the accompanying spouse is a woman whose duties are not accepted as “real” work and who is generally expected to take care of the children and household duties:

*What I notice informally is the perception of a diplomat's partner abroad. If the partner is a woman accompanying a male diplomat, everybody acts as if she's won a jackpot, while questions addressed to my husband were more along the lines of “how will you manage? Will you survive?” As if a male partner in this role were a victim, but for a woman it is great that she can wait at home all day, while her husband is on higher wages. (Slovenia)*

This also raises some questions about the financial losses for accompanying spouses, as men are likely to have higher salaries than women and therefore the loss of a man's salary could be more serious to the general family income. As posting abroad is a necessary step for career advancement in the MFA, it can be a barrier to career advancement for women and single parents, who are mostly women.

## 3.2 Awareness

The interviews and the survey were essential in order to grasp the level of awareness about the importance of gender equality among the employees, to observe differences in male and female answers, and to note differences in the perceived prevalence of discrimination.

### 3.2.1 Importance of gender equality

Employees' awareness of the importance of gender equality was assessed in the survey, as were their perceptions on gender parity and discrimination. Support for gender equality incentives and policies was also reviewed. Larger differences between women and men were observed for the perceptions of gender parity and discrimination, especially in the case of Slovenia.

As illustrated in Figures 7 and 8, the survey shows that there is considerable awareness of the link between gender equality and work productivity in both countries and among both genders. The differences in answers of male and female employees are larger in Slovenia. Notably, Slovenian men consider **gender equality as primarily important for ensuring non-discrimination, while women emphasize that gender equality actually makes diplomacy better** through the greater work productivity that gender-balanced teams bring, overall stronger organisational performance, and better qualitative output.



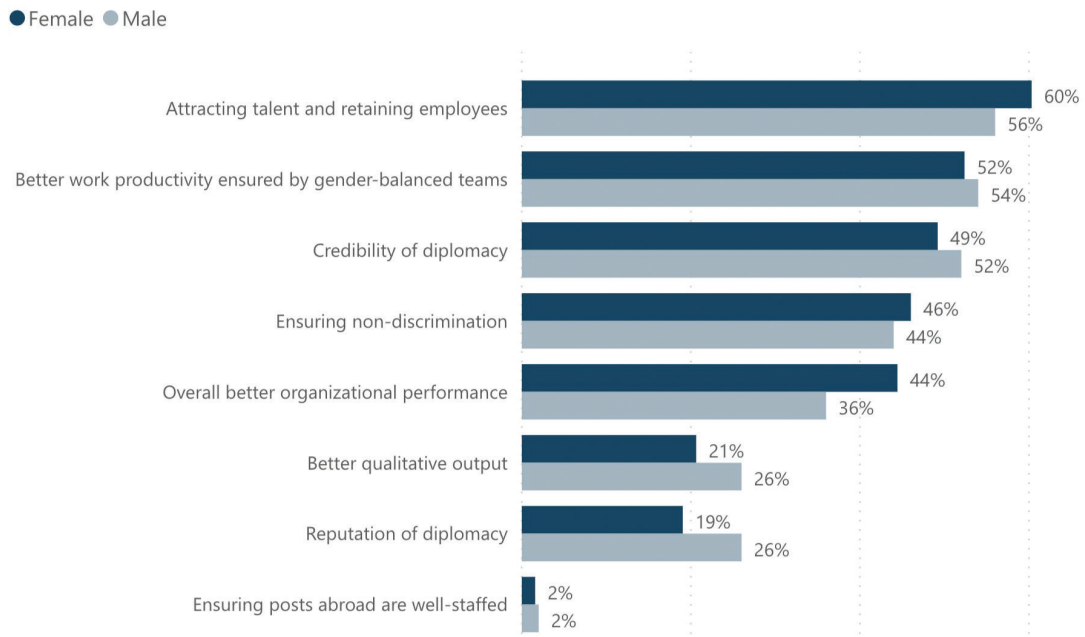


Figure 7: Why is gender equality important? — ICELAND

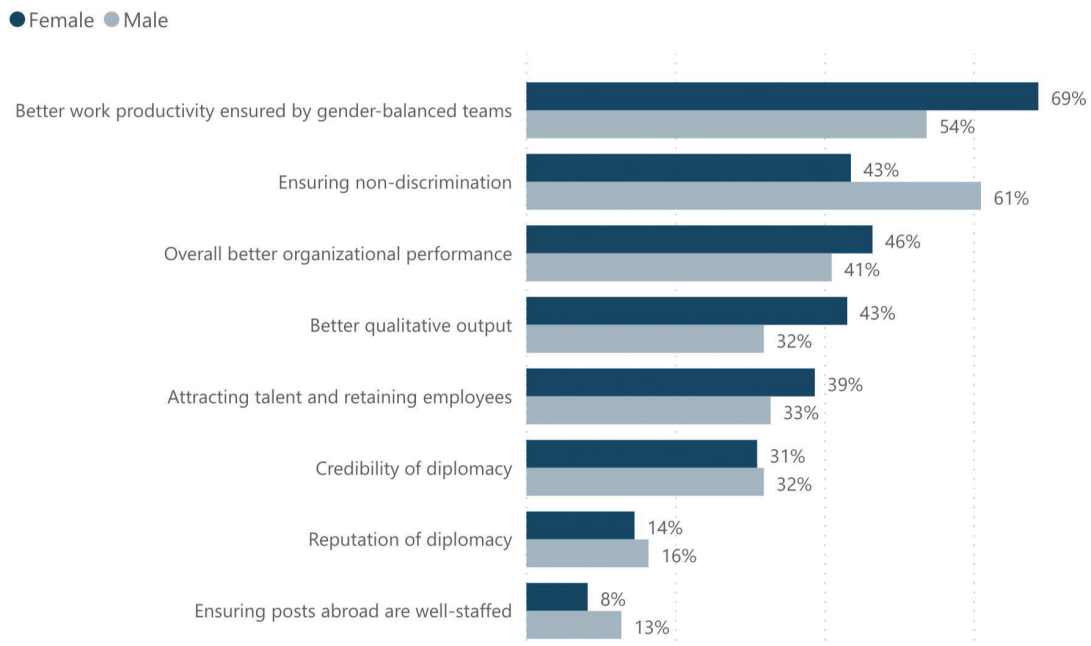


Figure 8: Why is gender equality important — SLOVENIA

In Iceland, the gap in answers of male and female employees is also largest concerning the link between quality and gender equality, with a substantially larger part of female respondents emphasising better organisational performance. Gender equality is seen as the most important factor in *attracting talent and retaining employees* in Iceland, whereas it does not seem to be so important in Slovenia. Another substantial difference between the two countries concerns the impact of gender equality on the credibility and reputation of diplomacy—two aspects to which Icelandic employees attach more importance.

A considerable gap exists between the perception of women and men on equality in representation of the genders as illustrated in Figures 9 and 10. Men perceive the situation as quite fair, whereas this is not experienced by women. The gender gap perceived is greatest when it comes to senior positions and smallest when it comes to postings abroad. In comparison, the gap between perceptions is wider in Slovenia.

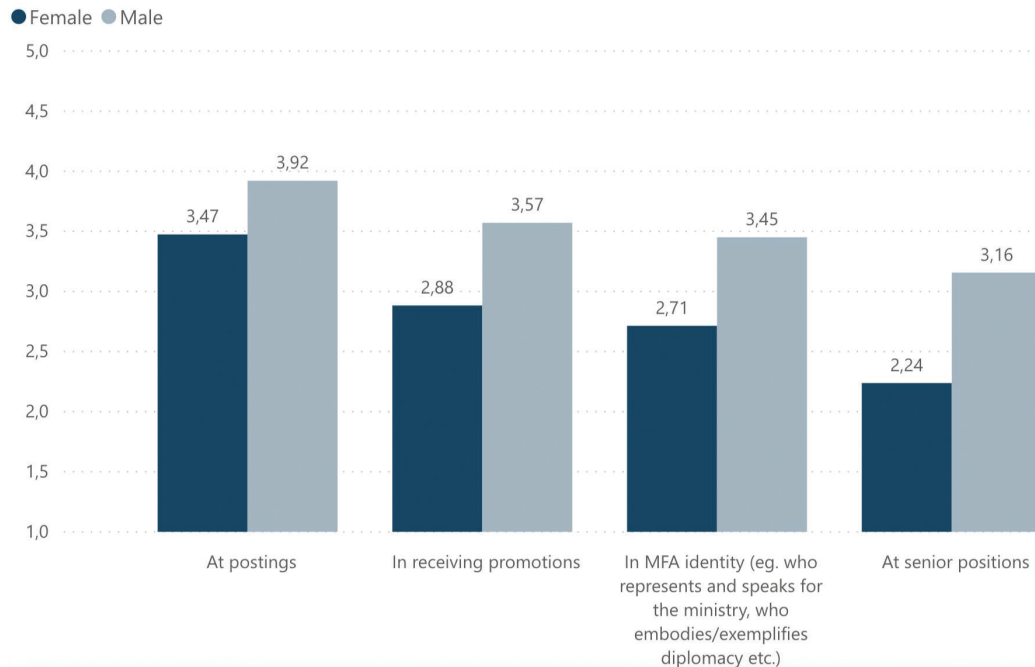


Figure 9: Are women and men equally represented? — ICELAND

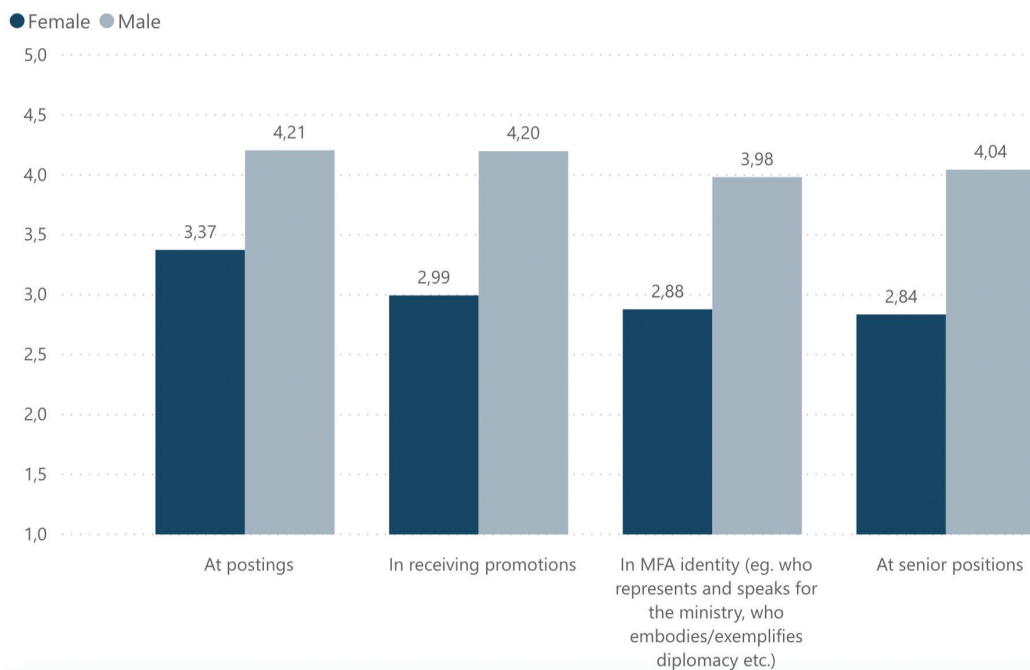


Figure 10: Are women and men equally represented? — SLOVENIA

Employees rated their support for different incentives or special measures to help establish gender equality as displayed in Figures 11 and 12. Family-friendly policies receive the greatest support while support for training and workshops on organisational culture is also high among both gender groups. On the other hand, there are considerable differences when it comes to assessing positive discrimination, which receives in general less support. However, women support positive discrimination to a greater extent than

men, particularly in Iceland. This might indicate that systemic measures of positive discrimination would not be universally embraced within the two diplomatic services.

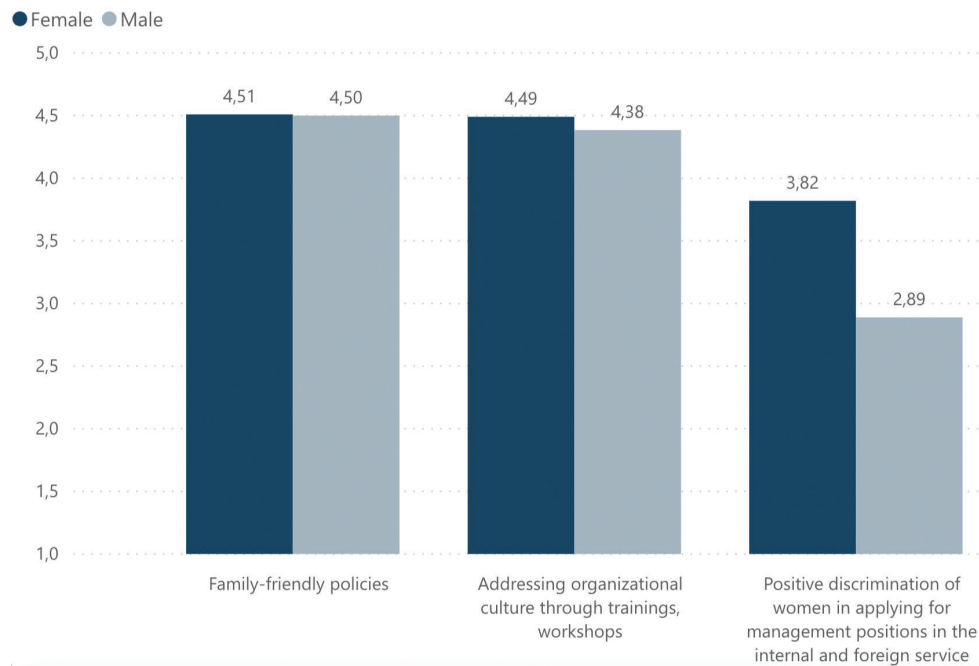


Figure 11: Do you agree with incentives or special measures to help establish gender equality? — ICELAND

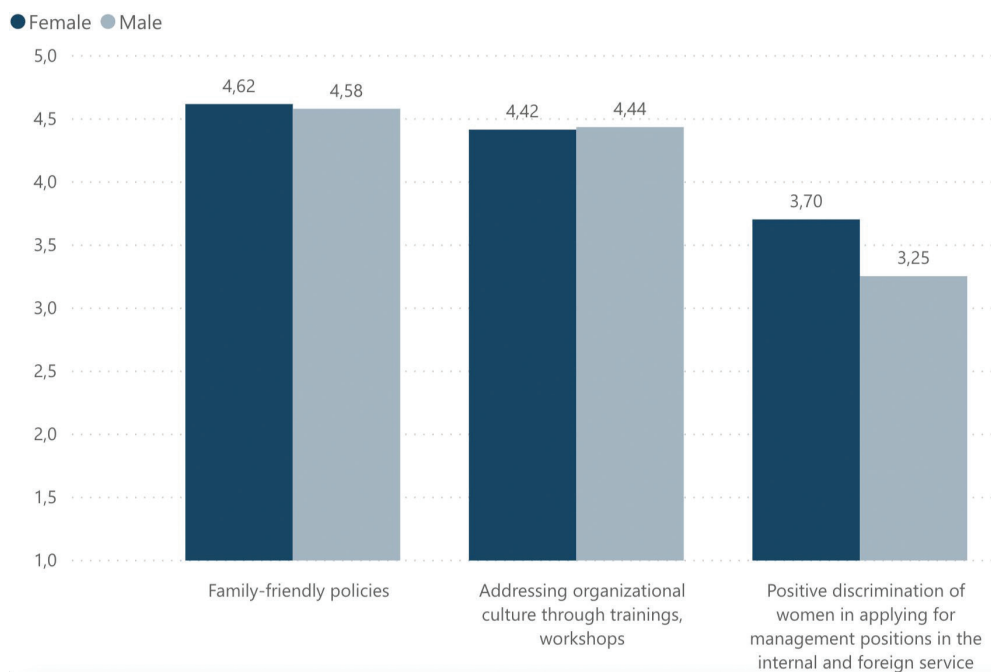


Figure 12: Do you agree with incentives or special measures to help establish gender equality? — SLOVENIA

### 3.2.2 Assessing discrimination

When assessing discrimination, it must be taken into account that responses to the survey and interviews show perceived discrimination and do not necessarily reflect actual discrimination. A comparison between the two factors would require further analysis. Based on the surveys and interviews, people feel most discriminated against at MFAs because of their gender and whether they have children.

Table 2: Staff who feels discriminated against due to gender

Question	Iceland	Iceland male	Iceland female	Slovenia	Slovenia male	Slovenia female
Felt discriminated against due to your gender (in the last 10 years)	35%	34%	36%	31%	15%	39%

As shown in Table 2 in Iceland, 35% of all respondents felt discriminated against based on their gender and 31% in Slovenia. In Iceland, the gap is insignificant; 36% women and 34% men feel discriminated against. In Slovenia, the gap is quite large with slightly more women than in Iceland (39%) feeling discriminated against, but considerably less men feeling so (15%).

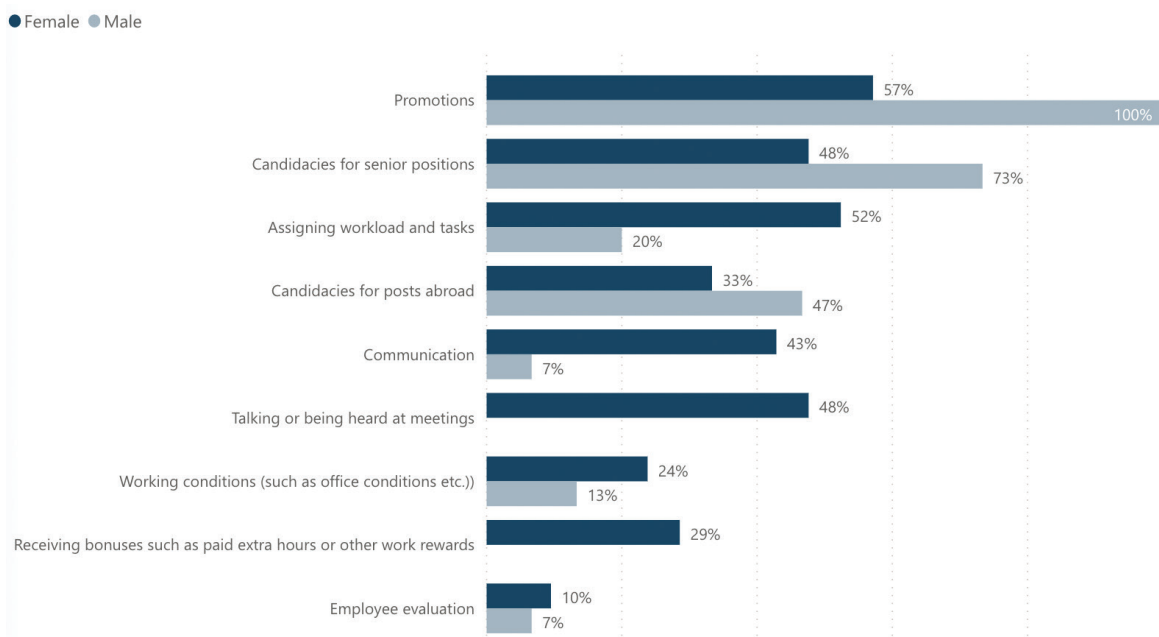


Figure 13: Circumstances where staff feels discriminated against due to gender — ICELAND

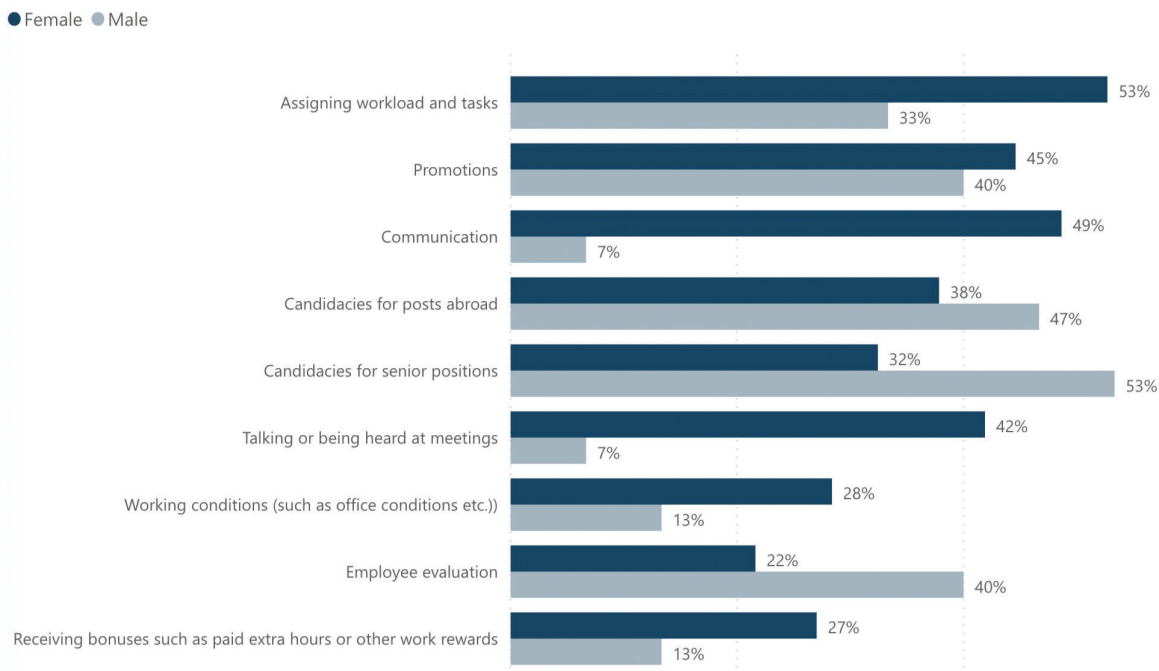


Figure 14: Circumstances where staff feels discriminated against due to gender — SLOVENIA

When looking at different circumstances of discrimination, most female respondents in the Slovenian MFA felt discriminated against based on gender when being *assigned workload and tasks* and in the process of *promotions*, while in the Icelandic MFA they mostly felt discriminated in the circumstances of *promotions* and *candidacies for senior positions*.

In Slovenia, men felt most discriminated against when applying for posts abroad and, in Iceland, for *promotions*. In fact, all Icelandic men who felt discriminated against based on gender (34%) felt that way for the circumstance of *promotions*. This might imply that they associate gender parity with fewer opportunities for them, which they interpret as gender discrimination. As the pipeline analysis has shown, men remain better represented in higher positions, while the progress of women in narrowing the gap has been gaining pace in recent years.

Differences in attitudes among the genders also appear for perceived discrimination pertaining to receiving bonuses and other work rewards, as 22% of women in Slovenia feel discriminated against and 29% of women in Iceland while no men in Iceland feel discriminated against and 13% of men in Slovenia. These results call for further analysis of paid work, other benefits, and the meaning that staff associates with such factors.

The biggest gender difference in both countries is the perception of being discriminated against in an area of communication. In Slovenia, 48% women and only 7% men feel discriminated against, and in Iceland 43% women and only 7% men, which is a staggering gender difference. In addition, 48% women in Iceland and 42% women in Slovenia felt discriminated against because they were *not heard or unable to speak at meetings*. No men in Iceland and only 2% of Slovenian men felt discriminated in these circumstances.

### 3.3 Culture

The study, through the interviews and the survey, sought to determine the prevalence and impact of perceptions and biases on the role of women in both MFAs.

Table 3: Overall assessment of gender equality at MFAs

Question	Iceland	Iceland male	Iceland female	Slovenia	Slovenia male	Slovenia female
Overall assessment of equal opportunities and professional progression*	3,5	3,87	3,37	3,75	4,26	3,45
Things in the culture which are working against reaching gender equality	72%	63%	78%	56%	33%	68%

As displayed in Table 3 on a scale of 1 to 5, Slovenian respondents rated equal opportunities at 3.75 and Icelandic respondents at 3.5. **Men perceive the situation more positively than women**, albeit a bigger difference between women and men is detected in Slovenia than in Iceland. When considering the question of whether there are things in the culture working against gender equality, the difference is quite high, especially among Slovenian respondents, as 68% of women are of that opinion while only 33% of men think so.

The interviews showed that women in particular perceive that stereotypes and prejudices are working against them, that they have to prove themselves worthy to a greater extent than men, have a heavier workload, and are more often in doubt about their performance:

*Women in higher positions tend to prove themselves more than men. Now, whether they have to or want to is another question. I myself am aware that every move I make is under much closer scrutiny than the actions of my male colleagues. (Slovenia)*

Women also feel the need to be very outspoken and that they cannot make a mistake:

*When you are starting your career—you need to pretend to be tougher than you really are. You are not whining over children, big family, or other stuff like that. (Iceland)*

*When you work abroad for four years, everything else, such as deciding to get pregnant, is put on hold. Or you tell yourself that now is not a good time. Many decisions have to be postponed. Men don't have these concerns. (Slovenia)*

Staff perceptions on factors that counteract gender equality are displayed in Figures 15 and 16. Gender stereotypes, prejudices and sexism, and the perception of the suitability of men and women for certain positions in Slovenia, and informal networks and lack of gender equality awareness in management in Iceland, are among the most important aspects of culture that counteract gender equality. In Slovenia, men consider family-friendly policies as the second most important factor, while women consider it as third. In Iceland, this is not a key factor, particularly for women. In a similar fashion, informal networking is the most important factor in Iceland for both genders, while in Slovenia, it is considered much less relevant. This shows that despite many similarities in both diplomacies, generalisations about organisational culture are difficult to make.

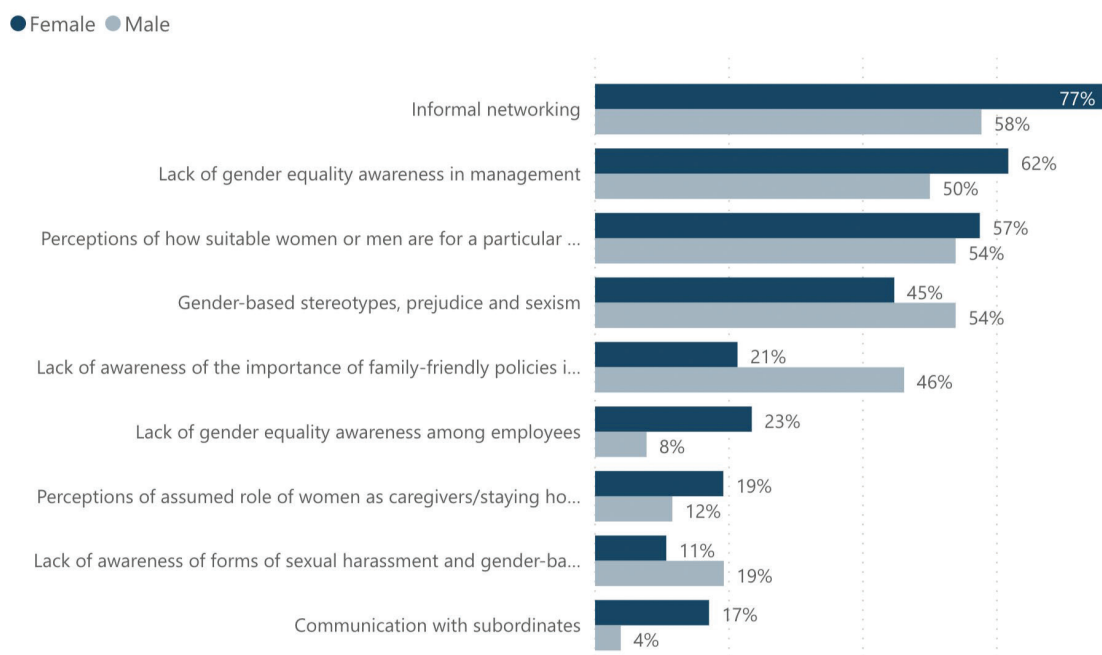


Figure 15: Factors that counteract gender equality — ICELAND

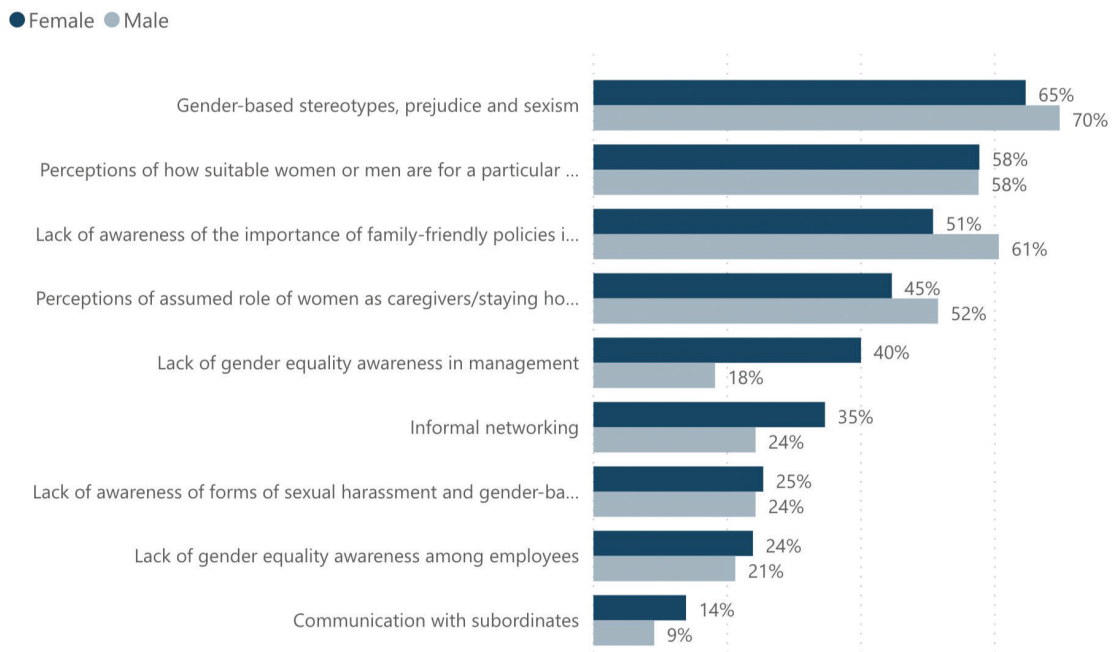


Figure 16: Factors that counteract gender equality — SLOVENIA

Women **experience a hidden power structure**, which works for men in a way that they have more information at hand and—when it comes to access to informal networks—to move forward within the diplomatic pipeline:

*If you're one of the important guys you get to participate, otherwise, no. Unfortunately, the "important guys" are more frequently men than women. (Slovenia)*

This is also exacerbated by human resources procedures that often lack clearly defined criteria, as well as informal practices that contribute to actual or perceived unequal treatment.<sup>29</sup> This may include the practice of holding "a meeting before a meeting," where women experience that many decisions are made behind closed doors and that internal politics play a major role. As discussed in one interview:

*Men walk into each other's offices, close the door, and are plotting something; in that way, we are being excluded. (Iceland)*

To return to Figures 15 and 16, lack of gender equality awareness in management was rated second in Iceland, but in Slovenia, only 18% of men considered it as working against gender equality. This could be explained by the perception that gender equality is a women's issue and not a management/organisational issue, or that management awareness of gender equality has no influence on the general situation of gender equality in the institution.

Interviewees explained:

*I often feel like we are missing guidance. You don't feel that gender equality is on the agenda in our daily work, talks, or ideas. But of course it's there, formally. (Iceland)*

*True supporters don't only declare themselves supporters, but they act accordingly. In discussions about equality, I miss male voices. And I don't mean only the guidelines and policies that they've read, but spontaneous reactions. (Slovenia)*

The perceptions of managers are reflections of unconscious thoughts and beliefs and are therefore representative of the culture of the organization.<sup>30</sup> Their gender equality awareness facilitates the positive shifts towards general gender equality at the institution. As one of the interviewees shared:

*There are instructions in place, but the strongest message is sent by those people in leading positions who really advocate equality by demonstrating it and doing it consistently. (Iceland)*

### 3.4 Family

In order to assess the impact of work-life balance challenges on gender equality in MFAs, policies and instruments available to diplomats were analysed, while the diplomats' own views were addressed through the survey and interviews. The survey showed that family-friendly policies are very important for both genders in both countries (see Figures 11 and 12).

As per the Slovenian and Icelandic MFAs, an overview of the gender equality policies and practices that currently exist are as follows.

**The possibility of having flexible working hours and working from home:** In both Slovenia and Iceland, working from home is relatively uncommon and traditional office hours are still the norm. The workday in starts between 7:00 and 9:00 (in Slovenia) or 10:00 (in Iceland) and ends between 15:00 and 17:30 (in Slovenia) or 18:00 (in Iceland), allowing employees the flexibility to make time for family commitments and leisure activities. The interviews have shown that this aspect is most important in postings and jobs abroad, where hours are longer and more unpredictable, especially for people with children. In the survey, the highest rated answer to the question "which aspects of life abroad need to be improved?" was *managing workload (paid extra hours, flexible hours, work from home, extra vacation days)*. 64% of women and 55% of men supported this answer, as did 69% of employees without children and 58% with children.

Nevertheless, with the new measures in place in order to contain the spread of SARS-CoV-2, working from home is becoming much more common or even the norm.

The interviews indicated that **it is more difficult for women than for men to take the decision to go abroad and move with their family**. Women feel that they are approached differently than men when it comes to family and that they have fewer opportunities when they have children. **Single-parent families** are also particularly affected, as there are prejudices and concerns about whether single-parent families may be suitable for a posting abroad. Of note, most single parents are women. There is also a perception that there is a lack of **support to help the families of diplomats move and start a life in a foreign post, as well as in subsequently relocating and reintegrating back home**.

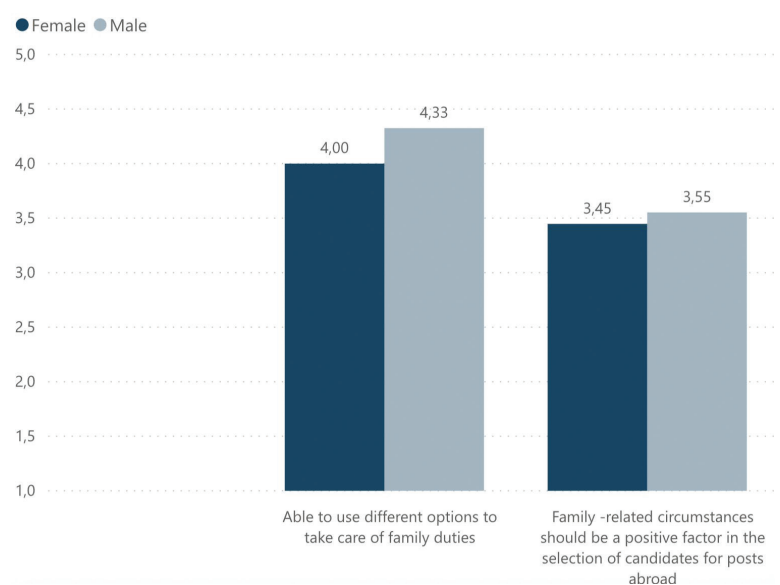


Figure 17: Caretaking duties — ICELAND

In comparison to Slovenia, Icelandic employees seem to be more satisfied with the ability to use different options to take care of family duties. In Slovenia, employees are generally satisfied, but less so are em-



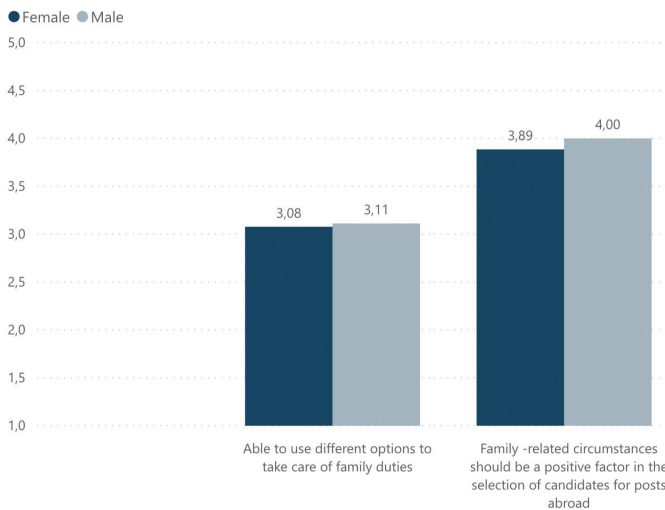


Figure 18: Caretaking duties — SLOVENIA

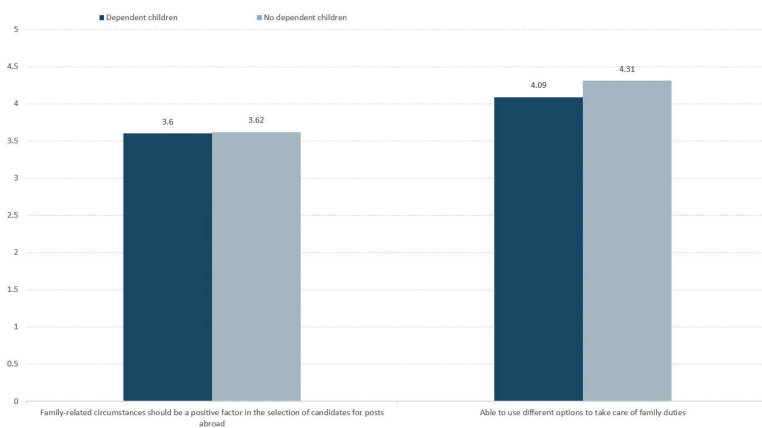


Figure 19: Family circumstances duties — ICELAND

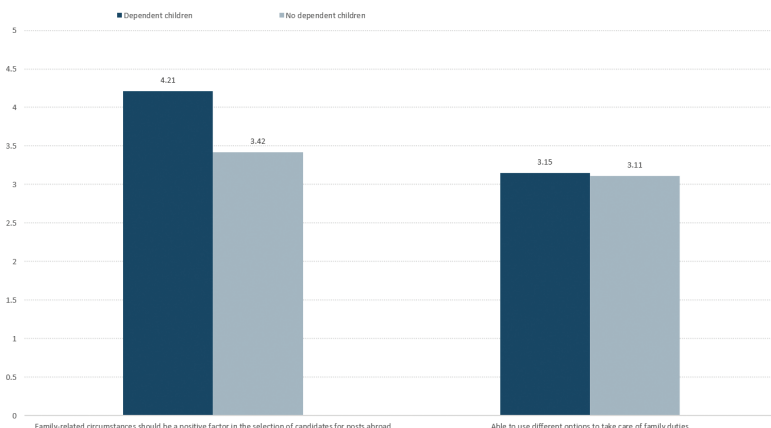


Figure 20: Family circumstances duties — SLOVENIA

employees with children. In rating the ability to use different options to take care of family duties (e.g. flexible hours, excess working hours, part-time employment, sick leave to take care of sick children or spouse), women in Slovenia assessed their access to these options as worse than the access men have.

**Leave options for MFA employees:** maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, paid sick leave, sick leave to care for family members, personal leave, and long-term disability leave. As noted in the interviews, there is a certain reluctance among women to use the available paid sick leave and sick leave to care for family members options, to not be perceived as overburdened with family and therefore not adequately committed to the job. In the case of Slovenia, employees on foreign postings do not currently benefit from equivalent parental leave conditions as those in internal service, as they lose their allocation allowance during parental leave.<sup>31</sup>

**Access to childcare:** Respondents pointed out that affordable, high-quality childcare is available in Slovenia, which is crucial for the economic security of families and contributes significantly to parents' abilities to stay in or enter the labour market and to reduce the gender gap in employment.<sup>32</sup> This is not necessarily the case for families in external service, where the current compensation scheme does not adequately reflect the higher costs of (and greater need for) childcare abroad.

**Parental rights:** MFA benefits that provide direct support to employees with young children include shorter business trips, easier access to MFA parking spaces (credit structure), and the possibility of extending the employment at postings (due to the children's education).

Access and uptake of life- and family-friendly practices can be thwarted by the challenging work environment and culture of long working hours at MFAs. This is even more burdensome for women due to their caring responsibilities, as

long working hours are a greater obstacle for their work-life balance than for men. It is therefore important that the institution shows **support for employees' work-life balance within the organisational culture and positive management practices**, by signalling and formally announcing the extent to which they value family responsibilities, the physical and mental health of employees, and their overall job satisfaction.

### 3.5 Sexual harassment

Considering the importance of recognizing, addressing, and preventing this form of discrimination, sexual harassment was analysed as a separate area in the study.

Table 4: Sexual harassment in the workplace

Question	Iceland	Iceland male	Iceland female	Slovenia	Slovenia male	Slovenia female
I trust the process which is in place for sexual harassment complaints	59%	63%	56%	41%	58%	30%
Witnessed any form of sexual harassment at work (in the last 10 years)	24%	16%	31%	37%	23%	45%
Experienced any form of sexual harassment at work (in the last 10 years)	14%	9%	17%	17%	8%	23%

Survey results for sexual harassment in the workplace are set forth in Table 4. There is a difference between the countries in terms of the proportion of respondents witnessing sexual harassment—37% for Slovenia and 24% for Iceland. There are differences between women and men with regard to witnessing sexual harassment at work, with **women witnessing more sexual harassment in both countries**—45% of all female respondents in Slovenia and 31% in Iceland.

**Women also experience more sexual harassment than men in both countries.** 17% of Icelandic and 23% of Slovenian female respondents experienced some form of sexual harassment in the workplace. This proportion is high compared to the average in Icelandic organisations, which is around 4% for employees in their current workplaces,<sup>33</sup> while in Slovenia the figure is average compared to other organizations.<sup>34</sup>

The survey findings regarding the nature of sexual harassment witnessed are set forth in Figures 21 and 22. Respondents rated which form of sexual harassment they have witnessed. *Offensive language* has the highest overall score in both countries, while the highest score for women in Iceland is *unwanted touching or physical contact* and in Slovenia *verbal harassment of a sexual nature*. 18% of Icelandic female respondents who witnessed sexual harassment had also witnessed sexual assault, compared to 2% in Slovenia.

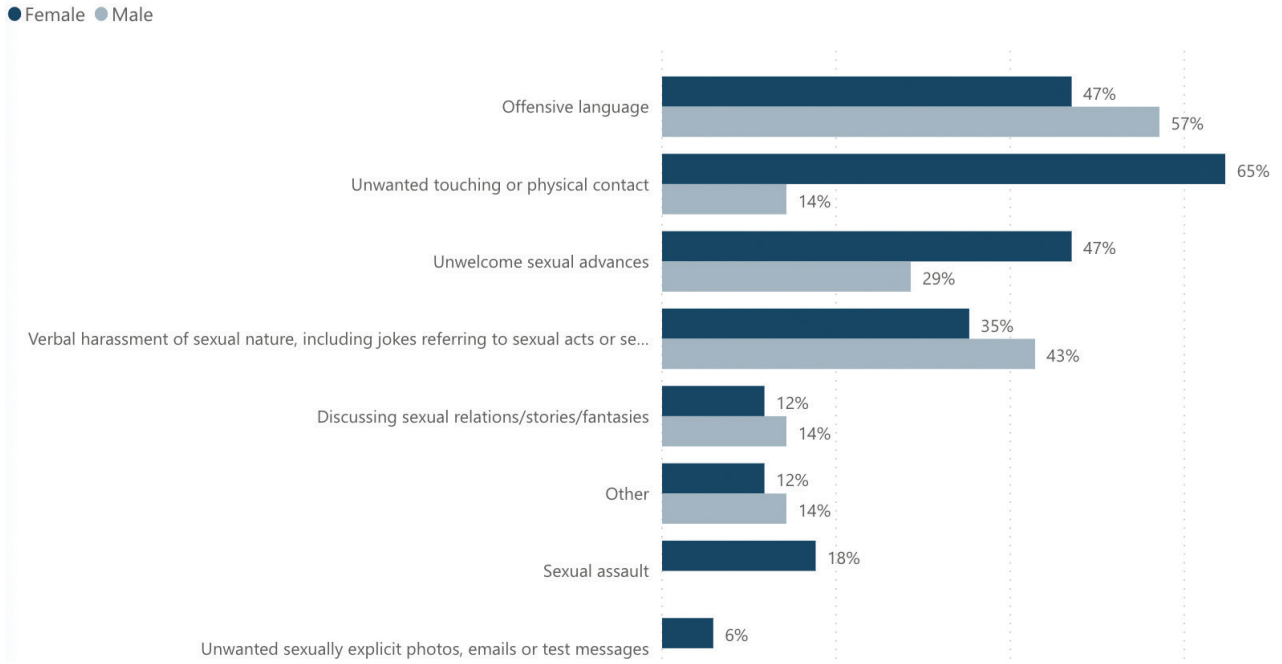


Figure 21: Nature of sexual harassment witnessed — ICELAND

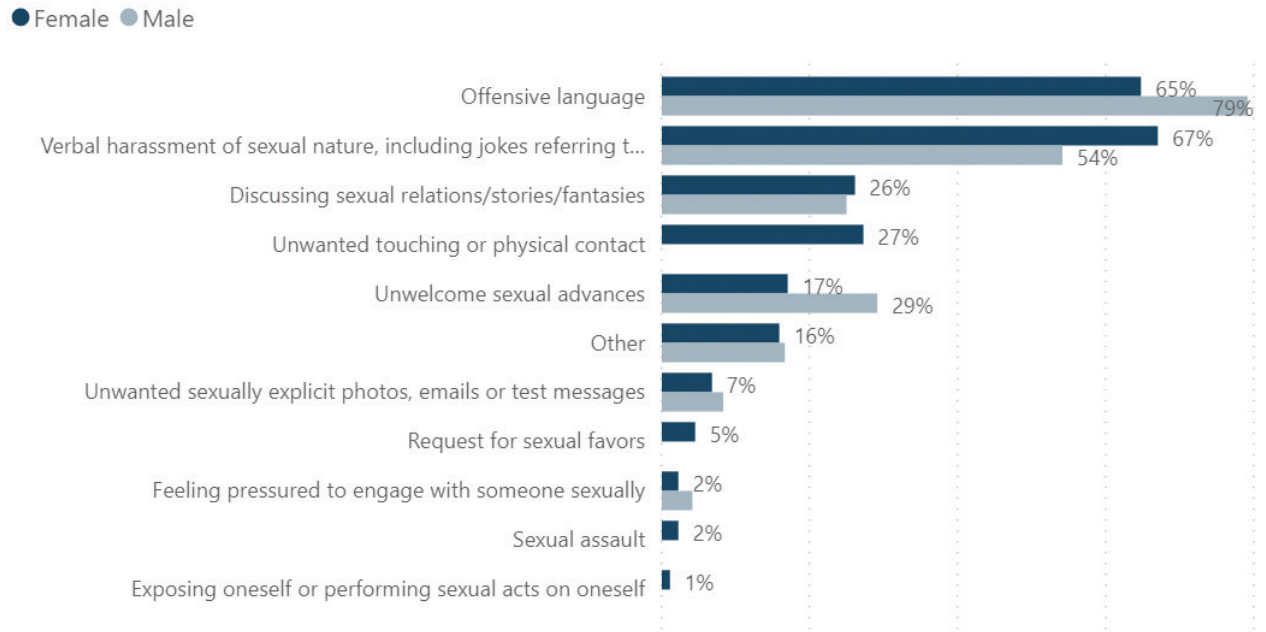


Figure 22: Nature of sexual harassment witnessed — SLOVENIA

Survey results for the nature of sexual harassment experienced is set forth in figures 23 and 24. Of those who have experienced sexual harassment at work, 78% of women in the Icelandic MFA have experienced *unwanted touching* and 35% women in the Slovenian MFA. *Offensive language* was only experienced by women in Iceland (44%), while in Slovenia it was most often experienced by men (63%).

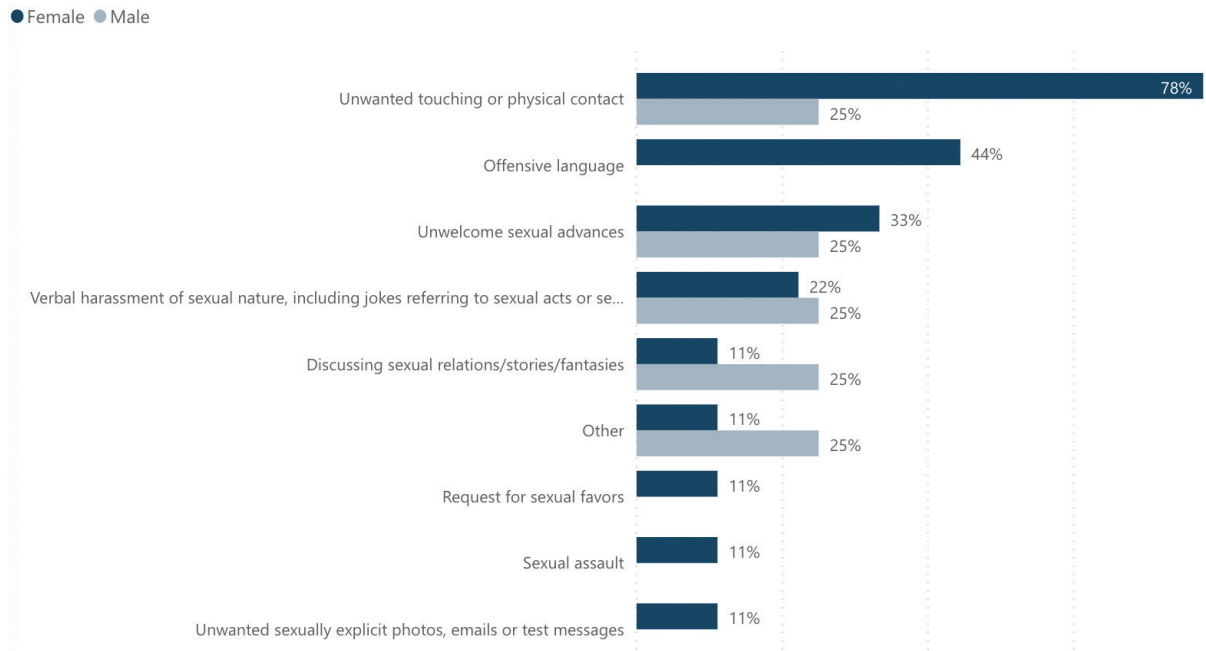


Figure 23: Nature of sexual harassment experienced — ICELAND

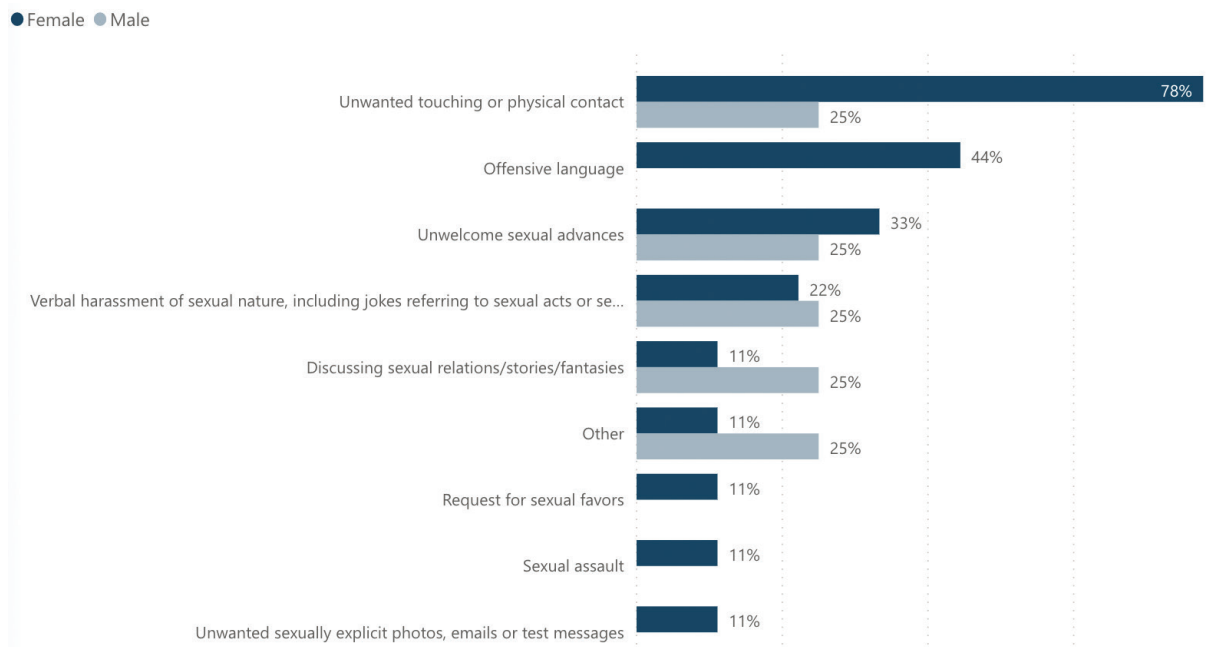


Figure 24: Nature of sexual harassment experienced — SLOVENIA

11% of female respondents from Iceland (1.5% of total employees) and 5% female respondents from Slovenia (1% of total) have experienced sexual assault at work. A worryingly low number of women in **Slovenia trust the existing sexual harassment complaints procedure** (only 30%), while the figure is a modest 56% for women in Iceland.

## 4. Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to assess gender equality and equal opportunities in the MFAs of Iceland and Slovenia in order to identify key issues that are country-specific, apply to both diplomacies, and are relevant to diplomacy as a profession in general. The 2020 survey found that in both MFAs the debates on gender (in)equality were already institutionalised. As well, similar mechanisms and arguments were introduced to promote change in two otherwise different social contexts.

Some who have studied both public in private institutions have argued that a critical mass of women<sup>35,36,37,38</sup>—usually about 30%<sup>39,40</sup>—is needed to transform a previously male-dominated organisation's structure and operating procedures. In both countries, women comprise a majority of the diplomatic staff – 55% in Iceland and 58% in Slovenia. However, gender gaps and unequal practices were identified. One should therefore not expect women in a specific organisation to become more empowered solely because they increasingly constitute a larger share of its staff<sup>41</sup>; rather, one needs to make an effort to take into account the gender-specific and diverse interests and values of differently situated women and men.<sup>42</sup>

Gender inequality affects both employees and institutions, and efforts to promote gender equality must be placed at the forefront of institutional priorities. The 2020 survey showed that employees perceive gender equality in the MFA as important for attracting talent and retaining employees, improving institutional performance and labour productivity,<sup>43</sup> but also for ensuring non-discrimination, employee job satisfaction, and commitment in the workplace.<sup>44</sup>

Power, culture, awareness, family, and harassment, were identified in the study as five factors in which unequal gender opportunities and gender discrimination appear, where women are in unequal positions in comparison to men. In fact, it is important to note that the five separate fields should be considered as overlapping components of a gendered institutional order. For further analysis, additional statistical and qualitative information would need to be collected. Nevertheless, hopefully this assessment can stimulate further discussion on gender equality in diplomacy and prepare the ground for incentives, focused actions, and special measures to be institutionally supported and adopted.

### **POWER, where sexist division of labour and asymmetrical distribution of power in favour of men still exists.**

Women are less represented at higher ranks where power, resources, rewards, and influence are proportionally greater.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, it is encouraging to note that in both countries, the share of women at top-level posts has more than doubled in the recent decade, and did so at a remarkable pace.

In light of this improvement, it is important to analyse some of the perceptions that continue to be observed. The survey showed that women feel most often discriminated against in promotions and in the allocation of workload and tasks. Positions of status and influence are still sometimes associated with alleged traits of masculinity, while femininity is more often associated with positions of lower status.<sup>46</sup>

#### **Key points:**

- Women continue to be underrepresented at top levels in both diplomacies, but the pace of progress in the past decade has been remarkable.
- In Slovenia, women apply less to posts abroad, and particularly less to top-level posts. This is not the case in Iceland. The key path to reach gender equality at top positions in the Slovenian MFA lies in creating the conditions that would enable more women to apply for these posts.
- The decision to serve abroad is more difficult to make for diplomats with families.
- The main reservations concerning serving abroad for women are connected to their caring responsibilities, while men are generally more concerned with financial reasons.

On the other hand, the analysis of Slovenian applications to ambassadorial posts revealed that women apply disproportionately less often than men for top-level jobs, while their success rate in those application is actually greater than that of men. A further analysis would be needed to verify how the perceptions mentioned above contribute to the power gap in the MFAs. At least statistically speaking, they do not seem to be affecting the selection of candidates themselves, but might be affecting the application rate of both genders. The study revealed that in order to be better represented in top posts, female diplomats would need to apply more frequently to these positions.

### **CULTURE, where gender discrimination and stereotypes still prevail.**

Women are still confronted with barriers resulting from the traditional roles ascribed to them. In addition to the asymmetrical distribution in powerful positions, hierarchical gender patterns remain present.<sup>47</sup> Career preferences can be the result of individual career choices but are also shaped by gender stereotypes and expectations.

Among diplomats, women may be clustered in sectors that are more “feminine” or require more “feminine” traits—sectors which are often less prestigious.<sup>48</sup> The survey showed that there are still perceptions of men and women being suitable (or not) for particular positions within the MFA, and women are particularly affected by stereotypes and prejudices, which work against them.

### **Lack of gender-equality AWARENESS.**

One of the aspects of culture that counteracts gender equality is the lack of sensitivity to gender differences in power, resources, and opportunities. Moreover, gender inequality can be perceived as a women’s issue, so that the “objective” organisational structure is not obliged to promote it. This also manifests in a lack of awareness of gender equality in management<sup>49</sup> when managers and senior officials do not promote gender equality, or are not held responsible to do so by institutional policy.

The survey showed that there continues to be vast differences in perceptions of men and women on the state of gender equality as well as its many aspects and implications. This fact, alone, underscores the importance of raising awareness on this important issue.

#### **Key points:**

- Women are still confronted with barriers resulting from the traditional roles ascribed to them.
- Women perceive that stereotypes and prejudices continue working against them. They feel they have to prove themselves worthy to a greater extent than men, have a larger workload, and are more often in doubt about their performance. Women experience that men benefit to a greater extent from informal networking that often shapes decisions.

#### **Key points:**

- While men predominantly consider gender equality important for ensuring non-discrimination, they are not as convinced as women are that gender equality actually makes diplomacy better.
- Women feel much more discriminated against than men when it comes to elements concerning their daily work: in assigning workload and tasks, in communications, in talking or being heard at meetings as well as concerning work conditions such as office space.
- In contrast, men feel most discriminated against in areas such as promotions, candidacies for leadership roles, for posts abroad as well as in employee evaluation.

### **FAMILY, where work-life balance poses more of a struggle to women than to men.**

There are various life- and family-friendly (LFF) measures in place at the MFAs. However, access to and uptake of LFF practices can be thwarted by the MFA's demanding work environment and long-hour culture, particularly when serving abroad. This is even more burdensome for women since long working hours are more of a barrier for work life balance than for men.

The survey showed that at the MFA the 'lack of awareness of the importance of family friendly policies in management' is the second most prevalent aspect in the culture working against reaching gender equality. Life- and family-friendly organisational culture constructs a supportive environment and creates a space for all employees to take advantage of LFF measures without worrying about the extent to which those will negatively affect her/his standing in the organisation. This is especially important to prevent men benefiting disproportionately more from LFF measures, since women can feel stigmatised if using the LFF measures.<sup>50</sup> Efforts should be made to make the diplomatic career as life- and family-friendly as possible for both genders. An overall goal should not be to help women adapt to existing structures, but to make gendered structures more women- and family-friendly.

#### **Key points:**

- Unequal distribution of family and caring responsibilities continues to impact women's career opportunities and choices.
- Men find it easier to use different options provided at work to take care of their family duties.
- Employees are aware of the positive link between measures to enhance work-life balance and gender equality; however, they acknowledge that serving abroad poses a particular challenge in this respect. When assessing which aspects of living abroad need to be improved the most, women particularly highlight measures related to work-family balance, while men are generally less concerned about these aspects.
- Employees of both genders are in favour of positive discrimination based on family circumstances in competing for posts abroad.

### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT, lack of prevention mechanisms and lack of trust in the process.**

The emotional and psychological toll of sexual harassment, which affects women disproportionately as showed in the survey results, can lead to them becoming less involved in diplomatic careers or even giving up their careers altogether.<sup>51</sup> Cases of harassment are sometimes mistakenly treated as isolated incidents and as deviant actions by certain actors. These issues need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner with consideration of the broader structure of gender inequality in diplomacy, including the lack of preventive mechanisms against sexual harassment and, especially important, the lack of trust in those mechanisms.

Finally, the study showed that despite many cultural and organisational differences between the MFAs of Iceland and Slovenia, the challenges that both diplomacies experience in pursuit of gender equality are remarkably similar, highlighting universal difficulties posed to women in pursuit of a successful diplomatic career.

#### **Key points:**

- Sexual harassment disproportionately affects women, with worryingly high rates of women having witnessed or experienced sexual harassment, including sexual assaults
- The level of trust in the mechanisms and processes for complaints is relatively low, particularly in Slovenia.
- Sexual harassment continues to be a sensitive or even taboo topic, with many diplomats feeling uneasy discussing it. This inhibits greater awareness and progress in addressing the issue.

## 5. Recommendations

The road to enhancing gender equality in the diplomatic services of Iceland and Slovenia can lead to a number of important actions. The steering groups of both Ministries agreed on a number of recommendations based on the analysis conducted.

The recommendations begin with a clear commitment to change that needs to come from the top-level leadership of the institutions. Institutional engagement is a key in overcoming sexism, gender discrimination, and gender inequality. **Senior leadership needs to openly make a firm commitment to gender equality, take ownership of gender as a central issue, and follow through with associated reform efforts.**

These should include but are not limited to:

### 1. Commit to implementation, oversee progress, and enhance transparency

- Set goals and targets concerning the pipeline with the aim to reach gender parity at different positions in a given timeframe.
- Determine performance indicators and monitor progress in additional areas such as recruitment, career progression, applications, and selections.
- Make the data public and visible, which also contributes to tackling possible misperceptions.
- Actively encourage women's applications for managerial positions.

### 2. Zero tolerance for sexual harassment

- Enforce zero tolerance for sexual harassment cases.
- Establish and/or enforce a code of conduct or a code of ethics.
- Make complaint procedures clear, trustworthy, and known to all employees.
- Organise workshops and training to raise awareness, especially among management.

### 3. Establish and/or improve and promote life- and family-friendly policies

- Improve the possibilities of using flexible hours, particularly when serving abroad.
- Promote work from home and provide technical equipment and/or support to employees in order to enable efficient work.
- Collect and disseminate useful information concerning life at a particular post as well as regarding relocation and reintegration back home.
- Establish a focal point for family-related aspects of the diplomatic career at the Ministry in order to centralise information and offer advice.
- Work on improving aspects of life abroad that particularly affect women, such as conditions of maternity and parental leave as well as child-caring arrangements.
- Recognise the engagement of the spouses of diplomats serving abroad in work processes of the diplomatic representations if interested and when possible.



#### 4. Raise awareness and promote gender-sensitive organisational culture

- Organise workshops and training.
- Encourage managers and employees to speak out against biases and stereotypes.
- Promote gender-balanced teams wherever possible; discourage gender-clustering in specific areas of work (such as men in security issues, women in human rights, etc.).

#### 5. Gender mainstreaming

- Integrate a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures, and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men, and combating discrimination.<sup>52</sup>
- Establish or enhance the work of a dedicated, permanent working body to oversee integrating gender dimensions in all policy areas. Monitor the status of women at the MFA, which regularly reports to the Minister on the current situation on gender balance at the Ministry.

#### 6. Make personnel decisions transparent and merit-based

- Further define and specify criteria and procedures for personnel decisions such as for managerial positions and for posts abroad, with a particular focus on gender balance.
- Enhance the system of employee evaluations with a focus on results and promote a culture of constructive feedback, aimed at improving employee skillsets.

#### 7. Join forces internationally

- Strive to improve the legal and policy framework regulating the employment of diplomatic spouses.<sup>53</sup>
- Promote local information-sharing between interested embassies concerning different aspects of diplomatic life, such as schools, childcare services, and other practical information.
- Collaborate to raise awareness of the importance of gender equality in diplomacy, including through instruments such as female ambassadors' clubs.

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<sup>1</sup> Declaration on the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Hoogendoorn et al., 2013; McKinsey & Company, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

<sup>4</sup> Studies (see e.g. Krause, J. Krause, W & Bränfors, P. (2018), True, J. & Riveros-Morales, Y. (2018)) show that there is a clear link between women's involvement in peace negotiations and the sustainability and quality of peace. Slovenia's Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men 2015-2020 (2015) also recognises this link.

<sup>5</sup> Towns, Ann, and Birgitta Niklasson. 2017.

<sup>6</sup> True, Jacqui (2003) defines this term as reproducing masculine-as-norm organisational structures due to a lack of sensitivity to gender differences.

<sup>7</sup> As defined by Linse, Caroline (2004), a professional environment that historically has been male dominated.

<sup>8</sup> Diplomacy has been changing at an unprecedented pace, driven by digitalisation, a growing variety of actors shaping international relations, the changing nature of communication, public engagement in foreign policy issues, and even by the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Aggestam, Karin and Towns, Ann E. (2018, 2019), True, Jacqui (2010), Jazbec (2012).

<sup>10</sup> Jazbec et al., 2010.

<sup>11</sup> The Iceland-based consultancy Capacent, specialising in assisting organisations to improve their gender diversity, assisted this process, whereas on Slovenian side, efforts were supported by the non-governmental organisation Ekvilib Institute, specialising in work-life balance.

<sup>12</sup> See for example the EEAS Gender and Equal Opportunity Strategy 2018-2023 (2017)\_ <https://eurotra-deunion.eu/documents/WGgender.pdf>. Another example is the reporting on the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

<sup>13</sup> The candidacies are reviewed by a five-person commission, tasked with providing the Foreign Minister with an assessment of how well each of the candidates fits the criteria and expectations for the post. The Minister then recommends one candidate for each post to the President, who has the right not to approve the proposed appointment.

<sup>14</sup> For example, the share of women applying for top-level jobs compared to men.

<sup>15</sup> Aggestam and Towns, 2018, page 13.

<sup>16</sup> Aggestam and Towns, 2019, page 22.

<sup>17</sup> Feeney and Stritch, 2017.

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- <sup>18</sup> Jogan et al., 2012.
- <sup>19</sup> Aggestam and Towns, 2019, page 22.
- <sup>20</sup> Ten interviews were conducted in each country. The group of respondents was surveyed by the MFA in each country based on Capacent's guidelines on the diversity of the group in terms of gender, age, marital status, position, etc. The interviews were conducted in a quiet and safe environment by consultants using semi-standardised question frameworks with eighteen questions.
- <sup>21</sup> The online survey was administered between 11 February and 4 March 2020. It was sent to all MFA diplomatic staff by e-mail, through posts on internal pages, and in staff meetings, with regular reminders. In Iceland, the response rate was 70% (126 out of 170 employees), while in Slovenia it was 52% (377 out of 721 employees). In Slovenia, there were 65% female respondents and 35% male, and in Iceland, there was 58% female respondents and 42% male.
- <sup>22</sup> In 2009, 2013, 2017, and 2020.
- <sup>23</sup> For certain posts, such as ambassadors, this is formally a condition in Slovenia.
- <sup>24</sup> The three levels of management were identified by the steering groups in both countries, analysing individual posts and their places in the Ministries' hierarchies.
- <sup>25</sup> It needs to be considered though that on that level Iceland has thirty-two employees while Slovenia has fifty-two.
- <sup>26</sup> It should be noted that the small size of the diplomacy in Iceland allows for a smaller number of appointments to cause proportionally greater shifts in overall gender proportions.
- <sup>27</sup> It is common for departments such as human rights to be headed by female diplomats, while security policy or economic diplomacy would be handled predominantly by men.
- <sup>28</sup> Health insurance is a notable factor that Slovenian survey respondents considered of particular importance which, according to the assessment of the Slovenian steering group, is likely due to the fact that diplomats consider healthcare in Slovenia as relatively better than what insurance generally provides abroad.
- <sup>29</sup> As was already pointed out by the working group for equal opportunities of the Slovenian MFA.
- <sup>30</sup> Wicks and Bradshaw, 2002, page 138.
- <sup>31</sup> In the case of maternity/parental leave, the relocation of the family back to Slovenia and a shortening of the posting is encouraged. Should the family wish to remain abroad and continue the posting following parental leave, the living costs (rent) allowance is only extended during maternity leave (the first three months after a child is born), but not during the parental leave (next nine months). As compensation during maternity/parental leave is covered by insurance, no adjustment for higher living costs abroad is made either, as would be the case with the regular salary of employees working abroad.
- <sup>32</sup> Resolucija o družinski politiki 2018-2028: »Vsem družinam prijazna družba«. 2018.
- <sup>33</sup> Snorradóttir et al., 2020.
- <sup>34</sup> A survey carried out by the Office for Equal Opportunities and trade unions in 2007 found that every third woman was a victim of verbal sexual harassment (28,33%) and every sixth woman a victim of physical sexual harassment (17,06%). Source in Slovenian: <http://www.arhiv.uem.gov.si/fileadmin/uem.gov.si/pageuploads/RaziskavaNadlegovanje.pdf>.
- <sup>35</sup> True, 2010, page 381.
- <sup>36</sup> Dahlerup, 2006.
- <sup>37</sup> Moss- Kanter, Rosalind. 1993. Men and women of the corporation (2nd edn). New York: Basic Books.
- <sup>38</sup> Niklasson and Towns, 2018.
- <sup>39</sup> Dahlerup, 2006.
- <sup>40</sup> True, 2010, page 381.
- <sup>41</sup> Niklasson and Towns, 2018, page 3.
- <sup>42</sup> True, 2010, page 371.
- <sup>43</sup> Capacent, 2020, (N=503).
- <sup>44</sup> This is in line with academic research on the matter. See e.g. Skinner and Chapman, 2013.; True, 2003; Delovna skupina za enake možnosti, 2010.

- <sup>45</sup> In the case of Iceland, the overall gender ratio of staff in the higher ranks is currently 50/50, but a female has not served as the Permanent Secretary of State, which is the highest ranking position within the diplomatic services.
- <sup>46</sup> For a theoretical explanation of this, see Aggestam and Towns, 2018, page 13.
- <sup>47</sup> Note that this is valid to a greater extent in the case of Slovenia, as in Iceland, the gender distribution for most senior positions is relatively even, with the exception of Permanent Secretary of State. Rotations between positions abroad in recent years reflect a perceivably fair and even postings.
- <sup>48</sup> Aggestam and Towns, 2018, page 13.
- <sup>49</sup> This is deemed third most prevalent factor working against gender equality by respondents in 2020 survey.
- <sup>50</sup> Feeney and Stritch, 2017.
- <sup>51</sup> Aggestam and Towns, 2019, page 22.
- <sup>52</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>
- <sup>53</sup> Considering the importance of a partner's employment possibilities when serving abroad for diplomats of both genders, the current international arrangements for the employment of spouses work against enhancing this aspect of life abroad. Spouses of diplomats may be employed only in countries where a bilateral agreement or established reciprocity on this exists. Strengthening this setup would lessen some of the important reservations in applying for posts abroad.