

Gender equality is positioned by the European Union as one of its core values and legal principles. Over the last decade, the EU has increasingly been positioning itself as a gender policy entrepreneur, showing its ambition to challenge the status quo and incite policy change not only in the member states, but also beyond the EU borders. Applying the Normative Power Europe theoretical lens, the research paper seeks to understand whether and how the EU acts in its foreign policy as a normative gender power, focusing on the case of the EU's action towards Russia, which represents a challenging and contrasting setting for the EU's normative power. The research is methodologically based on process tracing and document analysis with the use of quantitative and qualitative content analysis. As follows from the analysis of the EU's assistance to NGOs, public diplomacy actions and joint action with other international actors, the effectiveness of the EU's gender equality promotion in Russia has been limited by the absence of gender equality as a full-fledged policy area within the EU's actions. Although gender equality agenda has been taken on board by the policy makers and the EU actors abroad, overall, gender equality promotion has received limited attention and lacked a systematic approach that would be mainstreamed in all areas of the EU's activity.