

ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG

Vänsterpartiet

Handbook for Intra-Party Feminism

**A manual for the
Swedish Left Party**



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PREFACE

The goal of the Vänsterpartiet is nothing less than to ensure the freedom of all people. After all, nobody can be entirely free until everybody is free. The ideal basis for the unimpeded evolution of all individuals is a society founded on a sense of equality, and this should also apply to our own party. How credible can our politics be if we don't do everything in our power to establish a genuine sense of equality within our own party? There can be no equality without gender equality. We have defined ourselves as a feminist party since 1996, yet our party continues to be influenced by the patriarchal structures that surround it. We have managed to achieve a great deal, but it has also been a long and tumultuous journey. All of the Vänsterpartiet's internal feminist accomplishments were rooted in continued and resolute commitment. In 2012, we expanded our endeavours with regard to intra-party feminism and, as a result of the 2014 election, were able to achieve our goal of having at least 50 percent female representation at all levels of the party. This is definitely something to be proud of—but we cannot allow our work to end here.

In the autumn of 2017, when the #MeToo movement was beginning to expose global instances of abuse of power at the hands of men, it became clear that our party was also afflicted. Despite our commitment to feminism, and despite our party members having access to guides on how to combat 'master suppression techniques', it was clear that we were still falling short of our feminist ambitions. As this handbook demonstrates, the Vänsterpartiet is not a remote island removed from the influences of society. Even we on the left are not immune to claiming special privileges in ostensibly inviolable positions of power within communities or organizations.

It is crucial to acknowledge that the fight against harassment, master suppression techniques, and injustice is a collective endeavour for which we all must take responsibility. As long as we continue to live in a patriarchal capitalist society, we cannot allow our efforts to falter. It is our hope that implementing specific procedures into our organizational structures will enable us to continue this work together. We can achieve a great deal if we establish clear goals and work towards them collectively!

GENERAL PROBLEMS WITHIN THE VÄNSTERPARTIET

The Vänsterpartiet is not a remote island; we are heavily influenced by the structures that surround us, which, according to our social analysis, are also manifested in the processes that occur within our organization. As a feminist party, we should be exposing internal gender-based hierarchies of power and working to counteract them. It will be difficult to entirely rid our organization of such things as long as we continue to live in a society in which gender inequality exists. This does not mean, however, that we should strive for anything less than the best possible conditions for an equal exercise of power and influence over party policy and structure, regardless of gender. In this sense, feminist policy-making must also be decoupled from separatist processes, so that women can have spaces of their own without this necessarily being a question of feminist politics.

The fact that women are impeded from advancing in the Vänsterpartiet is demonstrated by their comparative underrepresentation relative to men in parliaments and committees. There is still room for improvement in terms of how these figures are statistically recorded and evaluated. Other party-internal shortcomings with regard to feminism are difficult to quantify using statistics and calculations. For example, women's political careers tend to be much shorter than men's because they are less likely than men to stand for re-election—which in turn leads to men accruing a greater degree of experience and being perceived as more competent. Those women who are represented in assemblies or committees generally fail to garner sufficient support to stand for re-election, and those who are not yet elected representatives do not receive sufficient support to stand for election in the first place.

All successful feminist praxis should be founded on clear perspectives regarding power. Power is something that emerges in our relations with other people and impacts all of our interpersonal relationships. Power means having the ability to make other people act according to your own expectations and agenda. Power also means the freedom to do as you please. It is easy to determine the agenda and establish goals and strategies when you occupy a position of power. But gender-based power structures and hierarchies are not always consciously reproduced. We all harbour unconscious behavioural patterns and habits, which makes it difficult to break with them. It is incumbent upon all of us to tackle this if the Vänsterpartiet is to become a political party in which women are granted the same opportunities as men to evolve and take space—and power—into their own hands.

MAKING STRUCTURES VISIBLE

Making visible is the most effective strategy and a fundamental prerequisite for dismantling structures of internal inequality and discrimination. Achieving this requires definitively addressing existing problems and their symptoms, for example with regard to our education programme, the advancement of female leaders, or the right to have one's voice heard. Existing problems are often so normalized that they are taken as a given, which leads to statements such as: "Nour is in charge of coffee and cleaning up because she enjoys those tasks", or "Ove knows a great deal about the EU, so he is the point of contact for speeches on the topic". In every context, the process of rendering visible is the first step in the journey towards effecting change. It is our collective responsibility.

Berit Ås, the former leader of our Norwegian sister party Sosialistisk Venstreparti (Socialist Left Party) and the first female leader of a Norwegian political party, has studied and documented the methods by which people maintain their grip on power. She first wrote about the five master suppression techniques in 1978, before expanding her analysis in 2003 to include the two additional techniques of objectification and the threat of force. Intimidation and hate will be dealt with in a separate section, as these constitute criminal offences and may necessitate legal intervention. The Vänsterpartiet is certainly not immune to master suppression techniques, which are often employed unconsciously. The techniques in question are described below.

Making Invisible

The process of rendering invisible can take place on a practical, political, and theoretical level—for example, when a contribution to a group discussion is ignored, an email goes unanswered, or when certain people are afforded a greater degree of political prominence and attention than others. To whom is authority ascribed in terms of ideological matters? Who presides over meetings, and which tasks are deemed the most important? It is not uncommon in meetings for men to repeat something that has already been said by a woman without referring to her original—and now invisible—contribution. In this way, the performance and competence of women is sidelined. These mechanisms are clearly evident in documents and other materials; earlier meeting reports are quite convincing with regard to such occurrences. Regardless of whether these actions are conscious or unconscious, they ultimately convey to women the sense that their voices are less relevant, and impede the recognition of women as political experts in their own right.

Tips for Tackling Processes of Invisibilization

- If women’s contributions are not being listened to or acknowledged, draw people’s attention to this, or address the contributions yourself.
- Directly reference contributions made by women. Be sure to refer to the woman in question by name, for example: “As Aisha said earlier ...”.
- Expose processes by which people or things are rendered invisible and point out instances in which a person repeats something a woman has already said without clearly referring to her original statement.
- It can be particularly effective and useful in such contexts to employ questions and de-escalation strategies such as humour, for example: “Whoops! Did you forget Anna’s here?” It is generally more effective not to adopt an accusatory tone.
- Record statistics pertaining to contributions to discussions and regularly evaluate who speaks and for how long. Speech statistics should be kept for several meetings in succession in order to ensure you have a more comprehensive record.
- Breaking off into smaller groups and round-table discussions can make large groups more egalitarian. Nobody feels good sitting in silence for the entire duration of a meeting.
- Reflect on the ways in which you could give more space to women. Encourage women to contribute. Ensure that their engagement is reflected in progress reports, in-house magazines, and other documents.

Ridicule and Objectification

Ridicule is an effective device for stripping someone of their authority and self-confidence. It occurs when a statement is mocked or turned into a joke at the speaker's expense. Women are often praised for their physical appearance, while men will tend to receive recognition for their knowledge and competence. In political contexts, comments pertaining to a person's physical appearance may detract, objectify, or be perceived as demeaning or belittling.

Tips for Tackling Ridicule and Objectification

- Talk with one another. Set up separate meetings for women and discuss whether you have ever been on the receiving end of ridicule or objectification. Devise collective strategies that could be employed the next time this occurs. Stand up for each other.
- Do not simply accept the role that has been assigned to you; challenge inappropriate behaviour. The “joke” was not funny!
- It can be helpful to address the consequences of a particular person’s behaviour.
- Take action when someone tries to belittle a woman or her opinions. Reiterate what was said and ask for clarification: “Did I hear you correctly? What do you mean by that?”
- Never laugh along when a person is being mocked— regardless of whether the mockery is directed at you or somebody else.
- Compliment women on other things apart from their physical appearance.
- Support people who are being objectified by identifying objectifying remarks as inappropriate and shifting the focus back to the actual topic at hand.
- Point out instances of sexual innuendo or hurtful comments.

For further information, refer to the Sexual Harassment Policy.

Withholding Information

A further problem is informal networks to which women are not granted access. When documents for a meeting fail to arrive on time, or documents pertaining to reports and other agenda items are missing, women can tend to feel that they are unable to participate in discussions or make proposals on an equal footing with men. Informal networks are used as opportunities to discuss the political and organizational decisions of the Vänsterpartiet after, between, or before official meetings. There is of course no harm in establishing contacts and holding discussions, but care should be taken to ensure that women are not excluded from preliminary meetings and that their work is not consequently impaired. Men generally tend to expect a sense of camaraderie and developmental impetus from other men, and affirmation from women.

Tips for Tackling the Withholding of Information

- Insist on receiving documents and other materials as early as possible.
- Prepare as much written material as possible so that everyone has access to the same degree of information and knowledge.
- Request that agenda items be postponed if adequate preparation was not possible.
- Ensure that every meeting has a chairperson, somebody to take minutes, and a list of speakers. Spontaneous discussions can prove beneficial in certain situations, but they come with the significant risk that only a handful of participants will end up setting the agenda.
- Use a variety of different methods during meetings in order to democratize them and get everyone involved.

The Double Bind

It's a no-win situation: women who don't stand up for themselves are labelled as weak, shy, or bad feminists, while more assertive or confrontational women are accused of being difficult or embarrassing, or of taking themselves too seriously. A strategy that is commonly employed by women in both broader society and within the Vänsterpartiet itself as a means of acquiring greater influence and feeling more integrated is to seek validation from men. In this way, a woman can shield herself from being branded as aggressive and enjoy a greater degree of social acceptance—or alternatively be accused of behaving opportunistically.

Tips for Tackling the Double Bind

- Try to define which actions and behaviours are rewarded and which are punished in the Vänsterpartiet. Which of these are good, and which are bad?
- Draw attention to instances in which double binds are used against women, for example by saying: "Everybody does their best".
- Practise establishing your own priorities. This will make it easier to take action when faced with a double bind. "I know why I do what I do" is a useful mantra to bear in mind here.
- Support women who are assertive, but do not criticize those who hold back. Interact with one another in the knowledge that everyone is trying their best.

Heaping Blame and Putting to Shame

Women can sometimes feel less well-informed, less qualified, and less experienced than they actually are. For a great many men, the reverse is true. Women often think that they do not deserve their position. Men who take up space at the expense of women are often encouraged and excused, with statements like: “it wasn’t that bad”, “he’s just unsure of himself”, or “he can’t help it”. In discussions pertaining to equality within the party, men sometimes portray themselves as oppressed and misunderstood victims. Comments like “that’ll upset plenty of women I’m sure” insinuate to women that they are intolerant.

Women often give themselves a hard time for not standing up for themselves, participating in discussions, speaking up at meetings, or approaching the lectern at party conventions and annual conferences. Women also often blame themselves when there is a negative atmosphere and feel responsible for ensuring that everything runs smoothly. They are also just as inclined to feel a sense of shame when they have clearly expressed their opinions, because they fear they were too harsh or that they overreacted.

Tips for Tackling Heaping Blame and Putting to Shame

- Actively combat processes of ridiculing and rendering invisible, as these frequently give rise to feelings of blame and shame.
- Be aware that the feelings of shame you are experiencing have been externally imposed.
- Resist, should you experience the use of such mechanisms against yourself or others. Stand together and support one another.
- Encourage victims to verbalize their feelings one-on-one in a private conversation. What exactly happened? Why did I feel a sense of shame? How did the other people involved feel? Was there a hidden message in there somewhere directed at me, and can I put it into words?
- Conducting written evaluations in the wake of individual events, longer projects, and campaigns can help prevent women from blaming themselves entirely for a failure for which an entire leadership team or working group was actually responsible.

INTIMIDATION AND HATE

Politically active people—and elected representatives in particular—are exposed to threats of violence, persecution, and bullying not only online and on social media, but also in the form of letters, text messages, and phone calls. In some extreme cases, a person will stalk a political representative by doing things such as loitering near the representative's home, or attending meetings in which the representative is giving a speech, for example. Online trolls can progress to real-life stalking, or may combine harassment online, over the phone, or via text messages. However, it is on social media that hatred and intimidation find their most fertile ground. This is difficult to combat, but we can guard against it in the long term by challenging social expectations and norms for both men and women. We can strive to ensure that there are procedures in place in executive committees, party associations, and legislative assemblies to respond to intimidation and hate. If somebody observes an act of violence committed against others, it may be necessary to intervene and notify the police.

Sexualized Intimidation and Hate Towards Women

Not only are women subjected to the same forms of intimidation and hate that also affect men, they are also more likely to find themselves targeted with threats of rape and other forms of sexualized violence. Women are more likely to be subjected to derogatory remarks pertaining to their gender. Woman-bashing contributes yet another facet to the vulnerability experienced by women. A great many women in the public domain are affected by intimidation and hate—not only politicians and journalists who advocate and campaign for equality, but also women who blog about topics such as fashion or make-up, or work in the video game industry.

The fact that women can fall victim to sexualized intimidation and hate—irrespective of the topics they choose to write about or the industry in which they choose to work—shows that these phenomena correlate with and are intrinsically linked to male violence against women. We must therefore restructure our understanding of intimidation and hate to ensure that it is rooted in the feminist conception of the gender hierarchy as the structural cause of violence perpetrated by individual men against individual women.

The Connection Between Antifeminism and Racism

Misogyny—and especially hatred towards feminists—goes hand in hand with xenophobia. For right-wing extremists, the political left embodies a number of positions that they deplore. In addition to this, they also project a deep-seated misogyny onto women on the political left. The fact that we are feminists, anti-racists, socialists, and advocates of LBGTO+ rights further fans the flames of their resentment. Representatives of the Vänsterpartiet may consequently become targets for intimidation and hate in a number of different ways.

Consequences for Victims

If an incident is reported to the police but they are unable to do anything, the victim(s) may experience—in addition to a sense of anger and fear—feelings of frustration, helplessness, and powerlessness. For victims, their sense of powerlessness arises both from the act of intimidation itself and from the fact that the perpetrator knows more about them than they know about the perpetrator. The uncertainty as to whether or not the troll will actually follow through with their threats can be hard to bear. If the person concerned has a family and children, this anxiety will be compounded by the fear that their family members might also become targets. It is also costly in terms of both time and energy to delete hurtful comments and images, etc. from social

media platforms. As with physical violence, online abuse can lead to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. It is not uncommon for women who are targeted by such attacks to compare themselves to other victims and minimize the threats being made against them. Support networks that facilitate interaction and exchange with other victims are crucial here and could constitute an important first step towards ending the situation.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexism and sexual harassment are manifestations of the prevailing gender hierarchy that reflect and perpetuate patriarchal power structures. These structures are most often seen in men's harassment of women but can also take other forms. The Vänsterpartiet's objective is to become a party that is entirely free of sexism. Sexual harassment constitutes a particularly serious form of misconduct and requires a specialized approach. The party leadership has thus chosen to adopt a directive for measures to prevent, combat, and handle instances of sexual harassment, which addresses the problem in greater detail and contains a series of checklists.

Sexual harassment involves the violation of a person's sexual integrity, and may come in the form of comments, remarks, or physical contact, unsolicited compliments, invitations, or innuendos, or more blatant forms of sexual assault. Sexual harassment is unwelcome behaviour; it is up to the individual person being harassed to determine what they perceive as unwelcome or a violation of their personal boundaries. Harassers need to understand how their actions are experienced by their victim(s). Sexual assault is a criminal offence. Sexual assault is defined as someone using words or actions against another person in a way that violates that person's sexual integrity. It is crucial that complaints of sexual harassment never be exploited for other purposes, as this will jeopardize the fight to end sexual harassment.

INTRA-PARTY FEMINISM IN PRACTICE

In the following section, we will explore a variety of tools that can be used to render visible and subvert the gender hierarchy within the Vänsterpartiet. All efforts to surmount and subvert existing structures and to develop a functioning form of feminism within the party must be implemented in a reflective manner, take into account a variety of different aspects, and encompass all levels of the party.

Strategies for Achieving In-House Feminism

Clear long-term and intermediate goals are essential for intra-party feminist work, as is a strategy outlining the concrete steps needed to achieve these goals. The strategy should serve as a guideline for mapping out in-house feminist work and should be discussed and reviewed on a regular basis. Formulating a strategy also involves identifying and remedying blind spots. A degree of political and organizational imagination is required if we are to challenge existing structures and perspectives and venture away from the beaten path.

Discuss potential goals in your party association, at the district level, or with the party leadership. Take into consideration both long-term and more short-term, low-threshold goals.

Suggestions for Long-Term and Intermediate Goals

- The majority of our courses should be conducted by women.
- Our statistics on who speaks should improve within three months.
- The majority of candidates in the next local elections should be women.

Responsibility of the Executive Committees

Executive committees at all levels bear the general responsibility for the work conducted by the Vänsterpartiet, and consequently also for in-house feminism. It is incumbent upon them to initiate an in-house feminist strategy, as well as to monitor and evaluate its progress. There is always room for improvement.

A consistent and systematic approach is a fundamental prerequisite for the success of in-house feminist work. Implementing the feminist creed within the party will require long-term planning at the various levels of leadership. If the executive committees fail to address this, it will also become harder for the organization as a whole to grapple with it. The party leadership has a duty to lead by example.

Education pertaining to intra-party feminist structures should become part of every executive committee training programme. Executive committees take prime responsibility for party planning and should address the range of different issues that can impact gender equality. Is it necessary to provide childcare so that everyone can participate? Might it be difficult for prospective female participants to attend meetings scheduled on weekends? How might we achieve a fairer distribution of tasks in meetings? We must come to terms with all of these factors if we are to succeed in making informal structures visible and in drawing attention to deeply entrenched attitudes and behavioural patterns. You can use constructive criticism as a means of helping to improve and evolve the discussions and the work of the executive committees. The specific responsibilities of the committees and the distribution of these responsibilities within it play a crucial role in fostering a spirit of feminism within the party. If it is predominantly men who are responsible for preparing the policy debates and formulating statements and election manifestos, while women assume the practical organization of events, this will inevitably have an adverse impact on the work of the committee.

Make a habit of keeping a note of who does what within your committee. Who sets the agenda, takes minutes, or prepares policy debates? Who drafts the business plan and the progress report? Who prepares the coffee and tidies up afterwards?

Suggestions for Discussion Questions

- How are tasks distributed between the genders on the committee?
- Who do you contact when something needs to be done—both within and beyond the committee?
- What kinds of behaviours and actions are rewarded in the Vänsterpartiet? Does this occur irrespective of gender?
- How do you design materials for public relations work? Are men and women depicted and presented differently?

The party leadership should also be mindful of how tasks and responsibilities are distributed among its various members at local, regional, and national levels. Get to know the party's female members in order to find out what their interests are and what kinds of issues they would like to get involved in, so that you can support them in their endeavours. Do not accept claims from the female candidates you approach that they do not have the required competencies or skills to perform a task. Offer support and advice and consider it your duty to ensure that women feel empowered to perform their jobs to the best of their ability. Supervise them in performing their tasks so that if problems do happen to arise, they can be resolved early on. A lack of success is no good to anyone.

As a committee member, you are expected to act as a point of contact to whom comrades can turn without hesitation. It's up to the respective committees to guide the work of the party. This means fostering a comprehensive

overview of the internal processes of the party and the perspectives of its members. If women fail to actively participate in or are altogether absent from meetings, it is due to a lack of equality. Discuss with your respective executive committee how to respond to this and address master suppression techniques and the mistreatment of women. It will be reassuring for party members to know that you are committed to taking action. Set a clear example and do not let any instances of misconduct slide. Directly addressing problems can prevent negative structures from becoming entrenched. You can also entrust several committee members with the task of handling cases of misconduct against women, so that the responsibility does not rest on one person's shoulders alone.

Clear structures provide a sense of security and certainty. Draw up an action plan to be implemented in the event that a woman perceives a boundary violation or unjust treatment. Designate contact persons and people to take care of these kinds of situations so that it is clear to women who they can turn to. Establish a network of contacts at the different levels of the party so that there is always a contact person.

Executive committees have a responsibility not only to take action, but also to perform preventive work, and to engage with the continued evolution of feminist party structures. Highlight women's accomplishments and present women as role models. Praise and support women's engagement and perspectives. Employ a range of different working and discussion methods in order to foster space for women and ensure that these methods are actually implemented during meetings, as this is also your responsibility. Do not be afraid to develop and try out new methods for empowering women and carving out space for them within the organization. Get in contact with other committees in order to exchange ideas and experiences.

Keep statistics on how many women are actively involved, which issues they are working on, whose proposals are adopted during meetings, as well as on who speaks during meetings and assemblies, areas of responsibility, mandates, etc. Analyse situations and develop strategies for achieving the necessary improvements. Evaluations and discussions must constitute a regular component of the work. Write reports detailing how processes can be improved, developed, and monitored.

Checklist for Executive Committees

- Clearly allocate tasks both within and outside the executive committee.
- Appoint contact persons so that party members know to whom to address their queries and concerns.
- Take action and set an example when you encounter conduct that has no place in the Vänsterpartiet.
- Devise and test out new kinds of intra-party feminist endeavours.
- Remain in constant exchange and contact with female party members.
- Encourage and acknowledge women's involvement.
- Encourage women to support one another.
- Set long-term and intermediate goals regarding how the work should be carried out.
- Evaluate efforts towards achieving gender equality, write reports and statistics in order to make the efficacy of this work quantifiable. Your endeavours should yield results.

Responsibility of Election Committees

An election committee has two tasks: to propose the best possible candidates for leadership positions, and to submit a proposal that has garnered majority support. The party constitution states that “women must make up at least 50 percent of total representation in elected bodies and representative bodies, provided that this is not impeded by extraordinary circumstances” (§ 21). This means that it is possible to elect an all-female or majority-female leadership, but not an all-male or majority-male leadership.

It thus falls within the remit of the election committee to specifically seek out women and encourage women to stand for election. The election committee should ensure that plenty of nominations are received within the stipulated deadlines. They may equally consider actively recruiting women. Justifications to the effect of “no women were willing to stand for election or were suitably qualified” will not be tolerated. By ensuring a balanced line-up of female and male candidates, the election committee thus lays the foundation for feminist successes within the party.

The election committee should also encourage women to stand for re-election, since they generally tend to be more reluctant than men to do so. If committee positions have been occupied by the same men for years, and newly elected women join, equality will not automatically be ensured just because the quota rule has been fulfilled. In the same way, it is not only a question of who is elected, but also of who is elected to occupy which specific position. If the most demanding and prestigious positions are primarily filled by men, then power will continue to be concentrated in the hands of men. A balanced gender composition among candidates is not enough. It is not uncommon for women to decline to take on more demanding tasks and roles for fear of not being able to fulfil the accompanying expectations. Women need support and encouragement if they are to feel inclined to take on such tasks.

The election committee should conduct interviews with candidates in order to prevent the most well-known or well-connected from receiving an unfair advantage. It is advisable to send out information materials in advance of the interview containing the questions that will be asked so that the nominees have an opportunity to prepare themselves.

If, despite all its efforts, an election committee is unable to recruit female candidates, it should provide an account of the measures taken to achieve gender parity. According to the party constitution, the quota rule can be suspended in the event of “extraordinary circumstances”; in this case, a resolution should be passed and the reasons for this recorded in the minutes. There is no exact definition of what constitutes extraordinary circumstances; this is decided at election meetings.

The responsibility for resolving the gender imbalance does not lie solely with the election committee; the committee should consult the party leadership if it experiences difficulties recruiting women for posts and positions. It is up to the leadership to determine the reasons for this issue and take appropriate action to remedy the situation—for example, with the help of a membership survey, or by encouraging women to share their views on the issues at hand in women-only meetings.

The election committee should be able to examine its own role within the broader structures of the organization. It is beneficial to openly address the gender composition of the committee itself, or how your own individual assumptions about women or men might influence the work you do.

Checklist for Election Committees

- Start work in a timely fashion so as to obtain plenty of nominations.
- Conduct interviews with candidates.
- Actively seek out women who would be suitable for the job.
- Encourage women to stand for election.
- Pay attention to who gets nominated for each particular task.
- Discuss your own prejudices.
- Review the gender composition of the election committee.

Ombudsperson

The ombudsperson will likely be best informed of which members are in the district and can thus address gender-related issues with due consideration. The ombudsperson can help promote women, recommend female speakers, or nominate female candidates to stand for election. The ombudsperson also has access to registers and can compile statistics on the gender parity among speakers.

Meetings and Debates

The conversational atmosphere plays a crucial role in terms of how and to what extent women participate in debates and discussions. Pay attention to formal processes and procedures; clear meeting procedures are necessary to ensure that everybody's voice is heard. Prepare the agenda in such a way that everybody has a clear overview of what will be discussed and no major points are omitted. Appoint a chairperson to moderate the discussion so that everybody is granted an opportunity to speak. Keep lists of who is contributing for the second or third time in order to get more people involved in the discussion and to make it more apparent when someone is taking up a lot of speaking time.

It is important to keep a list of who speaks at every meeting. What does this list reveal about the event? Which discussions are dominated by men, and which are dominated by women?

Make a conscious effort to bring more women to the lecture. Once they have overcome their initial trepidation, they will find it much easier the next time. Use courses to practice speaking and debating skills, and invest time in preparing for larger events.

A clear allocation of responsibilities can help prevent women's contributions to discussions and debates from being ignored or taken less seriously. When women are allowed to take charge of agenda items, or introduce or present a topic, they help shape the discussion and establish priorities.

Employ a variety of different discussion formats. Small groups and round-table discussions can give everyone an opportunity to speak. People respond in different ways to different methods, and it is important to allow space for everybody. Create separatist women's spaces for discussion in the absence of men.

Master suppression techniques may be used during meetings and discussions, and it is important at all times to identify these by name and make them visible. Women always have the final say when it comes to interpreting their own experiences. Talk with other women in the party about how you might respond to boundary violations and other infringements; recount how you approached the situation in question; let others know that they are not alone in their experiences; support one another. Women should always have the opportunity to express their opinions, and the climate should be one in which every woman has the right to take a firm stand when master suppression techniques are applied.

Checklist for Meetings

- Employ a variety of different working methods during meetings.
- Keep statistics on who speaks during meetings.
- Allow women to take over elements of the moderation.
- Vary the discussion formats.
- Carry out evaluations.

Education Programme

Educational work is of crucial importance for the Vänsterpartiet because it provides us with the opportunity to educate ourselves, to evolve, and to exchange our views and experiences with one another. Educational work can fulfil a number of functions as a component of our in-house feminist work: both as a means for collective learning and for feminism to take root even more deeply within the party.

When organizing training courses or study programmes, we should always be sure to formulate a list of guidelines concerning intra-party feminism that should be taken into consideration when planning talks or looking for speakers. Reflect on your choice of presentation topics. Why is the focus so often on the history of the labour movement, but rarely on the women's movement? Which organizations do the figures invited to speak from outside the party belong to and why were they selected?

Also pay attention to how the different topics are allocated. Invite women to speak about marxism or political economy. In the same vein, men can tackle topics such as feminism or social policy. It is vital that both men and women educate themselves further on the topic of feminism. There should be no difference in status between an expert in feminist theory and an expert in marxist theory.

Women should have the same opportunities in the party as men to develop their expertise, because until now it has generally been men who have more frequently been seen

as experts. Women should therefore be actively recruited for specialized further training.

Generating a database of speakers can help make it easier to find female experts in different fields. This will also make it easier to refer external organizers or journalists who are looking for a point of contact within the Vänsterpartiet to the appropriate person(s). If there are any gaps in the database, take steps to fill them with women in the sectors concerned.

Separatist educational formats are a further tool that can be employed in a variety of different ways to boost the participation of women. In a male-free environment, women do not have to assert themselves in the same way. Separatism can therefore be used as a tactic to provide women with the space to both formulate a feminist agenda and to deepen their theoretical and ideological knowledge—not least in the traditionally masculine or male-dominated domains. The education programme can, with the help of training opportunities for women in leadership positions, also strengthen women’s authority, for example among elected representatives in parliaments (more on this below in the section “Women in Leadership Positions”).

As organizers of an education programme, you should always be mindful of how specific responsibilities are delegated within the group. If it is primarily men who are in charge of the theoretical content, this will be reflected in the programme. It is also just as important that women do not find themselves charged with the majority of menial domestic tasks such as providing snacks, coffee, and cleaning up.

Checklist for Course Organizers

- Employ a variety of different working methods.
- Make a concerted effort to ensure that women act as speakers and moderators.
- Discuss your topic selection from a feminist perspective.
- Review the gender composition and distribution of tasks in the organizers' group.
- Ensure that men also take responsibility for the overall execution of the event.
- Ensure that information pertaining to the education programme is published in good time.
- Pay attention in the evaluation to aspects relating to gender equality.

Recording Statistics

Statistical data should not only be collected on the number of women who are members or are active within the party at a local and regional level, but also on how often they contribute or request to speak during meetings; the allocation of responsibilities should also be taken into consideration. The status analysis can be used as a basis for identifying areas in which there is room for improvement.

Examine the gender distribution with regard to mandates. Men are elected to public office more often than women and also tend to be appointed to higher-ranking positions. Who is the chairperson, district councillor, or group representative?

Carrying out regular evaluations over a period of several years will allow us to monitor the evolution of intra-party equality.

Women in Leadership Positions

Conscious efforts are required in order to generate female role models whose authority is recognized across the entire party. Such efforts entail encouraging and promoting women, for example by appointing them to political positions or inviting them to give speeches or take part in panel discussions. When more women are propelled into the position of role models, the image of the Vänsterpartiet will be strengthened both inside and outside the organization.

Promote women in the organization who are political representatives or occupy leadership positions. Good leadership is not necessarily characterized by supposedly masculine or male qualities; it can take a variety of different forms. Cite women as positive examples. Make direct references to things that other women have said, written, or done in order to highlight women's accomplishments in various areas of the party.

Prioritize women when looking for speakers and in the allocation of tasks within the organization. Make a concerted effort to feature women as the authors of contributions in both internal and public forums. If we allow mainly men to appear in our media coverage, people will perceive the Vänsterpartiet as a male-dominated party. Think carefully about who you designate as your press contact.

Both women who occupy important positions within the organization and women who provide assistance, advice, and support to their female comrades within the organization should be viewed as role models. Encourage women to build networks; these might take the form of platforms on social media, mailing lists, or women-only spaces.

Recruiting and Retaining Members

If we want to make our party a space for both women and men, the first step is to conduct an inventory of the party. Who are its members? Who has joined in the last year? Conduct a survey on the reasons why members decided to join the party, and analyse whether there is a difference between the genders in this respect. With this information as a foundation, it may be easier to conduct a targeted campaign to recruit more women to the party.

In-house feminist work should also help to foster an environment in which women feel as welcome as men. Sometimes particular attention needs to be given to female members to embolden them to participate on an equal footing with men. Always be attentive and welcoming towards women who attend meetings and other activities. If women find it more difficult to feel at ease, the party leadership should discuss how this can be addressed.

One way to ensure that new female members are well integrated into the party is to appoint contact persons and mentors. It makes sense to appoint female mentors because almost all women in the party will have gone through similar experiences and will therefore be better equipped to support one another.

Checklist for Recruiting and Retaining Members

- Conduct a membership recruitment campaign that specifically targets women.
- Keep an eye out for new female members at meetings and make women feel welcome.
- Appoint contact persons or mentors for new female members.

Premises

The significance of physical premises for members is often overlooked. Everyone should feel safe in our spaces. It is incumbent upon executive committees at all levels to ensure, for example, that the lighting works and that the toilets can be locked.

Give some thought to what is displayed on the walls. Does it accurately represent the sum of the party's activities? Members who do not feel represented may find it difficult to feel involved and will generally tend to leave the party after a while. Think about the kinds of signals your party headquarters sends to first-time visitors.

Feminist Perspectives on Policy Issues

One facet of an intra-party feminist strategy is to always consider policy issues from a feminist perspective. In this way, it becomes possible to recognize that women require specific things from society and its way of organizing. For every issue there will always be a feminist perspective, as well as a socialist perspective. By actively engaging with this, we expand our view and generate new ideas for our policies.

Integrate feminist perspectives into current policy issues. The feminist perspective should be a fixed item on the agenda—whether it be policy issues or internal organization that is under discussion. Never allow yourself to be fobbed off with claims that there is no feminist perspective or working method. Make feminism a priority by making it visible and allowing it to take up space. Do not allow feminist work to be relegated to specialized committees or working groups. Feminism constitutes the foundation of our party, and feminist work should always be on the agenda, as well as in the hearts and minds of all members of the Vänsterpartiet, regardless of their gender.

Bear this in mind when planning campaigns and carrying out public relations work. Never forget that it matters who

from the party is visible in the media, who holds the big assembly debates, and who is seen talking about our policies with workers.

SEPARATE SPACES

Incorporating separatist methods into in-house feminist work can have a number of advantages. As mentioned at the outset, there is a significant need for women-only spaces in the Vänsterpartiet. Women need to be able to meet, discuss their experiences, share ideas, and network. Within a separatist setting, it is easier for women to get to know one another and forge alliances that they can then draw on in their day-to-day work within the party.

No single element of feminist praxis is quite as controversial as female separatism. In some cases this is rooted in misunderstanding or a lack of knowledge, but more often than not it also because men feel attacked by the concept. No single element of feminist praxis is quite as effective as separatism in terms of improving the position of women. It is, however, crucial that separatist work be underpinned by a clear objective. The focus should be constructively oriented toward the future, so as to avoid floundering in a sense of self-referential malaise. It can help to be in a familiar, trusted circle and to develop collective strategies, but it is also crucial that the work remain creative and forward-looking.

Separatist work also fulfils a compensatory function. For example, educational programmes aimed at women can help counter the problematic fact that men are regarded as being more competent in some political domains. By the same token, study groups for men can also be organized on the topic of feminism.

Should women in party associations or district executive committees see the need, they can organize regular separatist meetings where they can discuss common experiences and devise strategies for surmounting gendered power structures. An evaluation session with the women in the local associations or in the district-level executive com-

mittee should take place at least once a year. One example of a possible starting point is to have as many women as possible fill out a survey on the topic of equality within the party. A meeting should then be held to discuss how to deal with the problems that have come to light. Back each other up when men are present and stand by what you decided in your meeting.

A mentoring programme for new female party members can be a good way to empower women in the district; women with more experience within the party serve as mentors for women who are new to a particular field of activity, for example in the leadership of a local branch or parliamentary group. Another way to formalize separatism within the party structure is to build local women's networks.

Designing Women's Meetings

Women's meetings should be organized for every major event and also on a smaller scale where necessary, such as for local executive committees or convention delegations. The format is most suitable for larger events such as party conventions and annual conferences, but can also be adapted for use in other contexts.

The meeting should be scheduled at a convenient time and be incorporated into the programme. If it is scheduled to take place before a conference or convention, it should be held in the conference hall itself. Let all attendees have a go at using the lectern and microphone. Do some vocal exercises together on the stage.

In order to ensure the meeting is a success, it is essential to allocate sufficient time—ideally an hour or more. There should be space for discussion and reflection. The women's meeting should be used to address issues that are relevant to the experience of speaking in front of a larger group. Begin the meeting with a round of personal introductions. This can also be helpful if the participants already

know one another; they have the opportunity to share with the group both their expectations for the preliminary meeting and their thoughts and feelings prior to the conference or convention.

If there are many participants in attendance, they can be separated into smaller groups in which to exchange problems, tips, and ideas for argumentative techniques, for example. If a more manageable number of participants are in attendance, the discussion can take place within the group as a whole. The meeting offers women an opportunity to talk about experiences and difficulties they've encountered in their own political work. Meetings such as these can empower and galvanize attendees into action because they offer a forum for sharing experiences. An additional aim here is to discuss the ways in which women can support one another during the conference or convention without necessarily always having to be of one mind with regard to factual issues.

If there is no scope for conducting group discussions, speakers can be invited to talk about their own and other people's experiences as women carrying out political work within a party. Invite women from the party leadership to present the policy issues that are to be discussed at the conference or convention.

There are a number of different options for ensuring diversity when it comes to women's meetings, for example holding discussion groups or inviting trainers to teach a course in feminist self-defence. Participants can also practise debating with one another. Start with actual policy issues that will be raised during the conference or convention. It is of course also possible to hold meetings during the conference or convention; new discussion points or questions may even come to light. It may be useful for the planning of future preliminary meetings to conduct a post-meeting evaluation.

Checklist for Women's Meetings

- The preliminary meeting should be incorporated into the overall programme.
- Allocate ample time for the meeting.
- Choose a suitable location.
- Begin with a round-table discussion.
- Conduct vocal and debating exercises together.
- Allow participants the space to share their own experiences and exchange advice and tips.
- Talk about the ways in which you can support one another when it comes to countering the use of master suppression techniques.

Designing Men's Meetings

Holding concurrent meetings between men prior to conferences and conventions can serve an important function in terms of sensitizing men to their role within the gender hierarchy and how they can unlearn and subvert this. It can be a good idea to have a woman and a man co-chair the meeting.

Include the meeting in the programme in order to emphasize the importance of attendance and participation. Allocate sufficient time, ideally an hour or more. A brief meeting may be better than none, but in order to reap as much benefit as possible from the experience, sufficient time must be scheduled for discussion and reflection.

Begin the meeting with a round of personal introductions. This can also be helpful if the participants already know one another; they have the opportunity to share with the group both their expectations for the preliminary meeting and their thoughts and feelings prior to the conference or convention.

The men's meetings should focus on problems, as well as strategies for redressing them. Discuss common examples of how master suppression techniques are used and explore how argumentative techniques can be wielded as

a means of establishing and demonstrating power and status. Discuss the importance of making women visible by taking their contributions seriously and making reference to these contributions in subsequent discussion—without appropriating, or offering your own interpretation of what was said. Emphasize to participants that they should think very carefully before allowing themselves to be added the list of those who have spoken for a third time and that it might be a good idea to sit this one out. Discuss how men can take a step back in order to ensure a more equitable and balanced statistic of speakers.

If the group is somewhat smaller and there is sufficient time, participants can share their experiences and discuss argumentative techniques, as well as good and bad resolution methods. Talk about the ways in which you can support women without adopting the role of protector, and how to call attention to instances in which someone is applying master suppression techniques. Encourage participants to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner during the conference or convention and to intervene if they notice others behaving inappropriately. Even if people have a difference of opinion, they should still always treat each other with respect.

Checklist for Men's Meetings

- The preliminary meeting should be incorporated into the overall programme.
- Allocate ample time for the meeting.
- Begin with a round-table discussion.
- Discuss ways in which you can support women without patronizing them.
- Discuss ways in which men can take a step back in order to give women more space.
- Discuss how you can constructively point out to one another instances in which master suppression techniques are being employed, for example.

A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

The Vänsterpartiet's feminist analysis encompasses a clear perspective on power relations. In order for this to be implemented into internal party business, equal responsibility must be assumed by both women and men. However, due to our differences in life experience, the roles we assume within this will also necessarily look different. Inequality is an issue that affects the entire organization, and it is therefore up to the organization as a whole to provide the internal feminist tools necessary to effect change.

Women in the Vänsterpartiet

Different people experience power structures in very different ways. Many—though not all—women feel frustrated and relegated to the sidelines. Women must be granted the right to evaluate problems and situations on the basis of their own personal experience.

It is not uncommon for women to feel like impostors—whether at a convention, an annual conference, or in local party associations. “I shouldn’t accept this offer, I’m not qualified enough”: convictions such as these can lead to women who do opt to accept a position or offer later being plagued by remorse and fearing that they have not lived up to the role’s expectations. Women in leadership positions constantly doubt whether they are doing the right thing or whether they deserve the trust that has been bestowed upon them. Women who opt not to stand for election out of a sense of self-doubt will in turn feel guilty about their decision. This vicious circle leads women to constantly feel like they are doing the wrong thing. A number of women also find it difficult to foster a positive self-image in relation to their involvement in party matters. Male leaders in the Vänsterpartiet often like to put themselves and their polit-

ical involvement on display, while women in similar positions sometimes feel uncomfortable seeing themselves on screen.

Occasionally in the Vänsterpartiet, a woman who champions feminist issues will be dismissively pigeonholed as a feminist. The reluctance to be reduced to nothing but their gender can lead women to keep a low profile when it comes to feminist issues, and to cease engaging with these to any great extent—which constitutes a considerable loss for both internal and external party work.

It is not always easy to admit your own disadvantage, which is why a great many women attempt to transcend the power structures that surround them by denying their very existence or by embracing patriarchal structures of domination themselves. Women who do not feel oppressed should not be admonished for this; people do not always perceive things in the same way. However, there is much to be gained from the realization that you are not alone, and that women as a group face structural oppression. The will to resist this oppression forms the foundation of feminist organizing.

It is crucial that we work to strengthen solidarity among women within our own structures without assuming that all women have the same experiences or views. To do so carries with it the risk of generating new norms about what women should think, do, or feel. Solidarity should be empowering, inclusive, and emancipatory.

Tips for Women

The following is a series of recommendations for women who wish to make their voices heard within the Vänsterpartiet and make the party more egalitarian.

Do your part to help promote other women and enhance their visibility: Highlight the accomplishments of other women. Express your enthusiasm and support when another woman is particularly successfully in her endeavours and let her know how impressed you are. Tell other people about her achievements.

Do not allow yourself to be interrupted: Practise speaking loudly, clearly, and with confidence. Do not cut yourself short before you are finished simply because you notice that others want to interrupt and say their piece. If someone interrupts you, address this directly.

Enhance your profile: Select an area of interest and expand your knowledge. Share your experiences with others on different channels. The more you read, the more capable and qualified you will feel. This will also make it easier for you to stand your ground when it comes to other issues.

Document your activities: Make sure that you are a visible part of party history. Document your viewpoints by writing articles or submitting drafts and proposals. This way, your involvement will be preserved for posterity.

Be proud of your work! Accept recognition for your work without minimizing it. If someone says, "That was a great speech you gave yesterday!", accept the praise and respond, for example, with "Thank you, I worked long and hard on that", or "I'm so happy to hear you enjoyed it". Women often downplay their own accomplishments—either due to a lack of self-confidence or because they genuinely believe that this is what is expected of them. Do not apologize if you think something did not go so well, nobody else made a better go of it! Do not devalue yourself by saying, "Gosh, I'm so stupid! How could I have messed things up so badly?"

Trust your feelings: Women are accustomed to ignoring insults because they are constantly subjected to them. Instead, get into the habit of being more mindful of how you react. If you feel that a situation is difficult, it is. Allow yourself to be irritated or angry when these feelings arise. Name what has happened, for example: "It's disruptive to everybody here when you whisper while I'm speaking. Please show some respect and listen to me".

Create a personal network: Maintain regular contact with a variety of other women whom you trust. Avoid limiting your network of support and feedback to only one person. Encourage and support less experienced women and remember that you can serve as a role model for them. Keep note of the areas in which specific women are particularly competent so that you can recommend them for tasks.

Learn feminist self-defence: Feminist self-defence trains self-confidence and self-esteem, which can be helpful in a number of different contexts, even beyond instances of sexual assault. Feminist self-defence encompasses a broad array of techniques that women can use to empower themselves.

Men in the Vänsterpartiet

The notion of gender equality does not herald any obvious benefits for men. Men belong to a privileged social group and are thus likely to have an interest in ensuring that women remain subordinate to them. Men often find it difficult to acknowledge their supremacy within the social order, which leads to the hierarchy of power only being addressed on an individual, rather than a broader societal level. In this way, structural relationships become obscured or are overlooked, even if they are ostensibly acknowledged. Moreover, men often take little interest in women's lives and do not know very much about the circumstances women face; this is not necessarily due to unwillingness, but rather to the fact that men are generally less dependent on women than women are on men.

Men's relationship to feminism is an ambivalent one: on the one hand, men benefit from higher wages and greater access to positions of power; but on the other hand, they too are constrained by the prevailing gender hierarchy, in that norms are imposed upon them that do not necessarily correspond to their nature or desires. If everybody were allowed to experience their identity without the burden of gender-related constraints, men would also find liberation.

Since our party codified its fundamental feminist principles in 1996, the number of men who self-identify as feminists has also risen—a fact that is generally met with a very warm response. However, words do not always translate into action in the sense of a profound engagement with feminist theory or active involvement in practical feminist work. We should raise the bar for men. Identifying as a feminist does not give a man a free pass to perpetuate existing gender relations.

In their interactions with women, men can tend to want to primarily talk about themselves and seek validation. This does not constitute an equal exchange. It is also not uncommon for women to conceal their capabilities in the

knowledge that men will be more likely to accept them if they do not pose a threat to their position. These kinds of things often occur unconsciously, but they nonetheless contribute to limiting women's actual scope of influence. It can happen that women are reduced to mere bystanders while men retain the real power. It is also not uncommon for men to encourage and support individual women, while at the same time resisting and opposing women who work more independently and without the assistance or influence of men. It is much more difficult to relinquish power than it is to adopt the role of mentor. The desire to be validated and feel needed, rather than overwhelmed and redundant, is all too human. Real empowerment of women will therefore never be achieved solely through an increase in female representation and women in leadership positions.

Women who have garnered the support and approval of a large number of men may sometimes in turn exclude other women, thus hampering the achievement of structural improvements for women as a group. It is not surprising that women so often make the strategic decision to align themselves with men, as this can guarantee them a degree of acceptance and recognition in certain constellations. We must pay close attention to what kinds of behaviour are rewarded within our organization.

Men as a group within a patriarchal society have a shared interest and desire to band together and uphold their hegemonic position. Because the Vänsterpartiet is itself part of the patriarchal social order, we must use our organizational philosophy to help ensure that women are granted equal opportunities to have their voices heard and to obtain and wield power.

Tips for Men

The following is a series of recommendations for men who want to be feminists and who are committed to fostering an organization rooted in a sense of equality.

Avoid informal networks: Men often find it easier to establish contacts with other men than with women. This can quickly lead to the formation of informal networks in which men keep to themselves and discuss both general and party-related topics. Experience has shown that a disproportionate number of resolutions are passed before they make their way into official meetings. It is therefore crucial that men ensure that any pre-meeting planning or post-meeting debriefing be carried out not only with other men; any new ideas should also be worked through with women. It is incumbent upon more experienced men to dismantle existing informal structures and to keep their influence within local branches or districts in check.

Think before you speak: If you feel that you have answers to the questions being discussed and would like to share them, first listen carefully and take a moment to think. Has somebody else already said what you wanted to say? Is there somebody else who might be better equipped to express that thought? Learn to hold back and do not interrupt when other people are talking.

Be a good listener: Make sure you listen just as attentively when women are speaking as you do to men. Respond to women's contributions. There is no joy to be had in contributing ideas if the discussion simply goes on without the speaker receiving a response. Do not assume that women who express themselves in vague terms do not know what they want or are not knowledgeable. This mode of expression may well stem from an underlying desire to reach a general consensus or to avoid being perceived as difficult.

Challenge and subvert gender roles: Familiarize yourself with a traditionally female-dominated policy area and talk to both men and women about the field in question. Get

involved in debates or portfolios such as feminism or social policy. Be open and encouraging when women seek to enter traditionally male-dominated areas.

Read feminist literature: Take the time to read feminist literature—both non-fiction and fiction. This will help you to learn more about the gender hierarchy that exists in our society and about the circumstances faced by women.

Get involved in intra-party feminist endeavours: Become involved with the party's internal feminist work. Talk to other men about the contents of this handbook. Are there other men in your circles who are engaged in intra-party feminist endeavours? If not, what can you do to help raise awareness and galvanize them into action?

Take a stand: Speak up when a man behaves inappropriately towards a woman, belittles her, or makes her invisible. Condescending comments, sexual innuendo, and demeaning behaviour create a toxic atmosphere, and it is crucial to address such behaviours directly.

Highlight the achievements of women: Honour and extol women's involvement and commitment. Respond not to women's physical appearance, but rather to their accomplishments and skills with support and appreciation.

Accept criticism: If somebody criticizes you for ignoring or devaluing a woman or her contributions, engage with the criticism without immediately responding in a defensive manner. The fact that you did not mean it that way does nothing to undo an insult or a violation of a person's boundaries. Your underlying intention is not the critical factor in this situation. Acknowledge your inappropriate behaviour instead of going on the defensive. Apologize to the woman in question and try to understand the nature of your misconduct in order to prevent it from happening again in future.

Do not delegate the small things: Make it a priority to take responsibility for the overall running of meetings, conferences, and other events. Keep track of schedules and

practical things that need to be done—not just your own share. Who is responsible for the preparatory labour? Who takes care of the contacts? Who cleans up afterwards? When women are forced to assume responsibility for organizational matters, it interferes with their own scope for political development and participation.

Exercise restraint: Being feminist means constantly challenging yourself and questioning your behaviour and motivations. This is true for both women and men, but it is a practice that can be particularly difficult and uncomfortable for men. Take a step back and make space for other people. If speaking time is unfairly distributed, it is only fair that someone take up less speaking time. If you have a tendency to talk a great deal, practice taking the floor less often. If positions of power are unfairly distributed, it is only fair that someone relinquish their position of power. If you are in the habit of occupying a role or position that gives you a high level of power, consider how you might share that power with women.

CONCLUSION

In-house feminism should not constitute a short-term campaign, but rather form a component of mainstream party work. The party leadership must take responsibility and formulate long-term plans for how, when, and what is required in the intra-party feminist sphere. Separatist meetings should be conducted before every major event. Every election committee should be expected to commit both time and labour to ensuring a diverse list of candidates. If this does not transpire, request to see the minutes pertaining to the decision in question in order to ascertain what the exceptional reasons were pursuant to Section 21 of the party constitution. Gender-disaggregated statistics should also be compiled by the party associations. Analyse and discuss all intra-party feminist work.

Should you happen to have any uncertainties in this area, attend the training courses that are on offer. You can also contact other districts or party headquarters for advice and tips; if in-house feminist work comes to a halt at a regional or local level, this kind of cooperation and collaboration can provide renewed impetus for action. Offer courses for executive committees and members.

In-house feminist work is an essential prerequisite for any other kind of political endeavour. When obstacles are laid in the path of female party members, this has ramifications for the functioning of the party as a whole, be it on an organizational or a political level. If we fail to engage and include all women in the party, we stand to lose a wealth of experience, knowledge, and expertise. There is a great deal at stake for the Vänsterpartiet if it cannot achieve in-house structural equality; after all, how can a party whose goal is a just and egalitarian society earn the trust of the voting public if it fails to achieve this within its own structure

and culture? Moving forward, let us steadfastly persevere on our path and ensure that everything our sisters have accomplished thus far was not in vain!

“How credible can our politics be if we don’t do everything in our power to establish a genuine sense of equality within our own party? There can be no equality without gender equality.”

From the Preface

