

Director of the Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law (CEDEM) in Ukraine, Olesia Kholopik is a lawyer with a mission to campaign for safe roads to save lives and to enhance the role of the civil society of Ukraine. She left corporate law to work on such advocacy campaigns in the voluntary sector and was voted one of Kyiv Post's Top 30 under 30 in 2018.

"A feminist transport system is one formed on the principles of gender-oriented budgeting and with the involvement of women in making key decisions. This is also a system that fights stereotypes from an early age and creates tools to increase the share of female transport workers."

Olesia Kholopik is a young woman who has wasted no time making a voice for herself as an advocate for human rights in mobility. As the director of the Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law, a Ukrainian NGO, she draws on many years of advocacy experience in road safety campaigns to promote the possibility of women influencing Ukraine's policy-making process around road safety issues and transport systems.

For Olesia, innovation will play a vital role in creating more equitable transport systems but only if approached in an inclusive and accessible way:

"It is important to raise awareness about possible gender imbalances, innovate governance, and identify public policies that can help new technological solutions in reducing inequalities for disadvantaged groups while avoiding the creation of new ones. It is about guiding the deployment of innovative transportation services that leave no one behind."

She has witnessed as Ukraine has been rapidly and effectively advancing in the areas of non-discrimination, protection of human rights, and a gender-balanced approach in all spheres of life. Olesia acknowledges this does not mean discrimination against women has been 'solved' nor has it significantly reduced the amount of domestic and gender-oriented violence, but these changes have had a significant impact on the formation of organizations' policies and procedures while shaping general social trends.

This began in 2005 with the pivotal adoption of the Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men, which notes such important concepts as discrimination, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence, specifies the punishment for them, and deals with the mechanism for ensuring equal rights and opportunities. In the years that followed, further legislation has reinforced laws against oppression, discrimination, violence, while improving human rights. This has even led to an Electoral Code for gender quotas to ensure the representation of women in power, prescribed at 40%. These ongoing developments reinforce Olesia's work as a lawyer and advocacy manager.

Olesia Kholopik

DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRE FOR
DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW (CEDEM)

UKRAINE





As a woman in a man's world, Olesia has the following practical tips:

- Learn to turn off doubt, fear, and hesitation
- Listen to your inner strength and believe in yourself
- Trust yourself and others, and delegate
- Learn to ask for and receive help
- Most importantly, remember the support, solidarity, and help of women

“There are numerous famous and prominent women all over the world and in history worthy of being role models. For me, one of the most important women who has helped me become the person I am now is my mother, Maria Kholopik. She inspires me, motivates me to grow without any limitations, and believe in myself. She is the best example for me of how to be a strong woman, supportive wife, attentive mother, reliable friend and a professional in your field.”

With the support of her mother and peers, Olesia remains motivated by remembering the victories, the results they achieved, and the path to success. She notes how important it is to praise ourselves and believe in our abilities to stay motivated and push for change.

“If I could, I would tell my younger self not to be afraid to fail and that it is ok not to get it right the first time. Keep calm, ask yourself what lessons you can learn from it, and try again. No one has a right to judge you except yourself.”