

Campaign without Women

Last presidential election left the women in the kitchen, again. It is not worth writing about the centrist candidate, Małgorzata Kidawa-Błońska, because her campaign was conducted in the style of parading a thoroughbred mare, not a living person with talents and achievements. To be fair, the Left hardly came up to the scratch. Their candidate, Robert Biedroń dutifully ticked off his party's standard slogans one by one like a litany (LGBT rights, reproductive rights) albeit without conviction. The commentary was that the electorate of the Left would sooner vote for Agnieszka Dziemianowicz-Bąk, the leader of his campaign, in the last lap then vote for Biedroń. Unfortunately, we were not given that chance. Women leaders and social activists were traditionally left standing by the roadside and the needs of women left out entirely. Nobody directs their electoral programs to women even though they seem to be the natural electorate of progressive, democratic and pro-European political forces in Poland.

You may ask: are women employees, entrepreneurs, tax payers? Theoretically, yes. There are certain aspects of the electoral propositions, however, particularly noticeable to women. How does one capture women in the campaign? This is a short guide, completely free, to a future use by the candidates of the democratic opposition.

1 Safety. A young woman, while still a girl, is trained to avoid violence, including sexual violence. The fight against domestic violence, support for the victims of rape, prosecution of the perpetrators – a full palette of subjects which are missed from the campaign.

2 Sexual education and access to hygiene products. The word 'sexual' evokes dark fantasies among the right wing voters, but in reality, it is about education and hygiene. How can we believe that we are living in a modern country, if there is still no soap in most school toilets? If there are no vending machines with tampons and towels at the railway stations? Ridiculous? More people have menstruation than a total number of Mr Trzaskowski's voters in the first round of the elections.

3 Home ownership programmes, credit subsidies. It is hard to rival 500+, but let's go back to the roots. All creatures procreate when they find suitable conditions. For many years, there have not been favourable conditions for young families in Poland and the last attempt, Homes for the Young programme has ended. We have a huge number of young people who live with the-

ir parents. For women, it is harder to enter the job market, because of the prevailing assumption that 'she will get pregnant soon'. As a result, she does not get pregnant until the age of 32 because it is not possible to get a permanent job contract, have credit worthiness and own a home. One has to be very optimistic to have children while still living in a room at one's parents, would you agree? Hint: maybe this can influence demographic trends better than 500+?

4 Right to work. While we are talking about the situation of young women, the employment code, which is decades old, requires re-writing. Not in the direction of 'sacking people by email'. These are the government's ideas which should be criticised by the opposition all the time. These regulations deprive a great deal of vulnerable people of job security. It is hard to hide that women, particularly young women and those just before the age of retirement, are the weaker players. Let's offer them something in the job market instead of subsidies to bloody water ponds as suggested by the President.

5 Professional carers and education workers. These are mainly women's jobs. Teachers were recently on strike, can we perhaps offer them something? The pandemic showed how much we need nurses, let's reach out to them! Lack of social workers, nurses, care homes and hospices burdens women who are forced to take up all of these tasks as unpaid work at home.

6 Ecology and the future of next generations. No way that this would miss the interests of mothers. Hint: meet the activists of Parents for the Climate, most of them are women, and listen to them.

Dear democrat, if you meet a politician, member of the electoral committee, slip this short prompt under his or her nose. Better still, start to broach these subjects yourself. This is not only a question of votes from women. This is a matter of rebuilding people's trust in politicians by touching on subjects important to them. More important than whether the candidate sent his kids to the first communion. This is a question of our common future. Our rights are not a cherries on the cake, a decoration on the electoral programme, this is the essence of the wellbeing of us all.

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