

Women in the Lead Project

The Academy for Political Development (APD) is a non-governmental organization that promotes the democratic values of pluralism, tolerance, and dialogue in Croatian society. Through our 18 years of operation, we have educated over 500 alumni in our programs, which include representatives of various political parties, state, local, and county officials and representatives of public administration, journalists and editors, representatives of the business sector, academia, and civil society.

We are currently implementing our second gender equality project, titled “Women in the Lead 2”, with the support of the State Department of the USA (through the US Embassy in Croatia). The project **aims to contribute to the overall purpose of increasing gender equality and improving the position of women in Croatia** by aiming at a long-term outcome of **political promotion of the new models for improvement of the socio-economic status of women, prevention, and penalization of gender-based violence and stronger political representation.**

The APD will do so by gathering **3 working groups of female politicians from all sides of the political spectrum, business women, women from academia, media, and civil society** to discuss the three areas where the new approaches are to be discussed: **1) socio-economic status and role of women in the economy, 2) safety and legal protection and 3) political representation and leadership.**

The working groups are expected to work through **a combination of closed workshops and open panel discussions** to discuss the problems in the 3 areas and proposed solutions, based on which overview of positions will be drafted by the APD to propose possible new models and approaches to the improvement of the position of women in the society. The proposed policy ideas will be presented to the wider audience, APD alumni, academia, and political parties.

In addition to the discussions and generation of proposals, the project will be focused on **encouraging women politicians to cooperate across the party fences on issues of gender equality.** In this, we aim to look into the best practice of bipartisan initiatives in the US political sphere. Therefore, we plan to organize **a study visit for 6 women in politics to the US and invite 2 women politicians (a Democrat and a Republican) to speak to our audience about such initiatives here in Croatia.**

Workplan Women in the Lead 2

1. Establishment of the 3 Working Groups

Three working groups, each consisting of 8-12 experts, politicians, and activists active in relevant fields, will be established through an open Call for Participation. The Call will be extensively promoted through the alumni network and the open communication channels of APD. Interested participants will have the option to engage in multiple working groups if they choose to.

The groups/topics are:

- 1) socio-economic status and role of women in the economy,
- 2) safety and legal protection of women in Croatia and
- 3) political representation and leadership of Women in Croatia.

The project team will select members based on their knowledge of the subject and previous political, academic, or civic activities in the area. Additionally, efforts will be made to ensure diversity in the composition of each group, both sectorally and in terms of political allegiances.

2. Initial meetings of the groups and designation of the rapporteurs (1/24)

Meetings will be held on the premises of APD in Zagreb to introduce the group members to the project, the planned role and tasks of the Working Group, and the proposed methodology. Rapporteurs will be designated. Further dates and tasks will be agreed including research tasks for each member to present at the next online discussion.

This will be then followed by subtasks before the open Workshops:

- **Kick-off meetings:** group introduction, project and methodology presentation, discussion about the roles and the positions and tasks (19 - 22/2)

- The group will **have an online meeting** to discuss their preliminary findings and positions and share them with the rapporteur, as well as to prepare for the open panels (3/24).

3. Public panels

- **Panel 1: Women in Croatian Economy (4/24)** - potential date: 11 April

Open panels with members of the Working Group. Invitations published in social media and e-mailing and press invited. Networking events to follow. The same principle applies to two other workshops.

- **Workshop and Panel 2: Legal Protection of Women in Croatia (5/24):** *dates TBD*
- **Workshop and Panel 3: Political Representation and Leadership of Women in Croatia (5/24):** *dates TBD*

4. Preparation of overview papers (7/24)

Rapporteurs prepare policy briefs representing the problem situation and the discussed potential approaches with agreed positions and areas of divergence between the members of the working group and the wider stakeholders.

5. Working meetings of the working groups to discuss the proposed papers before their publication (9/24)

6. Papers will be presented by the rapporteurs, APD, and the interested participants of the working group at the Gender Equality Committee and disseminated to political parties, activist groups, and academia, as well as presented at the APD Annual Conference. (9 - 11/2024)

7. Study visit to the US (9/24)

The budget is foreseen for 10 persons to stay for 7 nights in the states and travel between Washington and the state capital to:

- Get introduced to bipartisan gender equality and possibly also other bipartisan groups and initiatives in Congress
- To meet and understand the role of civil society and researchers in the articulation of public policies in Washington, especially concerning gender equality
- To see good practice examples in policy making and implementation on the state level, especially where it involves some level of cooperation between the parties and sectors

8. APR Annual Conference (10/24)

One day of the conference should be held in which:

- a) The project findings and policy papers will be presented by the members of the working group
- b) 2 US politicians will talk about issues of equality, dialog, and cooperation in the States

Members of the working groups will be invited to participate if they are interested.