

The RECLAIM study trip in Berlin was a turning point in how I understand feminist leadership in Europe. What struck me most was the shift from competition, which is often emphasized externally, to community, solidarity, and allyship. Instead of seeing women's political participation as an individual struggle, the program emphasized collective power and transnational learning, showing me that sustainable progress is built together, across borders.

A key moment was reflecting on European female biographies and learning about political participation in countries like Poland and the Czech Republic. Hearing how women navigate structural barriers differently highlighted that inequality is systemic, not personal. Meeting women from these countries and sharing experiences revealed the importance of a collective approach to advancing feminist politics across Europe. The city tour on Black and Queer Feminism in Berlin grounded theory in lived experience and reinforced the centrality of intersectionality.

Personally, I gained confidence in claiming space and using my voice strategically. Training on presence, authenticity, and leadership offered practical tools that left me feeling empowered. My voice matters, especially when contributing to collective goals. I plan to build on this empowerment by strengthening feminist networks in my own political work and continuing to learn from women across Europe. I remain curious about how transnational feminist cooperation can be institutionalized more effectively.

Message to my peers: To other women reclaiming space in the public sphere: you do not have to do this alone. Our strength grows when we share knowledge, address structural barriers, and stand in solidarity. Trust your voice and use it not only for yourself but to open doors for others.

Love,

Nergis Zarifi