

« ‘Europeanisation goes West’: Interroger les effets des élargissements de l’UE à l’Europe Centrale sur son fonctionnement »

« ‘Europeanisation goes West’: Scrutinizing the effects of EU Eastern Enlargement on its Functioning’

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Did newcomers (finally) make a difference? Framing gender equality in the EU-28

Résumé :

La contribution du nouveau personnel politique venu des Etats membres d’Europe centrale – parlementaires européens mais aussi membres du collège des Commissaires, à la « fabrique » des politiques d’égalité femmes-hommes, n’a fait l’objet que d’analyses éparées. Alors même que l’impact « domestique » de l’Européanisation dans ce secteur des politiques publiques avait fait l’objet d’une attention certaine lors de la phase de pré-adhésion (Forest, 2006 ; Roth, 2008), les conséquences de l’élargissement n’ont guère été interrogées pour questionner l’émergence de nouvelles lignes de fractures en matière de « politiques du genre », et la faible propension de la Commission à traiter ces enjeux sous les présidences de José-Manuel Barroso. L’objet de cette présentation est de contribuer, depuis une approche inspirée de l’institutionnalisme sociologique et discursif (Schmidt, 2010 ; Forest & Lombardo, 2015), à faire émerger l’agenda des recherches sur l’européanisation d’Est en Ouest. Nous nous appuyons sur une analyse de la contribution des eurodéputées femmes des nouveaux Etats membres au travail du Parlement en général et aux politiques d’égalité en particulier. Les hypothèses développées à partir d’entretiens et d’une analyse de leurs discours, rapports et interpellations entre 2004 et 2008, seront ici interrogés à l’aune de la période s’étendant jusqu’en 2014 et des évolutions en matière de recrutement des personnels politiques communautaires dans les nouveaux Etats membres.

Abstract:

To date, the contribution of the MEPs and members of the EU Commission(s) recruited in CEE member states to the making of gender equality policies, has been tackled only incidentally. While the domestic impact of Europe on this policy sector had received a significant amount of scholarly attention over the pre-accession period (Forest, 2006; Roth, 2008), the emergence of new cleavages around the politics of gender after EU enlargement and the little interest of both ECs led by José-Manuel Barroso for this area of European policies, have not triggered much interest. If it does not aim to bridge this gap in the literature, this presentation nonetheless intends to contribute to the research agenda of Eastern-Western Europeanization from a sociological and discursive

institutionalist perspective (Schmidt, 2010; Forest & Lombardo, 2015). We will draw upon a study of the parliamentary work of female MEPs from CEE member states, carried out through personal interviews and the analysis of policy documents from 2004 to 2008. This preliminary work, which focused in particular on their contribution to the making of gender equality policies, as well as the hypotheses it brought about, will be challenged in the light of a longer period running until 2014, and of the evolutions in the recruitment of MEPs and EU commissioners from CEECs.

Since the early 2000s, the politics of gender at the EU-level – and their consequences at the regional and national levels, have drawn significant scholarly attention, which more or less reflects the main theoretical options developed in European studies. Explored from a neo-functionalist perspective, as a field of expansion for EU policy- and Law-making in the area of social rights (Shaw, 2000; Caporaso & Jupille, 2001; Mazey, 2000), the politics of gender have also been analysed as an area for both interest intermediation (Woodward, 2004; Cavaillé, 2006; Forest, 2006b, 2006c) and representation (Freedman, 2002; Beauvallet and Michon, 2008; Regulska and Grabowska, 2008). From the field of gender and politics, the EU has been investigated as a source of innovative, but contested gender and other equality policies (Liebert, 2003; Lombardo, Meier and Verloo, 2009; Kantola, 2010), with a strong emphasis placed on soft-law (Jacquot, 2006, 2010; Beveridge & Velluti, 2008). More recently, the domestic impact of EU regulations on gender equality provisions and policies, triggered interest from a variety of perspectives, from approaches focusing on compliance with EU legal order - and presuming the intrinsically different nature of gender regimes in central and eastern European member states (Falkner & Treib, 2008), to more differentiated approaches engaging with the increased diversity of the EU after the Eastern enlargement in terms of institutional, social and political contexts (as Roth, 2008; Krizsan, 2009; Clavero and Galligan, 2009). Although sharing a number of theoretical and empirical concerns, Europeanization studies and gender policies analysis have yet remained two fields within political science that have often moved on parallel tracks, and only occasionally met (Lombardo & Forest, 2011, 2015).

As a result of these parallel tracks, a gap persists in the literature for interpreting and theorizing the contribution of female Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to Europeanization processes in general, and to the Europeanization of gender more specifically. Female MEPs elected in the “old” member states have been at the core of a few longitudinal studies, which mostly focused on national delegations (Michon & Beauvallet, 2008a) and have usually been annexed to the study of national legislatures (Mateo-Díaz, 2005). Nonetheless, those have brought valuable insights about what differentiate women deputies from their male colleagues at the European Parliament and from their female colleagues elected at different levels of representation (national or sub-national) in terms of social background or recruitment patterns. The presence of women has been addressed in a rather theoretical (substantive) way, through the lens of political and interests representation or legitimacy (Freedman, 2002), particularly accurate in the case of a supranational institution. Other aspects such as legislative behaviour have been merely left unquestioned, while it has been thoroughly addressed for national legislatures (Childs, 2001, 2003; Celis, 2005).

Taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of the literature that has developed so far, this paper attempts to bring further a research agenda on female MEPs elected in the new member states. Primarily using data on MEPs with regards to their individual backgrounds discourses and legislative activity, it also mobilize an extensive knowledge of domestic political recruitment and legislative behaviour patterns in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Forest, 2008, 2011). Starting from a preliminary analysis carried out on the first post-enlargement term (Forest, 2008), it explores some hypotheses about the role of CEE MEPs in making equality, both at the European level and in their respective countries of origin. The standing committee for Women rights and Gender equality is here taken as a laboratory for further hypothesis, rather than an autonomous policy arena. Frame analysis (Verloo, 2006b) is also convoked, as a possible entry for further comparative analysis of the making of Equality in EU parliamentary politics.

Gendering the study of Euro-politics

If compared to the attention for women's political representation at the national level or to the relatively important literature about women's interest intermediation at the EU-level (not mentioning the interest for engendering EU legal order), references to women's presence in the European Parliament are not so abundant. Of course, little attention was paid to political recruitment and legislative activity of MEPs in general, as long as the institution itself did not gain greater political credit, from the early 1990s onwards. Yet, even in this context, these references have remained quite incidental, as relatively high rates of female representation at the European Parliament were being convoked as an illustration of critical mass theories or – more recently – of their increasingly critical assessment (Norris, Lovenduski, 2001; Freedman, 2002; Bratton, 2005).

This can be partly attributed to a weak interest for mainstream analysis of the European political arena. As an example, very few feminist scholars explicitly drew on classical Schmitt & Reif (1980) hypothesis about European elections as second-order. But it was nonetheless often taken for granted that recruiting more women for running European electoral campaigns was a consequence of their "less-at-stake" dimension. Yet, the greater openness of party gate-keepers towards female applicants received less attention than its potential contagious effect for domestic legislative recruitment (Kauppi, 1999). At the same time, non-gendered literature on the European parliament often failed to properly account for the specificity of female presence (Marrel, Payre, 2006). When calling for an institutional theory of legislative behaviour in the European Parliament, Hix et alii (Hix, 2004; Hix, Raunio, Scully, 2003) thus left no real space for accounting of sex differences in variation in MEPs behaviour. However, they give a great importance to the domestic institutional contexts of political recruitment and to the functioning patterns of the EP: two dimensions for which it can be assumed that gender also matters. Similarly, in a more sociological and ethical vein, Olivier Costa (2003) makes no specific reference to gender when questioning the very nature of the European mandate. Exploring the paradox of a mandate conceived as "general" (i.e, MEPs/agents do not represent a specific, territorialized group of citizens/principals), Costa stresses the fact that "the aporia of representation can only be overcome or accepted because of the existence of a political community", which in the case of the EU, allegedly does not exist. But while such an aporia – the non-substantive dimension of the European

mandate - can be extended to the situation of female MEPs, the author keeps distance with the studies dealing with the social representativeness of the European Parliament.

As in Norris (1997) or Norris & Franklin (1997), the interest for the legitimacy of the European Parliament through reflecting social diversity, shed light on the gendered dimension of political representation at the EU level. As the concept of social representation refers “to the presence of political minorities in decision-making bodies, and the demands for parliaments to reflect the social composition of the electorate in terms of social, class, gender, ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities” (Phillips, 1993), it draws attention on the various reasons why the quality of representation can be flawed. But while a number of explanations to an altered social representation are convoked, such as electoral systems, the role of European parties in recruiting process or the salience of the European elections for voters, women’s presence would rather depend on a mixture of domestic institutional heritages and political culture. As far as political recruitment is concerned, complex patterns as those identified for Westminster (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995) would deserve to be confronted to the multi polar dimension of EU parliamentary politics.

But the huge diversity of recruitment patterns, political loyalties and parliamentary cultures at the European Parliament, has probably hindered this attempt. Here comes one of the main challenges for any political recruitment or legislative study applied to the EP, which shall account for variations in a multi-level arena. We owe one of the first consistent effort to deal with this diversity to Hillary Footit’s focus (2002) on the discursive dimension of EU politics & policy making. Addressing the hypothesis of a “new language of politics” being developed by women in this new political arena, she built up her approach on the three main streams of the analysis of language in politics. But while paying attention to policy styles and gendered vocabulary/discourse, she nonetheless emphasizes the ethno-semantic dimension of female political discourse, stressing cultural identities and social backgrounds expressed through different discursive patterns, as did Ruth Wodak (2003) in her study of narratives and identities developed by female MEPs. Although it does not consider the identity/backgrounds of representatives, frame analysis, as understood in the QUING project (Verloo, 2006), is also of added value. Analyzing and comparing the framing of major gendered issues at the EU level, it unravels a number of frames through text analysis, of which a substantial part is constituted of floor speeches at the European Parliament. Understandably, these speeches are mostly expounded by members of the Women’s rights and Gender Equality Committee (FEMM) and provide an accurate picture of the different meanings of gender equality advocated at the EU level. Those, in particular, reveal the importance of non gendered frames in the making of equality policies, such as *Efficiency and Governance*, along with gendered approaches in terms of *Structural gender inequality* or *(Un)equal representation* (Lombardo et al., 2008).

Grounds for accounting of the “enlarged” presence of women in EU politics

A decade after the start of Eastern Enlargement, there are some evidences that the literature about Female MEPs elected in the New Member States (NMS) might contribute to the cumulative work on the gendered dimension of EU parliamentary politics. Although such literature is scarce, it can now draw on a more complex

assessment of the impact of Europeanization on the politics of gender in Central Eastern Europe. By 2004, very little had been written in terms of Europeanization and most of literature addressed the impact of EU accession from a normative, top-down perspective, assessing the “progress” of candidate countries toward the implementation of EU legal order. For sure, the need for collecting basic data did exist, since gender equality was not much at stake during the first stage of accession negotiations. As a consequence, it was highly questionable whether Eastern Enlargement would truly provide a window of opportunity to politicize gender in the accession countries (Roth, 2004, Forest, 2006a).

Moreover, it became clear that instead of fostering convergence, the accession process had a differential impact in the new member states. As an example, institutional tools and legislations have been created to promote gender equality, but varied greatly among countries, with respect to their institutional legacies. While surveys carried out right after the great enlargement suggested that *all* new member states are equally considered to perform poorly (Falkner, Treib, 2008), such discrepancies have drawn attention on the influence of domestic political and institutional contexts on the Europeanization of gender. As put in evidence by discursive-sociological approaches (Lombardo & Forest, 2011), Europeanization has gone far beyond institutional adaptation, including cognitive framing (Neumayer & Dakowska, 2005 ; Jacquot & Woll, 2003). The complex analysis of the Europeanization of broadly defined politics of gender in the enlarged European Union, has also extended to its consequences in terms of women’s access to political decision making. EU incentives for the adoption of gender quotas at every electoral level, which prompted Slovenia to modify its Constitution in order to adopt new electoral rules (Antić, Lokar, 2006), as well as the gendered dimension of the first European election campaign (Matonyte, 2006), received a good deal of scholarly attention. But so far, this interest has been developed quite narrowly, if compared to the relatively abundant literature on women’s access to political power in post-communist Europe (Matland & Montgomery, 2003; Ilonzski, 2006; Forest, 2010), and no gender perspective applied to the developing research area on the Europeanization of domestic parliamentary politics (Auel, Benz, 2006). And yet,, respectively from the fields of gender & politics, and European studies, Ilonzski (2006), and Beauvallet & Michon (2008b) and Forest (2008), have nonetheless provided the first attempts to map out the differences embodied by newly elected female MEPs, in terms of recruitment patterns, educational background, political experience and ideological orientation.

Increased diversity: Women’s presence after EU enlargement

My own contribution to this debate firstly relied upon a research on the “professionals of the EU” carried out at the University of Strasbourg¹, and the QUING project (FP6, 2007-2011) dedicated to the quality of gender + equality policies in the

¹ For the purposes of the Study, a database was constituted from the biographies of MEPs in December, 2006 and updated after the European elections in Romania and Bulgaria (n=785). There are indicators related to socio-demographical features (sex, age, level and type of degree); dispositions for internationalization (foreign degrees); political paths (type of mandates, career features); professional paths, as well as legislative indicators (committees, groups, delegations, bureau membership, number of reports, interventions in plenary sessions, questions asked, proposition of resolutions. This database has been updated with data from the 2009-2014 legislature.

EU. While the former developed a sociological approach to Europeanization, gathering data on different categories of actors, including the MEPs in a gendered perspective, the latter applied critical frame analysis (Verloo, 2006b) to the making of Equality policies. Crossing the two perspectives resulted fruitful for a critical assessment of the making of equality in the enlarged European Union, and eventually materialized in a discursive-sociological approach to the Europeanization of gender policies developed in Lombardo and Forest (2011, 2015). Applied to the female MEPs elected in Central and Eastern European Member States since 2004, this research agenda accounts for the increased diversity of women's presence at the EP after Eastern enlargement.

An intellectual elite

By 2007, 44% of women elected in the new member states held a doctorate, no less than 91% having completed a master's degree and none but one MEP holding no academic degree. By early 2015, these proportion had not evolved significantly, respectively at 39% and 87%, to be compared to the overall proportions of MEPs having completed a PhD or a master (4-5 years of higher education) for the sixth (27 & 44%) and seventh terms (22 & 46%), respectively. This contrasted figures provide an accurate picture of the over-selection process occurring in domestic constituencies.

Such a picture is reinforced by the fact that this pattern commonly applies to *all* new member states and underwent only marginal variations from 2004 to 2014. However, as women MEPs do not form an homogeneous group, domestic patterns of political recruitment and social reproduction explain that the vocational structure of diplomas strongly differs from a country to another, with mathematics or journalism coming first in the Baltic states, economics in Hungary, while medicine, Law or social sciences prevail in other contexts. As an additional feature in relation with education, women (and men) elected in the new member states own foreign degrees more often than their colleagues from the former EU-15 (especially in Hungary and the Czech Rep.).

A group of professionals

Levels of political experience also enlightens recruitment patterns applying for elections to the European parliament in CEE. Over the past 3 European elections, proportions of women MEPs elected in the new member States having held a domestic national or regional mandate ranged from 40 (2007) to **52% (2014)**. Those rates distinguish women elected in the new member States both from their male counterparts in the NMS, endowed with an even greater political capital, and from their colleagues of both sexes elected in the former EU-15 countries. Among the latter, the proportion of MEPs having held significant (regional or national) mandates prior to entering the European Parliament, continuously decreased from 45% in the first term to respectively 35% and 28% in the second and fifth terms (Beauvallet, Lepaux, Michon, 2013:6). From the first post-enlargement term they have been also much more to have experienced executive governmental positions (20% as minister or deputy minister in 2007) than their Dutch and German colleagues (none) or the average for the EU-15 (11%). But at the same time, women MEPs from the new member States were less likely to have occupied decision making positions than their male fellow citizens elected at the EP.

If the proportion of women having experienced political responsibilities in local politics reflects the one to be observed in national legislative bodies, and if educational level is traditionally high among post-socialist assemblies since 1990s, the accumulation of cultural and political resources seems to be typical of female MEPs elected in CEE. This to be illustrated by the number of MEPs who occupied governmental positions, at a time when the ratio of women ministers did not exceed 25% (Latvia), usually scoring well below 10% as in Hungary or the Czech Republic.

Such patterns account of the differential resources of the women MEPs elected in the new member States, when compared to their female colleague from the former EU-15. Traditionally, the latter present less socio-cultural properties than their male counterparts (Beauvallet, Michon, 2008a), as they are more frequently holding intermediary professions or educational positions. Similarly, women MEPs elected in the EU-15 have less often completed five years of higher education than their male colleagues. They also used to be endowed with less political capital, not only for not having held national mandates or governmental positions in similar proportions, but also for counting with shorter careers within their respective parties. On the contrary, a high proportion of female MEPs from the EU-15 owe their presence at the EP to a long-term involvement in civil society organizations. Women elected in the NMS clearly distinguish themselves from their female colleagues at the EP. As most of them have completed 5 years of higher education, they had usually occupied managerial or senior academic positions before being elected. In terms of political resources, even those who did not held national parliamentary mandate have usually strong party experience or good connections due to their former activity (well-known journalists, national experts).

Differentiated political polarization

Additionally, as noted by Ilonszki (2006: 11), while the feminization of the European Parliament was, from its early stage, spurred by left-wing parties (Norris, Franklin, 1997), “female MEPs from the former socialist countries are better represented in the People’s Party Parliamentary Group (EPP-ED) and are also present in small, anti-EU groups”. This has remained through over the last decade. By 2007, 43% of the female MEPs from CEECs ranked among right-wing groups (36% sitting for the EPP); 22,4% on behalf of the ALDE and only 25,9% among left-wing groups, the two independent MEPs being close to the right. In 2009-2014, their polarization to the right was even stronger, with 53% of elected female MEPs standing for right wing parties (50% for the PPE), while respectively 36% for the Social-democrats and 11% for the ALDE. In 2015, the ratio stands as follows: 51% of female MEPs from CEECs rank among conservative parties (41,5% for the PPE, 9,5% for the European Conservatives and Reformist Groups); 30,3% among left-wing groups (28,3% for the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, 2% for the European United Left) and 17% belong to the ALDE group².

Yet, this not only illustrates the political orientation of most of governments in Central Europe, as some women have been elected on the lists of parties which play the role of challengers or even outsiders on the domestic political scenes. This is not only the case

² Our own calculations, source: www.europarl.europa.eu.

of anti-EU ultra-conservative parties, such as the League of Polish Families (LPR) during the sixth term or Hungarian Jobbik during the 7th. In 2007 and again in 2009 and 2014, the centre-right Platform of Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria, (GERB), has brought to the EP a much feminized delegation, reflecting a framing developed at the national level, which links fighting endemic corruption with feminization.

Eagerness to get involved into EP legislative activity

As shown by Beauvallet and Michon, how women MEPs appropriate their mandates strongly depend on social and political features. Among those elected in the former EU-15, MEPs endowed with strong political resources inherited from the national level, have shown little eagerness to get involved into EP activity, privileging opportunities on the national political scene. For these women, mandate have been traditionally shortened, and parliamentary activity scarce. Yet, the most common pattern found can be characterized as an “over-involvement” in parliamentary activity, as a strategy to compensate the more limited resources of women elected in the old member States (be they political or educational). These forms of devotion to the institution and over-involvement in their role by newcomers offer the possibility to reinforce an often fragile legitimacy and to acquire a genuine political credit. With lower political resources and know-how, numerous women MEPs claim to be hard workers, showing a kind of “good will” toward the institution. Although such strategies, can be embedded in diverse domains and within diverse committees, newly elected female MEPs tend to join secondary, less competitive committees that partly reflect the structure of their social properties and political capital. Under the 7th term (2009-2014), the most feminized committees were thus those to petition, environment, employment and Women’s Rights and Gender Equality. To the opposite, they have remained under-represented in the most prestigious committees, such as AFCO (Constitutional Affairs) and Economy.

“Good will” and “over-involvement” can also be illustrated by legislative records, as female MEPs from the old member States have drafted an average of 1.85 reports in 2004-2008, to be compared to the 2.1 of their male counterparts endowed with more political resources, and a ratio of 3.3/3.6 over the seventh term (2009-2014). Understandably, since they feature more systematically as newcomers, but also given they are endowed with higher political and educational resources, women elected in the NMS have been less eager to get involved into the European legislative process than their colleagues from the EU-15. Nonetheless, with an average record of 1.25 reports drafted in 2004-2008, they still did much better than men MEPs elected in the NMS (1.0) over the same period. At the same time, women MEPs from Central and Eastern Europe have shown lower interest for less prestigious committees, which are also those at the core of the EU legislative activity (Internal market, consumer policy) and have been more eager to join foreign or monetary affairs in order to ensure visibility in their home-countries. In that respect, they do share common perspectives with their male colleagues, considering the European mandate as a shortcut toward domestic politics. Often seen as peripheral from a Western point of view, Central-Eastern Europe’s politics remains central to their own political actors. The parliamentary practices of women MEPs, however, cannot be understood separately from their social and political

properties and therefore, should be related to the specificities of their political recruitment.

European elections in the new member states: still second order?

At a first stage, these basic features urge to pay attention to the conditions of the electoral competition on the domestic level. Do European elections differ from national legislative campaigns, in terms of salient issues, recruitment patterns or typology of competing parties? As early as 1980, Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt had identified the main patterns of European elections as second order: a) Less at stake, due to the complexity of the European political system and to the (then) weak competences of the European parliament; b) Lower and lower turnouts; c) Ruling party loses (European elections to be used as a sanction); d) Marginal or newly established political actors gain seats. Do such patterns apply to the elections in the new member states, and which have been the consequences in terms of (female) political recruitment?

The less-a-stake dimension is clearly reflected in the especially low electoral turnouts – 30% on average - experienced during the three first elections to the European Parliament held in former socialist countries (see tables 1-3). Similarly, the rule of “government party lose” often applied, European campaigns mainly addressing domestic issues. Concerning the typology of running parties, on the one hand, institutional parliamentary parties usually kept control over electoral competition, even if some domestic outsiders did gain greater importance on the occasion of European elections. It must also be underlined that on several occasions, as for PiS in Poland (2004), GERB in Bulgaria (2007 and 2009) or ANO in the Czech Republic (2014), European elections were part of the broader strategies implemented by emerging parties to occupy a central position in domestic parliamentary politics. Yet, on the other hand, gate-keepers’ control over applicant selection has revealed to be looser than during domestic elections, thus allowing the nomination of quite different profiles, including women.

Nevertheless, this shall not be interpreted as a systematic effort to bring more women into politics: in the Czech Republic, female candidates have been continuously under-represented since 2007 if compared to national elections. Yet, female candidates usually have enjoyed better position on party lists, as well as increased political visibility, in the absence of national party leaders. The Czech case also illustrates that if not particularly sensitive to new political issues such as gender equality, European campaigns gave greater importance to female candidates, supported by higher preferential votes. There were also some empirical evidence of higher turnouts among female voters, at least during first elections to the EP (Rakušanová, 2004, 2005). The less-at-stake dimension of European elections thus has revealed particularly true in the case of the new member states, and revealed to be even more favourable to female candidates, as shown by the greater gender gap between national assemblies and delegation to the European Parliament (fig 3-5).

Indeed, in 2004/2007 and again in 2009, the difference between the feminization of national lower (or single) houses and the one of delegations to the European Parliament, was significantly higher for NSM than it was for the former EU-15 countries, with strong variations among countries. Thus, in Slovakia, the proportion of

female MEPs among delegations doubled the one to be noticed at the national level, while it triplicated it in Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia and Romania. These features, valid only for the two first elections to the EP, nevertheless reflect different situations: while in Estonia and Slovenia, European Elections, due to their second-order character, served as a test for the adoption of legislated quotas (respectively 50 and 40%), in Hungary, Slovenia and Romania, the same pattern led to lower intra-party competition. Therefore, female candidates, often ranking among outsiders, more easily convinced gatekeepers to be appointed in winnable positions on the lists. In the Czech Republic, Poland and Lithuania, however, the EP reveals only slightly more favourable than national ones for women to be elected, and after 2014 European elections, the above-described pattern no longer applies to Hungary, where domestic politics strongly reinvested the EP due to the rise of anti-EU discourses, whereas in Slovenia, gender quotas have now been generalized also for national elections, thus bridging the gap between both constituencies.

More generally, the last elections to the EP, held in 2014, have proven to be less favourable than the two previous ones to female candidates in most of CEEC. From 34% in 2004-2009, the proportion of women steadily decreased to 33% (2009-2014) and 32% (2014). Simultaneously, the gap with overall feminization rate of the EP, moved from +3 to -5 pts, thus reflecting a clearly diverging patterns with regards to the evolution of political recruitment to the European parliament. And yet, over the same period, the feminization of national parliaments increased in same proportions (+4 pts) for NMS (19 to 23%) and former EU-15 countries (24 to 28%). Therefore, the growing competition for winnable positions on party lists running for European elections, shall not be interpreted as a sign that in former socialist countries, EU politics are no longer second order, especially as turnout remains especially low. And yet, this should be seen as an indication that patterns of political recruitment to the EP are being endogenized, this also applying to opportunities for women to be selected as candidates.

Tab. 1 European elections: turnout (2004/2007*)

Country	BG*	CZ	EST	H	HR	LT	LV	PL	RO*	SLO	SK	CEEC
%	29%	28%	27%	39%	-	41%	48%	20%	29%	28%	17%	31%

Tab. 2 European elections: turnout (2009)

Country	BG	CZ	EST	H	HR	LT	LV	PL	RO	SLO	SK	CEEC
%	39%	28 %	44%	36%	-	21%	54%	24%	28%	28%	19%	32%

Tab. 3 European elections: turnout (2014)

Country	BG	CZ	EST	H	HR	LT	LV	PL	RO	SLO	SK	CEEC
%	36%	18%	36%	29%	25%	47%	30%	24%	32%	25%	13%	29%

Congrès AFSP Aix 2015

Fig.1 Feminization of national delegations to the EP (2004/2007)

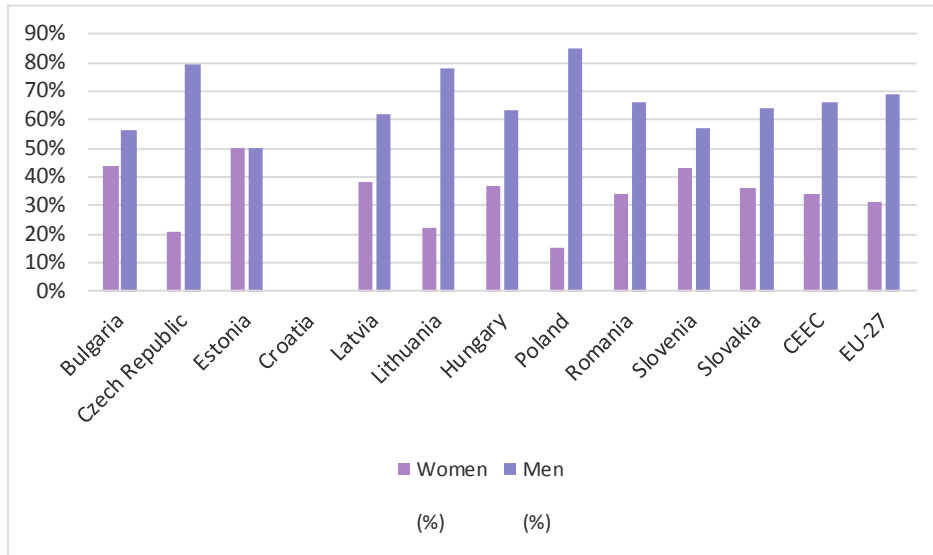


Fig.2 Feminization of national delegations to the EP (2009-2014)

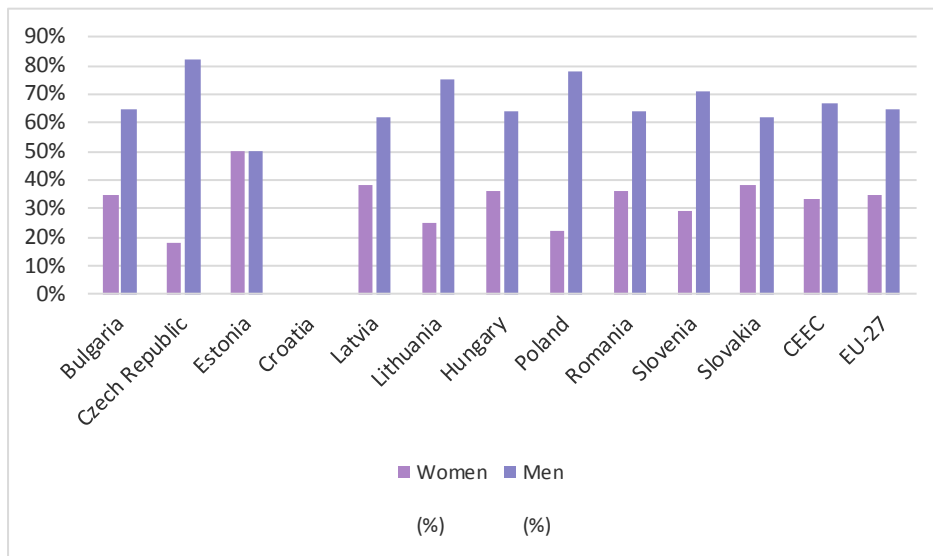


Fig.3 Feminization of national delegations to the EP (2014)

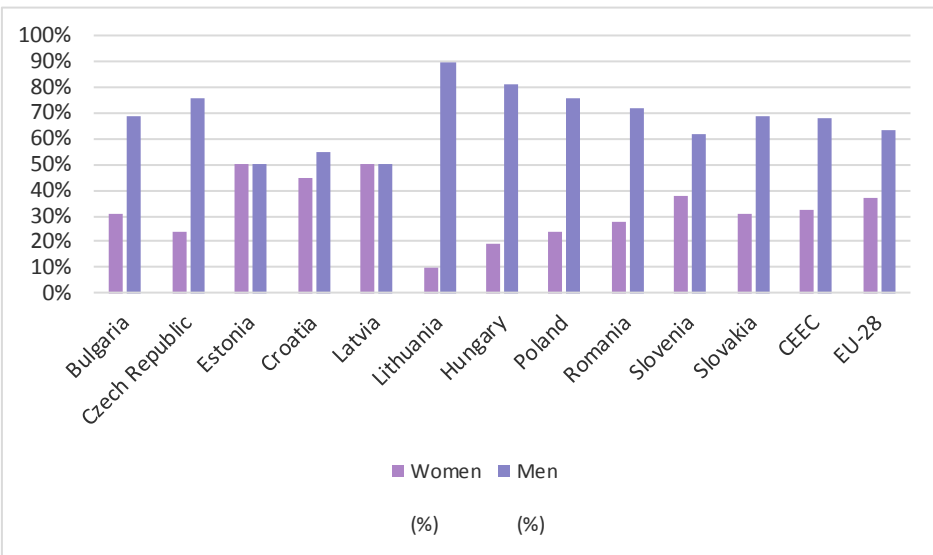


Fig. 4 Feminization of delegations to the EP and lower houses of NP (2007)

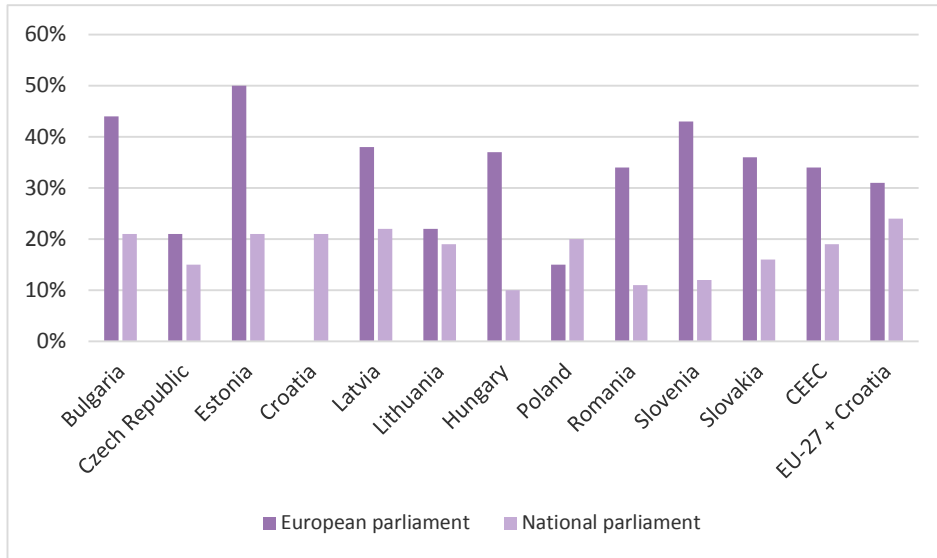


Fig. 5 Feminization of delegations to the EP and lower houses of NP (2009-2014)

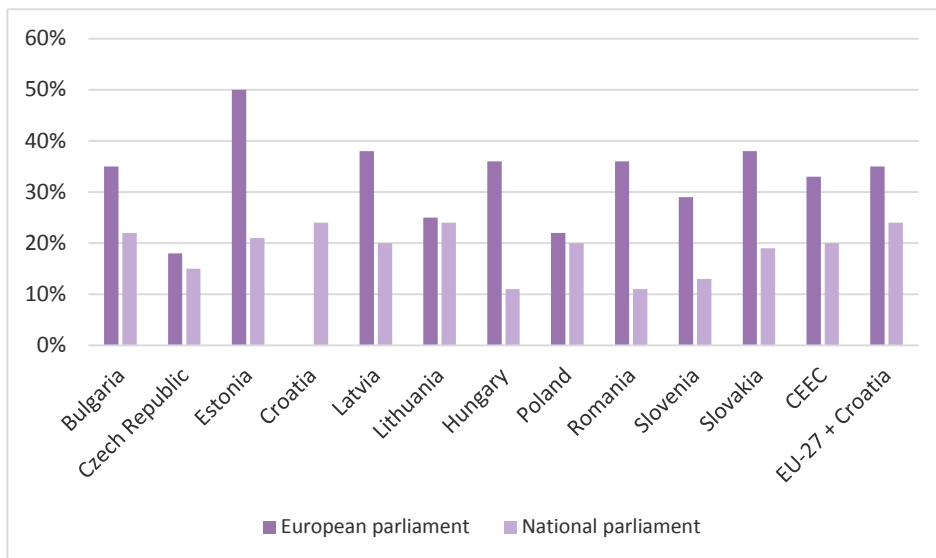
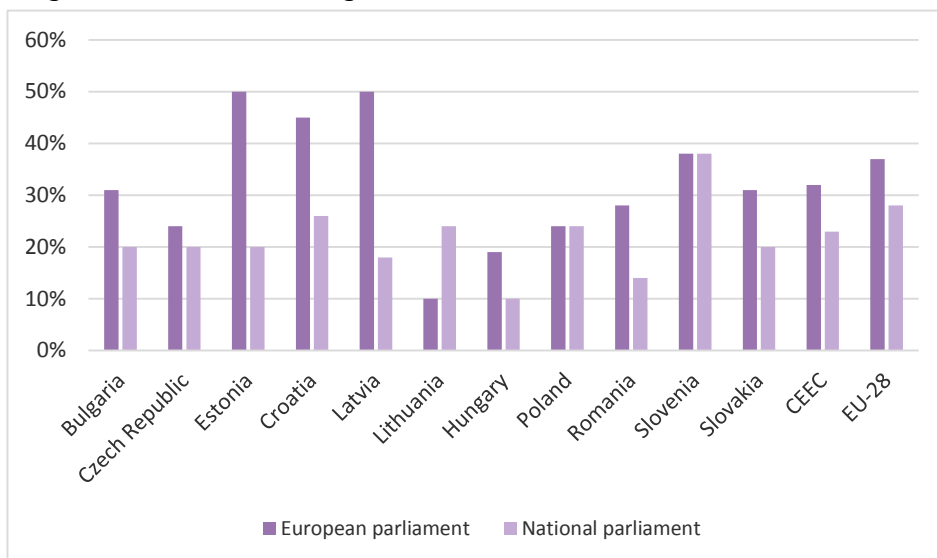


Fig. 6 Feminization of delegations to the EP and lower houses of NP (2014)



Sources: www.europarl.europa.eu, national electoral commissions.

Yet, the increased diversity of female presence after EU enlargement also convokes long-term patterns of political recruitment and other cultural/demographical aspects peculiar to post-socialist countries.

The old comrade, the preacher woman, the Roma and the anti-Semitic human rights advocate: contentious gender rights at the FEMM committee

These deserve some closer attention, and can be illustrated through the composition(s) of the FEMM committee. The Women's right and gender equality committee, established in 1979, does not provide a statistically significant picture of the whole institution. But due to its contribution to the making of EU gender equality policies, it provides a strategic entry to answer this question: did newcomers made a difference, with respect to the orientation of these policies?

In terms of political orientation, the first post-enlargement version of the FEMM committee reflected the situation of the EP. While the Right/Left ratio among commission members elected in the old member states (22/17) was similar to the ratio in the whole institution, 6 of 8 women elected in the new member states belong to a right-wing group. A similar proportion can be noticed in 2015, with 6 out of 8 female CEECs' MEPs belonging to a conservative or ultra-conservative party, while the Right/Left ratio is of 16/15 for the whole committee. More strikingly, the FEMM committee embodies some of the most salient differences introduced by the presence of CEE member states, such as their alignment on more traditional conceptions of gender roles and equality issues and the stronger contention put on minority rights issues.

The controversial nomination of Slovak Christian democrat Anna Zaborska at the head of the first post-enlargement FEMM committee inaugurated this trend. Well-known for opposing abortion in her country, she aroused suspicion about her ability to chair an institution traditionally committed in favour of new equality measures. While she kept holding firmly her anti-abortion positions on the domestic scene, where her home party was then opposing the adoption of the anti-discrimination act required to comply with EU directives (See: Forest, 2006a), she adopted a rather conciliatory leadership in the committee, leaving the most traditional conceptions of gender roles to Polish LPR deputy Urszula Krupa. Their respective speeches on the issue of abortion, during the sixth term of the EP, illustrated these different discursive strategies, to be related with their respective positions in the FEMM committee, but also on the domestic scene (Forest, 2008)³. Since, these different degrees of conservatism in the framing of gender issues – at least in discursive terms, have been maintained among CEECs female MEPs at the FEMM committee. In 2015, one of the most conservative member of the committee is thus a member of Polish PiS, Jadwiga Wiśniewska who opposes abortion as the “worse of all evils” and has been critical to the ratification of the Istanbul convention on violence against women for pointing out the role of family and religion.

³ Mrs Zaborska, a nation-wide respected oncologist, classically used her professional prestige to boost her political career inside KDH. Mrs Krupa, while being herself a doctor, has long been involved in the most traditionalist circles in Poland, as a redactor of populist, anti-Semitic Radio Maryja.

As a former regional functionary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, among the 5 only MEPs elected on the list of a still genuinely communist Party, Věra Flasarová experienced the suspicion of her colleagues: „*we had to prove that we were normal people and that it was possible to work with us*“, she said⁴. This situation prompted her to adopt a strategy of accountability towards her voters and a strategy of good will in terms of law making in the area of gender equality. This graduate of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow (1987) thus published several documents on the issue, with the financial support of the European United Left (EUL) group, also issuing a report on the discrimination against women in the access to university. On the domestic scene, she has been so far the only woman holding a public mandate to publicly address the issue of feminism, a label she did not endorse for being depreciated in CEE.

As a representative of the hungarian liberal party FIDESZ, Livia Jaroka was the first Roma deputy ever elected at the European parliament, serving under the sixth and seventh terms. Graduated in Anthropology from a British University, her political contribution was made even more salient during the year of equal opportunities celebrated by the EU in 2007, when she issued a report on the discrimination against Roma women. During her mandates, she has been the main voice of the Roma community on the parliamentary ground, publicly contesting the lack of action of European institutions. In 2009, she was appointed vice-chair of the FEMM committee.

While a Roma MEP serving as vice-chair, the FEMM committee was joined in 2012 by Hungarian, anti-roma Jobbik's MEP Krizstina Morvai. Graduated from King's College in London, a Fullbright-fellow at University of Madison in the US in the 1990s, Krizstina Morvai has a long record as a Lawyer specialized in human rights. Over the 1990s, she worked for the European Commission of Human Rights, dealing with issues such as abortion, prostitution and violence against women. From 2003 to 2006, served as a member of the CEDAW Committee of the UN, where she once compared abortion to torture. And yet, as a Lawyer, Krizstina Morvai was among the first advocates of provisions to tackle gender-based violence – such as protection orders and shelters for victims. Her Anti-Semitic stances have yet played an ever greater role in her political alignment, making her one of the outspoken voices of Jobbik – although not a member of the party. Embodying her contradictions, her speeches at the EP largely deal with the issue of gender-based violence, joining her voice to the critics against a prevention campaign launched by the government in 2014, which make victims of rapes the main responsible.

Intersecting gender with other inequalities?

It does not fall into the scope of this paper to deal with the growing literature on intersectionality (for a theoretical assessment, see Hancock, 2007). It is enough to mention that although the pursuit of equality in a sense broadened to other inequality axes than gender is supposed to become a policy priority for the EU and its member states, „very little attention is paid to both structural and political intersectionality in policy-making“ (Verloo, 2006, 214)⁵This does not only apply to the the EU level, but also to member states, for which first attempts to map out the institutionalization of intersectionality have found little evidence of a true paradigm shift from single or

⁶ Interview with Věra Flasarová, 6th term.

⁵ I owe this quotation to Maria Bustelo (2008)

additive approaches to inequalities, to policies including multiple inequalities and their intersections (Krizsan, Squires, Skejje, 2012). Yet, the proportion of legislative acts and speeches making references to other inequality axes, such as poverty, ethnicity, disabilities, health or age, seems to be much higher among the representative of new member states, since almost every submitted report complies with this objective of EU policy making, while about 10% of speeches putting intersectionality into words – 5% among the other FEMM members. Poverty is the most quoted related issue to gender inequality, with age and health. Since 2007, ethnicity has been also increasingly quoted. Should we therefore consider that the representatives elected in the new member states are more likely „to make intersectionality happens“, beyond official discourses? At least two elements should prevent any such conclusion: first, if compared to their „western“ colleagues of the FEMM committee, female members from the CEECS dedicate 80% of their interventions in plenary sessions to other issues than gender equality, in line with their joint membership(s) in other standing committees. Similarly, gender is at stake in less than 10% of submitted recommendation proposals. Second, the way inequality grounds are intersected by most of female MEPs from CEEC seating at the FEMM committee since 2004, does not account for a structural understanding of how multiple discriminations interact. Instead, such discourses and positions, reflect either a more traditional framing of gender equality, focusing on vulnerable groups, in terms of age, origin or disabilities, or a political agenda irrigated by an ethno-nationalist vision, where ethnicity, origin and sexual orientation are the primary concerns.

Framing Gender Equality in the EU-28: bringing research forward

In conclusion, we shall consider the overall impact of the Eastern Enlargement on the making of Equality, through the presence of women MEPs elected in the new member States. Among other unfulfilled predictions as regarding the (negative) impact of Eastern Enlargement, a number of actors expected the EU-28 to be much less favourable to gender Equality than the EU-15. While the accession of Sweden, Finland and Austria has constituted an impetus for reaching Equality, the accession of 10 former socialist countries, with their public opinions sceptical about feminism and lower rates of female representation, should be accompanied by a backlash.

Yet, such predictions deeply underestimated the changes introduced by the Europeanization of Equality policies in the candidate countries (both in terms of public action and collective action). Additionally, it paid no attention to the specificities of political recruitment in relation with second-order elections, which proved to be favourable to female candidates. As a result, NMS's delegations to the European Parliament have contributed to maintain the relatively high feminization rate of the institution. However, as in the case of old member States, this shall not predict any contagious effect in national constituencies. It remains true, however, that Eastern Enlargement has increased the range of „gender regimes“ in the European Union. For more than a decade now, the EU is counting with members, as Poland, Hungary, Slovakia or Croatia where gender rights are more often at stake. In these conditions, what is the actual contribution of women MEPs elected in the new member States? This assessment shall consider their differentiated patterns of recruitment and legislative activity, as well as their contribution to the framing of the issues addressed under the chapter of Gender equality.

As regarding the two first sets of elements, this paper attempts to provide a balanced description: albeit more right-wing oriented and less committed toward social issues than their female colleagues in the EU-15, these women are much more endowed in political and educational resources. For this reason, they are less likely to suffer from the same mechanisms of sexual discrimination in their access to power (or valuable) positions within the EP. At the same time, this make them slightly less eager to get actively involved in the legislative activity of the Parliament, which is confirmed by lower report-submitting records.

Concerning their actual contribution to the making of equality policies, it should be interpreted in terms of framing. For the purposes of such an assessment, we could draw on a broad definition of frames, as “an organizing principle that transforms fragmentary or incidental information into a structured and meaningful problem, in which a solution is implicitly or explicitly included” (Verloo 2006b, 19). A definition that refers to the various dimensions in which a given policy problem can be represented and does not account only for the policy outcome, but also for the form in which the problem is diagnosed and debated. On the one hand, we can take into account the interventions of these women in plenary sessions on issues such as reproductive rights, work-life balance, sexual orientation discrimination or equal pay. On the other hand, this enables interpreting the different meanings given to equality within the FEMM committee, and the role played by different patterns of recruitment and legislative behaviour.

It is now widely acknowledged that the two last terms of both the European Parliament and the Commission, have proven to be less committed toward Gender equality. No major legislative innovation was brought forward, in an unfavourable context heavily marked by the financial and economic crisis. Yet, can it be inferred that this weaker commitment is to be related to the „great“ enlargement? A more comprehensive frame analysis – as the one conducted by the QUING project from 2008 to 2011, would certainly provide a more differentiated answer. Regarding reproductive issues, it would suggest that a *Sexual Health* frame is being articulated, to the expense of a *Protect Equality and Sexual freedom* one, in an area where the EU did not extend its competences and is prevented from doing so. Similarly, frames such as *Good governance* and *Quality of legislation* are more often referred to than the one labelled *Transform the sexual division of Labour*, for supporting pro-equality measures (Lombardo et al., 2008). Even measures aiming at reconciling work and private-life, as a directive extending maternity leave up to 20 weeks, in discussion since 2009, do not challenge the sexual division of roles in the family. And yet, other variables than the increasing diversity of women representatives after Eastern Enlargement, account for this outcome. The right-wing polarization of European politics and the continuous rise of nationalist movements bringing forward ultra-conservative views on gender and framing gender rights as a threat to an ethnic-based vision of nation has thus been of major relevance. But the greater emphasis placed by European institutions on anti-discrimination, to the expense of gender equality policies, also certainly contributed to increase the politicization of gender in EU politics, in particular among CEEC countries where gender issues are framed through other political issues such as the presence of large minorities, deep demographical crises, post-war tensions and enduring questions about the „survival of the nation“.

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