

Unfulfilled Hopes and New Challenges – Gender Equality After the 2023 Polish Elections

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The 2023 Polish election earned global attention due to many factors, such as Poland's democratic backsliding in a time of rising right-wing populism. What is more, the topic of women's rights was present in the Polish political debates on an unprecedented scale polarizing the society. This development, as well as the topic of women's representation in the Sejm (the lower chamber of the Polish parliament), raised the interest of international media, although not enough to make it a primary topic (Norström/Barczyszyn-Madziarz 2025). Those issues have also become a query in academic deliberations.

After the more progressive government was sworn in, I published a text on whether the results of the election should be considered a victory for women's rights, cautioning against overly optimistic expectations (Plichta 2024).¹ In this text, I revisit the grand promises made back in 2023, as the halfway point of Donald Tusk's tenure as Prime Minister evokes the need for evaluation: which hopes regarding a more progressive gender equality policy agenda were fulfilled, and how were the changes implemented? As the international scholarly engagement with these questions remains limited, this text aims at providing updates on the developments, specifically those aimed at strengthening the position of women's rights and gender equality in Poland. Two years into Civic Coalition's leading role in government, they proudly report implementing, either in full or partially, all their promises to women. A closer look at the solutions to fulfil them, however, shows that the situation may not be as bright as the government is trying to paint it.

What was promised? And what was delivered?

On October 15th, 2025, two years had passed since the Polish people's vote ended the eight-year rule of the right-wing party Law and Justice (PiS). Two months later, on December 13th, 2025, Donald Tusk, Prime Minister from the pro-European Union Civic Coalition party (Koalicja Obywatelska), celebrated the mid-term of his government. The power shift at the end of 2023 had brought optimism to the liberal side of the political scene, and plenty of promises were made to the people. Most notably, "100 policies for 100 days in the office", a program put forth by Tusk's party, the largest in government, which covered e.g. health care, education, environmental issues, national security, as well as gender equality.

Tusk claimed on multiple occasions that the 100 electoral promises the Civic Coalition made are binding, and the commitment to strengthen women's rights was written down in the government coalition agreement (Plichta 2024). The website with 100 policy promises is still online after two years and has been updated with the state of their re-