

European Political Mentoring Network

Ethnic minority women making their way
into the European Parliament (2014 elections)

Handbook for Mentees





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European Women's Lobby

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union (EU), working to promote women's rights and equality between women and men. EWL membership extends to organisations in all 28 EU member states and the three candidate countries, as well as to 20 European-wide bodies, representing a total of over 2000 organisations.

EWL project partner :

KVINFO

KVINFO is a knowledge centre and research library, for the study of gender, equality and ethnicity based in Denmark.

As one of their larger projects, the KVINFO Mentoring Network matches women with refugee and migrant backgrounds with women who are active in Danish society. The KVINFO Mentoring Network opens the doors to the labour market and leads a way into Danish society. Since its inception in 2002, the Mentoring Network has received numerous awards and has been cited as an example of best practice both in Denmark and internationally.

EWL is very grateful for the financial support of:

Open Society Foundations

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens.

The EWL European Political Mentoring Network is funded by the "Working Together for Tolerance in Europe" grant.

European Commission

Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme



Forewords

Dear Mentee,

The EWL welcomes you in our European Political Mentoring Network!

Whatever the form of the political commitment, may it be on a local or international level, the challenge remains: as it is all about dialogue, exchange and action for a better world.

Our part in the commitment is to fight for a better political representation of women and in this case in particular, of women from minorities. Through this political mentoring programme, we aim to make change and progress happen for better social justice and equality between women and men.

Commitment is first and foremost about participation. Today, in the era of the globalisation it can be done through local structures, but also at European and international level. You have chosen that path and EWL wants to give you the tools to be able to walk that walk to the best of your abilities. For us, this Political Mentoring Network is a way to concretely implement our commitment to the equal participation of (diverse) women and men in the European institutions, and in particular in the European Parliament in view of the European elections next year!

The EWL is proud to have mentees joining our European Political Mentoring Network, which aims to support your participation in an active European political life, with a view to build a better world.

Please be assured of our sustained support throughout this unique experience, which we hope you will find valuable!

Viviane Teitelbaum

President of the European Women's Lobby



Dear Mentee,

This handbook is a tool that will enable you to better understand the mentoring programme. I recommend that you read it at the beginning of your mentoring relationship, and refer back to it throughout the programme.

The handbook is divided into different sections. You will be given an introduction to your own role as mentee, to the mentor's role and to the mentoring process. The practicalities of a mentoring process are described and there is a general introduction to the European Women's Lobby's European Political Mentoring Network.

I hope that you will get a lot out of being a mentee in EWL's European Political Mentoring Network. I look forward to our cooperation to enable you to get closer to your goals and dreams. Enjoy a successful partnership with your mentor!

Karima Zahi

Policy Officer & Project Coordinator at EWL





Being a Mentee in EWL's European Political Mentoring Network

No two mentees are alike. However, they all share a desire to change something in their lives and they are all prepared to work together with a mentor to bring about that change.

Mentees in EWL's European Political Mentoring Network are:

- ▶ Women with a migrant background or from an ethnic minority living in the European Union
- ▶ Women already involved in politics at local, regional and/or national level
- ▶ Women who are eligible and interested in running for the European Elections
- ▶ Committed to women's rights

What is your role as mentee?

Joining EWL's European Political Mentoring Network and working with a mentor is a process which requires your active participation. Therefore, as a mentee you have to take your share of the responsibility for making the interaction with your mentor a success and for working towards the goals you want to be the priority in the mentoring process.

As mentee you must be straightforward with your mentor and tell her about your dreams and the specific goals you want to work towards in the mentoring process. You set the agenda for the

areas you will work on together. You must therefore be proactive both in relation to your mentor and to the aims of the mentoring process – be open and inquisitive and, if there is something you do not understand, ask your mentor.

A mentee should:

- ▶ Define her own goals
- ▶ Be open
- ▶ Set the agenda
- ▶ Listen and investigate
- ▶ Be pro-active

Experience from KVINFO's Mentoring Network has shown that being a mentee is an instructive, challenging and rewarding process in a variety of ways. Some mentees report that, with the support of a mentor, they have achieved results in the form of a job or a work placement. Some have received useful advice about how to apply for jobs. Others have started a course of study or training, or have received help to complete a course they had already started.

By far the majority of mentees have reported that they have benefited from the guidance and incentive they have received from their mentor. Many also report that they have expanded their network – both study/work-related and social circle.

A photograph of two women, one with long dark hair and one with short blonde hair, looking at a book together in a library setting. The title 'Vanessa's Story' is overlaid on the image in white text on an orange background.

Vanessa's Story

“I was unsure of what to expect before meeting Pia. We were members of two different political parties. I had the idea that most politicians are less open when dealing with someone from a different political party than when dealing with someone from their own party. As soon as I met her my reservations faded away. She was very welcoming and genuine which instantly made me feel at ease... For 6 months I had the opportunity to talk through things with someone who has many years' experience in politics. Pia made it easier for me to ask any question during the entire campaign period.”

Vanessa Stephensen,
mentee in KVINFO's Mentoring Network,
Denmark



The Role of Mentors in EWL's European Political Mentoring Network

All the mentors in the EWL European Political Mentoring Network are women who are MEPs with diverse and varied professional and personal experiences.

A mentor is a volunteer – she is not paid, she is a mentor in her professional and free time. It is important to acknowledge this and appreciate her involvement.

Mentors are:

- ▶ Women who are Members of the European Parliament
- ▶ Women with knowledge and experience
- ▶ Women with a good insight into political election processes
- ▶ Women from diverse occupational backgrounds
- ▶ Women with the time and desire to support women from migrant and ethnic minority backgrounds in achieving political aspirations and goals

A mentor is a woman who wants to support you in moving closer to your goals and fulfilling your dreams – professionally and personally. She has knowledge and experience; she is committed, inquisitive and wants to get to know you.

What is the mentor's role?

A mentor puts the focus on your wishes and needs. She listens, gives you her attention and acknowledges your dreams for the future. A mentor helps you to help yourself. She does not know all the answers, but she helps you to find the answers to your questions. This means, for example, that it is not your mentor's task to write campaign strategies, but she can give you feedback on what you have planned. A mentor shares from her experience, explains her viewpoints and clearly states her expectations of you and the mentoring partnership. She gives you feedback about your ideas and thoughts and asks you the kinds of questions that are both clarifying and challenging.

A mentor is patient, open, inquisitive, attentive, stimulating and understanding in relation to your specific situation. It is not the mentor's role to get you a job in European Affairs, or help run your political campaign, but to help you on your way so that you can move closer to your goals.

What do mentors get out of being in EWL's European Political Mentoring Network?

Experience from KVINFO's Mentoring Network shows that being a mentor gives you just as much back as you put in. Being able to share your knowledge and experiences with someone else gives pleasure, and helping someone else on their way can be highly satisfying both on the personal and the professional level.



Heidi's story

Heidi Wang, originally from Taiwan, has been member of the Copenhagen City Council for many years. She is the only politician of Chinese descent in Scandinavia. In 2001 Heidi joined the Liberal Party and launched her first political campaign. She was elected to the City Council with the third highest number of votes. She says very openly that her reason for entering politics was seeing minorities being treated unfairly in the job market in Denmark.

When Heidi said “yes” to be mentor for Kosina Savage from Gambia, she knew first-hand how it feels to lack the money, the time and the resources to be a full time politician. She felt good about having this opportunity to share with someone also from a minority, the skills and determination she used to succeed in Danish politics.

“A new politician from a minority background usually has little preparation for her role. She needs to look strong and in control, but in reality it can be hard to perform because she is not clear about what is expected of her and on how to deliver it.”

“I’ve told Kosina that a good campaigner must take into account those who feel marginalised by the language barrier, those who are keen to see someone at the municipal level speaking for their interests. I am talking about immigrants and refugees from many countries living in Copenhagen. I’ve never been afraid of hard work, of getting my hands dirty. In fact, you have to do it if you want people to vote for you.”

Heidi Wang,
mentor in KVINFO’s Mentoring Network,
Denmark



How do you get as much as possible from your mentoring relationship?

What is a mentoring relationship?

No two mentoring relationships are alike. Each mentoring relationship is unique because it is based on the individual mentee, her particular wishes and dreams. Therefore your mentoring relationships will also be unique – because it will focus on your wishes and your needs.

A mentoring relationship is dependent on what you and your mentor bring to it – it is in the dialogue between you and your mentor that the process is shaped.

However, a mentoring relationship in EWL's European Political Mentoring Network will still comply with certain general principles. A mentoring relationship involves regular meetings, respect for one another, keeping to the schedule and arriving on time.

Dialogue and discussion is important

In order to have a good mentoring relationship, it is important that you and your mentor communicate clearly and openly with one another. Good communication is crucial in stimulating new ideas and fresh thoughts, and to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings. In order to use your mentor to the best advantage, it is therefore important that you think about how you enter into a productive dialogue.

To be an active mentee you must be aware of three factors:

- ▶ Listening
- ▶ Asking
- ▶ Telling

It is important that you listen to your mentor in order to find out how you can make use of her experience. Do ask her questions to get the information you are looking for. It is also only by asking questions that you can clear up any uncertainties you might have and come to a greater understanding of what your mentor means and thinks. And it is also important that you tell her about yourself, your thoughts and opinions, so that the mentor knows who you are and what you expect from her.

Positive developments start in your shared experiences and perspectives. Therefore, focus on how best to listen, ask and tell. Together with your mentor, you could perhaps do some exercises that would help you build good communication and understanding of each other.



Here are some ideas for the kind of exercises you might choose to do together:

Listening: 'retell your mentor's story'

Let your mentor tell you about an experience she has had. Listen in silence to her story. When she has finished, you retell her story. Afterwards, ask your mentor if your retelling fits with what she has told you. By doing this exercise in various situations, you and your mentor will listen actively to one another. And this will help you make sure that you have the same understanding of what has been discussed at your meetings.

Asking: 'ask the right questions'

When talking with your mentor, it is important to ask open questions – questions that cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'.

By doing this you make sure that your dialogue constantly gives you new opportunities to explore your mentor's knowledge and experience. For example, ask your mentor about a particular challenge in becoming an MEP, the decisions had to take along the way, the approaches she uses to challenges in her work. This will give you access to your mentor's hands-on experience. And it is from this type of information that you can derive inspiration for your own development. When you ask a question, always remember to give your mentor time to answer – do not be afraid of silence, it can be necessary and it will give both of you space for thought.

Telling: 'express yourself clearly'

This exercise will help you to be clear and straightforward in what you say.

For example, you and your mentor can talk about your political aspirations. First, you have exactly two minutes to tell her about them. Your mentor is not allowed to say anything, but she listens and keeps check on the time. After this you are both silent for two minutes. You then tell her about your aspirations again, but this time you have one minute to do so. The mentor still keeps check on the time. You now both spend the next two minutes in silence. You then tell your mentor about your plans again – this time in 30 seconds. Each time you talk to her you will do so more clearly and your goals will be more precise.

Talk about what your mentoring relationship should be about

A mentoring relationship can be about many different things – establishing and setting professional goals, campaign tips, help understanding the "unwritten rules" of European Politics, networking, amongst many others – you and your mentor should discuss what you will focus on in your mentoring process.

It is important that you and your mentor regularly discuss what aspect of your development is in focus and which of your goals you are working towards. Maybe you will be working towards several goals at the same time. Maybe the goals will change in the course of the mentoring process.

A common factor of all mentoring relationships is that the mentee's dreams and wishes always have top priority. You will therefore be working steadily towards your goals. The clearer your idea of what you would like help with, the easier it is for the mentor to help you.



Here are some exercises you can use to keep track of and focus on your mentoring process:

Logbook

Either during or after your meeting with your mentor, it is a good idea to write a logbook – i.e. a report of your meeting. You might want to note down any new thoughts and ideas you have had and what you would like the next meeting to focus on. It does not have to be a very long report, just a few notes, headings or single words that will make it easier for you to remember the meetings with your mentor – what you agreed, for example, that you should prepare for the next meeting etc. A logbook can be seen as a memo to yourself.

Use the Mentoring Agreement and the Activity Schedule

EWL's European Political Mentoring Network has provided some tools to help you and your mentor discuss important issues. We recommend that you use the mentoring agreement. This is a written agreement between you and your mentor, which you work out with your mentor at the beginning of the process. The purpose of the agreement is to make sure that you and your mentor have a clear picture of the goals you want to achieve. The mentoring agreement is a useful tool to define this.

Along with the mentoring agreement, you and your mentor will plan out an activity schedule. Here you can list intermediate goals, activities and deadlines. The activity plan makes the organisation and steps in the mentoring process more simple and manageable for both of you. Your goals might well change during the mentoring process, so it is a good idea to look at the activity schedule now and then with your mentor. Your goal might have been to get a better sense of the systems and processes of the European Parliament, for example – and you get a great understanding of what is involved, so now your new goal is to run to become an MEP. Even though you have achieved your first goal, you can continue your mentoring process towards a new goal.



Match

The mentoring process and the mentor/mentee match vary from pair to pair. Some mentors and mentees are matched on the basis of shared political interests. Together with your mentor you might work on issues related to raising your profile, running a successful campaign and expansion of your political networks. But there are other types of match, too. It could be that you need to find more clarification about what you want to do within European politics, and therefore need a mentor to support you in that process.

European Political Mentoring Network coordination

You will have a EWL staff member who will be your contact person in the Network during the mentoring programme. Get in touch with her if there are any problems, if you are in doubt about something, or if you and your mentor have any questions you think she can help you with. Keep her regularly informed about how your mentoring process is going and tell her if there are any changes to your situation, for example a change of job.

My Coordinator at the EWL is:
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Mobile: + 32 (0) 485 39 22 71

During the mentoring programme

We recommend that you are in contact at least once a month, and at first it is a good idea to speak twice a month. It is important that you are in agreement as to how much time you will spend on your mentoring process. You must fill out the mentoring agreement and the activity schedule (see page 15) at the beginning of your partnership. In addition, it is important that you give your coordinator at the EWL regular updates about how you are getting on.

At the end of the first six months we ask you to evaluate your partnership. It is also a good idea to pause for a moment now and then and talk about how far you and your mentor have come towards achieving your goals. And have those goals perhaps changed? And are you still fulfilling your respective expectations of the mentoring process? Maybe you need to look at the activity schedule again.

Capacity-building sessions, face-to-face meetings and shadowing

There will be four training sessions and face-to-face meetings planned throughout the mentoring programme. These will ensure you get a good insight into the day to day life of the European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg. You will have the opportunity to shadow your mentor as she carries out her work, have meetings to discuss your goals and progress, and attend capacity-building sessions. The capacity-building sessions will be designed to equip you with the skills and knowledge you need to navigate the challenges and opportunities you will face in your political ambitions.



Ending

The mentoring network is scheduled to last until the European Parliamentary elections in 2014.

Evaluation

When you and your mentor end your mentoring process, you have to fill out an evaluation form. It is important to tell us how you feel about it – what has been good, what has been difficult, and what you have both got out of it. We will learn from your experiences, and hope to have the opportunity to improve and launch new mentoring partnerships.



Activity Schedule

This is your tool to ensure a dynamic and active mentoring partnership. It is one thing to agree about shared and honourable aspirations – but it is another story to get them converted into reality. It can therefore be a good idea to itemise the goals in specific activities and actions.

The process can be made more manageable by setting intermediate objectives which can be demonstrated and celebrated. The goals can of course be changed as required.

Think about the following questions and fill out the schedule below:

- ▶ What will we do together and what will we do separately?
- ▶ What are the intermediate objectives and deadlines for each goal?
- ▶ What results do we hope to achieve?

Goal & Objectives	Activities	Who	Timetable	Results
Goal 1 - Objectives				
Goal 2 - Objectives				
Goal 3 - Objectives				
Goal 4 - Objectives				



Duty List – Mentee

As a mentee in EWL's European Political Mentoring Network I commit to the following:

- ▶ Enter into a partnership with a mentor for a mentoring process of up to 12 months duration. We will contact each other at least once a month.
- ▶ My mentor is a volunteer. This means that she does not receive payment for the time she spends on our mentoring partnership, but is a mentor because she wants to support and help another woman.
- ▶ My mentor will support and advise me regarding the fulfilment of my wishes and in reaching my goals.
- ▶ My mentor and I talk in confidence. However, my mentor might need to share information with our EWL coordinator.
- ▶ My mentor is an interlocutor. It is up to me to decide which advice I can use and which advice is not relevant for me. I discuss this in an open and straightforward way with my mentor.
- ▶ I will do my best to have a good partnership with my mentor. This means that I will abide by our agreements and let her know if I cannot come to a meeting. This also means that I must be as clear as possible in specifying the goals I want to work towards.
- ▶ My mentor and I share the responsibility for our mentoring partnership.

I will:

- ▶ Participate in capacity-building sessions and shadowing at the EP
- ▶ Tell my coordinator at the EWL if I find something difficult or if I think there are problems in the mentoring partnership.
- ▶ Keep my coordinator at the EWL updated during the mentoring process, and fill out an evaluation form and provide evaluation interviews when required.
- ▶ Share positive stories and achievements with EWL's European Political Mentoring Network, particularly through the mentoring blog, 50/50 campaign, web documentary and any other event or communication tool, as relevant.



Mentoring Agreement

This is a mentoring agreement between

Mentee

Mentor

Our contact person in EWL's European Political Mentoring Network is called **Karima ZAH**

We hereby agree on the following:

- ▶ We meet one another with respect.
We listen and ask questions in order to understand one another's viewpoints.
- ▶ If we encounter a difficulty in the mentoring process, we will discuss it and try to find a solution.
- ▶ Our partnership is one of confidentiality. This means that we do not tell anyone else about the content of our conversations. We can share our experiences and thoughts with the EWL if we choose to do so.
- ▶ We do not exchange gifts.
- ▶ We do not wait for one other to ring or write. We take initiative.
- ▶ We abide by our arrangements and arrive on time.
- ▶ We work purposefully and we do what we have agreed on.

We speak at least once a month. Between meetings we keep in contact by:

The aim of the mentoring process is that the mentee:

(Tick up to 4 boxes)

- Receives help with her political ambitions
 - Expands her professional networks
 - Gains greater insight into the European Parliament and other EU institutions
 - Gains greater knowledge about being an MEP
 - Enjoys the opportunity of having someone to talk with / someone who listens
 - Gains greater self-confidence and belief in her own abilities
 - Starts an education/training course
 - Finds a work placement
 - Improves her language skills
 - Other
-



European Political Mentoring Network

The EWL European Political Mentoring Network was developed within the framework of the EWL 50/50 Campaign, which aims to improve the representation of women in the EU institutions and put issues related to women's rights and gender equality high on the EU agenda.

The EWL Mentoring Project seeks to empower women from ethnic minorities ahead of the May 2014 European elections and, ideally, to increase their representation in the European Parliament. The Network addresses the lack of gender parity and ethnic diversity in political decision-making at European level. It was officially launched on 09 April 2013 at the EP in Brussels. The mentoring network is the first of its kind at European level and it is inspired by a political mentoring programme developed by our project partner KVINFO in Denmark.