

Conservative Women's Representation in the European Parliament (2014-2019)

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Author's declaration:

I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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Contents

Abstract	7
Abbreviations	8
List of Tables	10
1. Chapter One. Introduction	11
1.1 Introduction	11
1.2 Research Questions and Literature Review	14
1.3 Objectives and Scope of Study.....	19
1.4 Substantive Representation of Women in Conservative Women	23
1.4.1 Factors That Affect the Enactment of Women’s Substantive Representation.....	24
2. Chapter Two. Methodology	28
2.1 Introduction	28
2.2 Case Selection: Czech Republic, Greece, Poland and Sweden.....	31
2.3 Data Collection and Selection	35
2.4 Contextualization of Substantive Representation of Women	37
2.4.1 Defining Women’s Issues.....	40
2.5 Data Analysis	48
3. Chapter Three. Setting the Context: Conservative Members from the Center-Right Political Group in the European Parliament	53

3.1	Women in the European People’s Party Group	53
3.2	Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People’s Party of Czech Republic: MEP Michaela Šojdrová	53
3.3	Civic Platform of Poland: MEP Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz	54
3.4	New Democracy of Greece: MEP Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi	57
3.5	The Swedish Moderate Coalition Party: MEP Anna Maria Corazza Buildt.....	58
4.	Chapter Four. Findings	62
4.1	Introduction	62
4.2	Data Analysis and Findings.....	64
4.3	Prioritization of Women’s Issues	65
4.4	Economic, Social and Cultural Issues	68
4.5	Violence Against Women and Girls.....	70
4.6	Civil and Political Issues	73
4.7	Practical Issues of women	74
5.	Chapter Five. Conclusive Discussion	76
	References.....	80
	Appendix.....	94

Abstract

The European Parliament is an important institution in improving gender equality in the European Union. Generally, both descriptive and substantive women's representation is much stronger in left-wing political parties compared to their right-wing counterparts. Some right-wing parties in the European Parliament have made more progress than others. This research aimed to develop an understanding of the conservative women's representation in the European Parliament. By comparing the women's issues championed by the conservative members of the European Parliament (MEP), the research aimed to reveal policy prioritization and variation of conservatism among the MEPs during the eight-legislative term of the European Parliament. The research has identified variety of issues presented by the MEPs and found some feminist issues presented as well. This research makes an important contribution to the literature on conservative women's representation in the European Parliament.

Keywords: gender, conservative politics, substantive women's representation, European Parliament, European Union, right-wing politics, MEPs, political parties, party ideology

Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EMPL	The Committee on Employment and Social Matters of the European Parliament
EP	The European Parliament
EPP Group	The European People's Party Group
EU	The European Union
EUW	The European Union of Women
EWL	The European Women's Lobby
FEMM	The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
IMCO	Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection of the European Parliament
KDU-ČSL	Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party of Czech Republic
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MP	Member of the Parliament
ND	New Democracy of Greece

PFA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
PiS	Law and Justice Party of Poland
PO	Civic Platform (Polish Platforma Obywatelska) Party of Poland
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
RQ	Research Question
SRW	Substantive Representation of Women
TERR	Special Committee on Terrorism of the European Parliament
TRAN	Committee on Transport and Tourism of the European Parliament

List of Tables

TABLE 1: GENDER EQUALITY INDEX SCORES FOR SWEDEN, CZECH REPUBLIC, GREECE AND POLAND.....	32
TABLE 2: OVERVIEW OF INDUCTIVE CODING PROCESS.....	43
TABLE 3: THE CONSERVATIVE MEPS. SOURCE: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WEBSITE	60
TABLE 4: SPEECHES MADE BY THE MEPS CONCERNING WOMEN’S STRATEGIC AND PRACTICAL ISSUES.....	66
TABLE 5: STRATEGIC ISSUES RAISED BY THE CONSERVATIVE MEPS.....	67

1. Chapter One. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

“There never will be complete equality until women themselves help to make laws and elect lawmakers.” Susan B. Anthony – American women’s rights activist

Two centuries ago, women started campaigning for their right to vote and take a part in their government and its policy making. Since then, women’s political participation has expanded exponentially and policies towards protecting women’s rights is receiving increased attention and number of significant international agreements and treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA) were adopted. More recently in 2014 the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention became the first legally binding instrument that criminalizes violence against women creating a legal framework and approach to prevent and combat violence against women, protecting victims and prosecuting the offenders entered into force (UNESCO, n.d.). The following year, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change came to effect. Furthermore, the Paris Agreement is the first agreement that “commits Parties to promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, as well as on gender equality, and the empowerment of women” in its preamble and mandating gender-responsive adaptation actions and capacity-building activities (UNESCO, n.d.). More importantly, the political participation of women is considered vital in the feminization of policies. Consequently, the PFA acknowledged that political representation of women is important for “redefining political priorities, placing new items on the political agenda that reflect and address women’s gender-specific concerns, values and experiences and providing new perspectives on mainstream political

issues” (Beijing Declaration, 1995). Although, the rise in the numbers of women in formal political institutions has been steadily rising, it has not been smooth, and women still continue to be under-represented. As of 1st of May 2020, the global average percentage of women in parliament in both upper and lower chambers was 25% whereas in Europe the average was 4.9% higher than the global average with 29.9% (IPU, 2020). The proportion of women members of the European Parliament (MEPs) grew slightly from 36.1% during the 8th legislature to 40.4% for the current 9th legislature- which is the highest it has ever been (European Parliament, 2019). In the European Union, 51.1% of the total population is women, but gender equality has not yet been achieved by the very political institution that advocates and stands for gender equality. Nevertheless, adopting gender quotas for the selection of parliamentary candidates became a popular measure to increase the number of women in the parliament for political parties across the political ideology spectrum due to electoral competitiveness. Why is it important to have women in the parliament and what is the importance of studying women’s representation in the parliament? According to Phillips (2004, p. 228) there are four main broad arguments for increasing the number of woman candidates – 1) women candidates inspire other women and serve as a role model, 2) equal representation of women serves as a just legislation, 3) women candidates are more likely represent women’s issues and interests, 4) equal representation of women “revitalize democracy by bridging the gap between representation and participation”. Supporting Phillips’ studies, scholars have suggested that women politicians pay greater attention to women’s interests and issues compared to their male colleagues and that higher number of women politicians elected does have an effect on women’s issues (Childs & Whitley, 2004; Kittilson, 2008; Lovenduski & Norris, 2003; Lovenduski, 2005; Wängnerud & Sundell, 2011). On the other hand, some research found that not all women will represent women and women’s interests due to their diverse background, life experiences and

interests hence rejecting the correlation between the presence of female representatives and representing women's interest (Celis, 2006; Mansbridge, 1999; Phillips, 1998/2003; Wängnerud 2000). Many of these studies on women's representation mainly focuses on the effect of the numerical presence of women in the parliament and the policy responsiveness of those women members of the parliament (MPs) on women's lives and issues. These studies have also found that feminist left-wing women MPs were the mainly representing women's interests and issues in parliament due to their ideological tendencies to embrace equality and inclination to select more women candidates, hence allowing the scholars to explore the importance of their presence within the parliament and the policy output (Childs, 2004; Kittilson, 2006; Wängnerud, 2000). However, looking at women's representation and women's needs through a left-wing women MPs' lens undermine the other representative actors such as men and create a bias that substantive representation of women is only present among left-wing women MPs. Therefore, scholars also suggested that "non-traditional" actors such as men (Celis, 2006) as well as conservative parties (Celis & Erzeel, 2013; Childs & Webb, 2012; Evans, 2011, Lovenduski, 2005) can represent women. Some of the studies are concentrated on conservative parties in the British parliament (Childs & Webb, 2012; Norris, 1996;), in American politics (Schreiber, 2008), and in Germany (Wiliarty, 2010) whereas recently there has been a study on conservative women MPs in Germany and Japan (Gauder & Wiliarty, 2019). However, there is a lack of literature for interpreting and understanding the contribution of conservative MEPs to substantive representation of women in the European Parliament, the very institution that mandates gender equality. The European People's Party Group (EPP Group) is the largest mainstream center-right political group in the European Parliament that plays a critical role in policy making, and thus it is important to learn how it represents women. Reingold and Swers (2011) claimed that with the increased political

party polarization and rising number of active conservative women, the relationship between the parties, and the conservative women's views on women's issues are still poorly understood. Therefore, the important contribution of this research is that it looks at the understanding of substantive representation, which is traditionally looked through feminist perspective, from a different perspective, introduces diversity to the representatives and offers new insights into substantive representation of women.

Therefore, this research investigates the substantive claims of women by the conservative MEPs and the different institutional and contextual background which the women MEPs shape their claims for women and women's issues on the floor of European Parliament (EP), further enriching the literature on conservative claims on women¹.

1.2 Research Questions and Literature Review

Political representation is complicated and complex to study. This research is concentrated on the substantive representation of women in the European Parliament based on Pitkin's (1967) seminal work *The Concept of Representation* where she has identified four types of representation –descriptive, formalistic, symbolic, and substantive. Descriptive representation focuses on the

¹ The researcher acknowledges that the term “conservative representatives” have a broad range of actors across the right-wing political ideology spectrum. However, for this research “conservative representatives” exclusively refers to members of the European Parliament who belong to European People's Party - the center-right wing political group consisting of conservative parties and Christian Democrats excluding populist, radical right-wing parties. The European People's Party has been specifically selected due to its ability to influence legislations as the biggest political group in the European Parliament and in the European Council hence becoming an important actor to be studied and the affiliated parties within the party group introduces different conservative ideologies such as the Christian Democrats, liberal-conservatives and the moderates.

politics of presence - whether the representatives resonate with the experience, identities, perspectives and interests of those they are representing. Formalistic representation is shaped by the institutional norms such as rules, regulations and structure to act for the representative. Symbolic representation refers not to the action and the identity of the representatives but rather than what they 'stand for' or what they symbolize in the representation. Perhaps the most important representation for women's representation is the substantive representation. Pitkin describes it as "acting in the interests of the represented in a manner responsive to them" (1967, p. 209). The research will take its point of departure from Pitkin's description of substantive representation as an 'act for' women. In regards to women's political representation, there are many questions asked for empirical investigation when studying women's representation such as 'who represents women?', 'where does representation occur?', 'how does it occur', and 'why does it occur?' In finding out who represents women, researchers mostly focused on female members of the national parliaments (MPs) while seeking answers for two main questions "Do women in politics make a difference?" and more specifically "Do women speak for women and represent their interests?". Numerous studies suggest that women parliament members (MPs) connect to women and women's issues and feel responsible to speak for them, raises women's issues on government agenda more than their male peers (Reingold, 1992; Thomas and Welch, 1991, Tremblay, 1998; Welch, 1991). In general sense these studies suggest women may represent women, but they also show that there is a great deal of variation among women, both regarding their activities, attitudes and their preferences. Some studies concluded that just because they are women, women MPS cannot always represent women as they are not homogenous entity and have different experiences, issues and expectations (Celis, 2006; Mansbridge, 1999; Wagnerud, 2000). Other studies concentrated more on the left-wing parties and found out that generally they tend to adopt gender

quotas hence resulting in higher number of women representatives in the parliament (Kittilson, 2006; Lovenduski, 2005).

Nevertheless, there can be number of factors that affect women's representation such as the external political culture, party ideology, party affiliation, party cohesion, parties in opposition or in government, and committee membership. Several empirical studies investigated the impact of political parties in women's representation and have shown that party identity is likely to affect the MEPs' attitudes and behavior and paid more focus and attention on the left-wing parties due to the higher number of women representatives in the parliament (Davidson-Schmich, 2010; Erzeel, 2015; Kittilson, 1999, 2006; Krook, 2010; Lovenduski & Norris, 1993; Murray et al., 2011). Kittilson (1999) analyzed the impact of political parties in women's representation by looking into party ideology and party quotas. Party ideology, especially the ideology of left-wing parties, was shown to have positive impact on the MPs to act for women (Erzeel & Celis, 2016). Further supporting this point, Kantola and Agustín (2016) looked into women's representation in the political party groups in the European Parliament and concluded that women are better represented in the left green party groups compared to the conservative right-wing party groups. Moreover, the importance of parties as gatekeepers to the political position was pointed by several studies. (Lovenduski & Norris, 1993; Norris, 1996; Luhiste, 2015). Nevertheless, in recent studies, scholars shifted their focus on left-wing parties and became more interested in understanding how right-wing parties represent women (Celis & Childs, 2011, 2018; Celis & Erzeel, 2013; Childs & Webb, 2012; Evans, 2011; Schreiber 2008; Swift, 2018; Wiliarty, 2010). Although different from conservative men and left-wing women, conservative women have their own political interests and that does not mean that they do not represent women's interests. Previous research suggested that conservative women have a dilemma to either represent their part or their gender when it comes

to women's interests and issues although on other matters their policy attitudes do not differ much from their male colleagues (Lovenduski and Norris, 2003; Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). However, there are also studies show that conservative women tend to adopt more liberal and progressive policies directed towards women than their male colleagues hence rendering the notion that substantive representation only occurs in feminist left-wing representatives represent women false (Childs & Webb, 2011; Erzeel & Celis, 2016; Lovenduski & Norris, 2003; Schreiber, 2008; Swers, 2002; Wängnerud, 2000). Childs and Webb (2013)'s study also showed that the number of women representatives are increasing in conservative parties and it turn they are becoming more descriptively representative raising the possibility of non-feminist representation and actors for women. In order to stay electorally competitive, conservative parties may need to voice some claims for women that were traditionally voiced by the liberals. Celis and Childs argue that "rather than conservatives prescribing what women should do, they offer choice confident that any commitments to formal equality of opportunity will be considered less preferable than the choice of the traditional sexual division of labor and traditional gender roles." (2011, p. 221). However, according to Reingold and Swers (2011), although there's a rising activism of conservative women, their views on women's issues and the relationship between them and their parties remain poorly understood. Therefore, to further expand the work of Celis et al, and contribute to the understanding of how the conservative MEPs shape women's issues, this research explored the substantive representation of women occurs among the conservative MEPs from the center-right wing in the European Parliament. However, in the EPP Group there are ideological differences within the political group among the traditional conservatives, moderate conservatives and the Christian democrats. In regard to sites of representation, Childs and Lovenduski (2013, p.501) claim that "representation occurs in institutions" hence studies focused on the role of parliamentary

representation and on deliberation within parties, committees, and among legislators to study how women's issues emerge during the political process (Celis et al. 2008; Childs & Webb, 2012). Following the framework, this research aims to look at substantive women's representation at a supranational level – in the European Parliament (EP). Further elaborating on Childs and Lovenduski's argument, Whip (1991) also suggested that women MPs as a group have more potential to represent women. Then how do women MPs in a committee to work for women's rights and gender equality represent women especially if they are not from left-wing liberal parties? This is the main question this research thrives to answer at a transnational level– women's representation by the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality's (FEMM) members from the center-right wing party group known as the European People's Party Group (EPP Group). When studying the representation of women by the parliament members, two main issues are investigated: attitudes and parliamentary activities. In terms of attitudes the studies investigate the recognition of the presence of women's interests and needs; sense of responsibility towards women; prioritizing women (Thomas and Welch, 2001) and the parliamentary activities including not only participating in debates in favor of women (Trimble, 1998) but also participating in the legislative activities such as initiating, and voting on legislations related to women's issues (Swers, 2002) .

Therefore, in order to explore the behavioral pattern of the MEPs who belong to the center-right wing and their contestation as well as consensus regarding women's issues the research suggests the following expectations in line with the research's interpretivist approach:

- E1: The conservative MEPs are more in agreement with women's traditional and practical issues such as family, and childcare than strategic women's policy issues such as crimes related to women and women's reproductive rights

- E2: The conservative MEPs from countries with higher gender equality index tends to be more supportive of the liberal stance on women's issues

The research will implore into the following research questions basing on the suggested expectations:

RQ1: Which women's issues define the policy priorities of conservative members of the European Parliament when addressing matters related to gender equality?

- On which women's issues do these conservative members agree more and on which issues do they disagree?
- How does national party ideology affect the conservative MEPs' stance on women's issues?

1.3 Objectives and Scope of Study

This research's main purpose is to contribute to the need for better look into and understanding of how conservative representation of women is constructed in the European Parliament (EP). As Celis and Childs (2011) pointed out that although feminism is commonly associated with the left-wing politics, considering only leftist women representatives and representation renders other actors' activities relatively invisible. In Western democracies, for the sake of electoral competitiveness, some aspects of liberal feminism such as abortion rights and women's labor participation are being accepted by some conservative parties which traditional was only limited to being accepted by the liberal democrats (Childs & Webb, 2012). Political actors in the European Parliament such as the parliament members and political groups are central in constructing meanings given to "gender equality" and "women's issues" (Kantola & Agustín, 2016, p. 642). Therefore, this study aims to look at woman representation from the other side of the political spectrum and explore how women's issues are represented and constructed by the conservative

center-right win women MEPs in the EP. Moreover to look at the substantive representation taking place among the conservative MEPs, this study specifically analyzed the speeches made by the MEPs who are the members of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), a committee of the EP that is concerned with protecting and promoting women's rights and gender equality. Committees are central to the legislative process and the membership on a parliamentary equality committee strongly suggests that the MEPs will act for women. Although the FEMM committee does not hold a legislative power, it is a vital key actor in promoting women's interests and gender equality policies. As FEMM members, it would be their duty to represent women and present women's issues to the parliamentary debates, but also presents the political struggles over how to construct women's interests and issues at the EP level which in turn provides ample amount of data to analyze the contestation among the MEPs. Therefore by selecting members of the FEMM committee, the research assumes that substantive representation of women does take place hence omitting the need to investigate whether substantive representations occurs but rather aims to investigate how it occurs and what issues are more prioritized and advocated by the conservative MEPs.

Furthermore, the study is specifically concentrated on the MEPs who belonged to the European People's Party Group (EPP Group) – the center-right wing political group in the EP. During the 8th parliamentary term, EPP Group had the highest number of seats in the European Parliament with 217 seats out of 751 seats. As one of the main center-right wing group in the parliament, the EPP Group not only has high influence and a big voice in decision-making process of the European Parliament, but is also the main representative of the conservative ideology not only by sheer numbers, but also by including different conservative political parties from the liberal-conservatives to Christian Democrats. However, according to the European Parliament (2019b),

the EPP Group had one of the lowest levels of woman representation among MEPs during the 8th legislature with only 28.9% of women MEPs although it maintains gender balance in its bureau. Nevertheless, this does not mean women's representation is not present in the political group and to stay electorally competitive, the EPP Group has recognized the issues of violence against women including female genital mutilation and sexual harassment, supports women's participation in entrepreneurship and promotion of gender equality in its EPP Action Programme 2014-2019 and resolutions of EPP Women (EPP Women, n.d.). Hence, with over 70 conservative and liberal-conservative national parties from 40 countries, the political group should not be overlooked in how they represent women and address women's issues.

Given the qualitative approach adopted in this research and the nature of the research question, the researcher believes the most appropriate strategy for this study is the qualitative content analysis approach to employ a systematic way to collect and analyze data and understand the conservative substantive representation in greater depth. With the suggested expectations for this research, the qualitative content analysis will adopt inductive approach by exploring how the substantive representation of women occurs among the conservative MEPs instead of investigating whether conservative MEPs act for women. Hence in order to see whether conservative MEPs from a country with high gender equality index would present different women's issues to the parliamentary debates opposed to the MEP from a country with low gender equality index, the researcher selected four MEPs from four different countries as case studies – Sweden for having the highest gender equality index in the European Union, Greece for having the lowest gender equality index in the European Union and Czech Republic and Poland as median countries with different takes on gender equality and women's rights mainly due to their political past. Additionally, both Czech Republic and Poland make interesting cases as in addition, they are both

post-communist countries where democracy is relatively young with much different political culture compared to Sweden and Greece. According to Erzeel and Celis (2009), around 13-20 percent of critical actors acting for women were present among the Christian Democrats in a three-country case study of Hungary, Germany and Belgium concluding that there exists a large group of representatives from the center-right wing parties who claim to act for women.

Most studies on women's representation and political parties are done at a national level or compared with different countries. However, study on women's representation in the European Parliament and European party politics is limited. There are studies done on exploring women's representation in Poland (Gwiazda, 2019), in Czech and Poland (Kunovich, 2003), women's political representation in Sweden (Sainsbury, 2004), women's representation in the radical right-wing parties (Erzeel & Rashkova, 2017; Krizsán & Siim, 2018), and study women in the radical right-wing parties in Bulgaria (Rashkova & Zankina, 2017). Hence, the contribution of this research is to study conservative women's representation at a transnational context, namely, in the European Parliament to investigate how substantive women's representation is constructed by the conservative MEPs from the mainstream center-right wing.

This study further contributes to the scholarship on conservative women's substantive representation and further enriching Celis and Childs (2011) study on conservative women's representation by distinguishing between conservative strands and comparing types of conservative parties within the center-right wing European People's Party Group. Research on conservative substantive representation is very scarce and with the European political parties including the conservative parties are becoming more feminized and including women's issues and women's representation to their political propaganda for electoral competitiveness, conservative claims and conservative women's representation should be researched. Moreover,

studies do not shed a light on the variation of among conservative, center-right wing women politicians. Hence, this study also becomes a basis for further research on the conservative women's representation in not only European Parliament but also among the members states of the European Union. However, the size of the research's sample limits the generalizability of the data. Nevertheless, this research generates knowledge that can contribute the context and understandings of MEPs from a specific national context in governance at the transnational level.

1.4 Substantive Representation of Women in Conservative Women

Political representation of the citizens is the main characteristic of a democratic governance. Democracy dictates that each and every citizen of a country is entitled to have a say in the government through voting their political representatives. Such representatives then “speak for,” “act for” and can even “stand for” those individuals who voted for them. However, defining exactly how representation takes place and who the political representatives “speak for”, “act for” and even “stand for” is complex and often debated. Scholars have long studied representation in formal political institutions, focusing on its formal, symbolic, descriptive and substantive aspects. The concept of political representation in this research is based on the concept developed by Hanna Pitkin (1967) where she offered a comprehensive discussion on different views of representation: formalistic representation, symbolic representation, descriptive representation and substantive representation. Formalistic representation can be defined as the institutional arrangements that introduce and initiate representation in two dimensions: authorization and accountability. The main research question invoked for formalistic representation is: “What is the position of a representative in the institution?” Symbolic representation is defined by the ways that a representative mandates issues on behalf of the represented — that is, the meaning given to the represented by a representative. The main research question for symbolic representation is: “What

kind of action is showed by the representative in those being represented?” Furthermore, descriptive representation is defined at the extent to which a representative resembles those being represented. The main research question for descriptive representation is: “How does the representative resonate with the represented in terms of similar looks and likes, common interest or shared experiences?”. Finally, the substantive representation is defined as the activity of representatives acting for the represented as an agent or a substitute. The main research question for substantive representation is: “Does the representative mandate policy preferences that represent the interests of the represented?” The most common approach to define substantive representation is to look at policy responsiveness – the extent to which legislators are responsive to the policy interests and demands of their constituents. In other words, it is considered that when representative votes, promotes, and mandates for policies that reflect the interests his or her constituents, then the representative is substantively representing them. Policy that meets women’s needs, interests and demands is considered as the key element of substantive representation of women and the importance of women’s parliamentary representation is discussed by many scholars (Lovenduski 2005; Mansbridge, 1999; Pitkin, 1967; Tremblay, 1998). However, the characterization of substantive representation of women within the center-right wing political party family is not only limited to the inclusion of women’s issues in the parliamentary debates, but also looks into other factors such as national party ideology and national political environment.

1.4.1 Factors That Affect the Enactment of Women’s Substantive Representation

In the previous sections, existing literature suggest that substantive representation of women is affected by many different factors including political institution, political environment and party ideology. By studying the center-right wing MEPs who are member of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) of the European Parliament (EP), the research

already assumes that substantive representation of women occurs hence the aim of this research is not to answer why does substantive representation of women occur among the conservative members of the European Parliament (MEP), but how does it occur and what influences their representation. Therefore, this section discusses the possible influences of national party ideology, and their country gender equality index as their national political environment on the MEPs' variation, contestation and consensus in representing women issues. By explaining these factors in turn add value to the understanding of the conservative claims on substantive representation of women. In addition to the broad ideological differentiation of the political party groups in the EP, Kantola and Agustín (2016) has also analyzed their orientation toward gender equality. The study concluded that while left-wing parties debate on gender equality by framing in societal and structural forms, the right-wing parties has shown to have an increased liberal, market-oriented and numerical tendencies on gender equality (Kantola & Agustín 2016, p. 644).

Moreover, as the conservative representation increases, the division between the left and the right has also been increasing starkly on the issues of sexual health, right and reproduction in the European Parliament (Agustín, 2012; Kantola & Agustín, 2019). As a result, gender equality initiatives produced by the left is often framed as too much state intervention into the private life and increased bureaucracy by the right and becomes a tool to oppose the European Union's intervention (Kantola & Agustín, 2015, p. 646).

The FEMM Committee plays a central role in promoting gender equality in the EU defining women's issues and protecting women's rights. Hence from an institutional perspective, being a FEMM Committee member facilitates the MEPs active political participation on behalf of women. However, women's studies focusing on the committee as a collective representation of women is very few. Ahrens (2016) studied the activities of the FEMM Committee whereas Agustín's (2012)

research looked at how the committee defines women's interest. Committee membership is a highly competitive and sometimes even politicized in the European Parliament (McElroy & Benoit, 2011). As the FEMM Committee members are allowed to have a membership in another committee, it allows the members to introduce and promote policies related to women in junction with policies that relate to the other committee. Therefore, to investigate the conservative MEPs who make substantive claims for women, not only the political group should be a factor to consider but the political environment such as the nation's gender equality index, and national political party ideology are undeniably important factors that impacts the MEPs' substantive representation and are tied together. One of the characteristics of national political environment is the gender equality index. Behind the numbers of gender equality index, there are many factors and context shaping it such as political history, democratic background, and gender norms, thus it varies among the European Union (EU) Member States. Consequently, national party agendas and leniency towards the left or right dimension of the political ideology spectrum are then shaped by the national political environment for electoral advantages. Therefore, this research is not only considering the national party ideology of the MEPs regarding their political stance on women's issues, but also looking at their national gender equality index.

Being center-right wing politicians, these MEPs belonging to the European People's Party Group (EPP Group) bring different set of values, attitudes, and preferences regarding women's issues on the floor of the European Parliament compared to the left-wing politicians. Number of studies show that political ideology plays the biggest role in the MEPs' support for legislations relevant to women's interest (Campbell & Erzeel, 2018; Celis & Erzeel, 2013; Erzeel & Celis, 2016; Tremblay & Pelletier, 2000). Moreover, some of these studies have also shown that although left-wing parties generally adopt more feminist ideologies and policies regarding women's issues

compared to the right, the once strong influence of the left-wing parties on women's representation is wavering and that the right-wing parties in Europe are supporting more and more liberal feminist ideals, sometimes have even more women candidates in the parliament, which means that substantive representation of women can also be studied in the ring-wing parties (Campbell & Erzell. 2018; Celis & Erzeel, 2013; Childs & Webb, 2012; Kittilson, 1999; Lovenduski & Norris, 1993).

2. Chapter Two. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This research employed an explorative, in other words, more introductory and illuminating qualitative design. One of the main advantages of content analysis is its flexibility of its research design and that deductive and inductive analysis could be done depending on the purpose of the research (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). As stated in the previous chapter, the research has two main purposes; first to investigate how conservative MEPs from the center-right political group in the European Parliament acts on substantive representation of women (SRW) and second, understand the claims made by the center-right conservative members of the European Parliament (MEPs) on women's issues in the European Parliament. Thus, data was analyzed iteratively by an inductive qualitative content analysis as inductive approach is recommended when there is insufficient or fragmented knowledge about the phenomenon studied (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The parliamentary debates transcript of the 8th European Parliamentary term allowed to gain perspective of how the conservative MEPs represent women on the parliamentary floor and which issues they emphasize and prioritize more. Thus, this research contributes to the literature in understanding the perspectives of conservative claims and their role in the SRW.

In order to understand the focal area of conservative MEPs' deliberation on women's issues and how distinct they are from each other; the research has selected four MEPs from four different countries and four different center-right wing parties. This study principally relied on primary dataset of parliament documents (transcripts of plenary debates, written reports) in its analysis. A detailed data-driven qualitative content analysis was employed to reveal the way which the intervention on women's issues was described by the MEPs. Qualitative content analysis (QCA) is "a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative material. It is done by

classifying material as instances of categories of a coding frame.” (Schreier, 2013, p. 1). As an exploratory research, the research focused on the meanings and thematic analysis as opposed to uncovering how those meanings are constructed through language and discursive strategy. Opposed to analysis of language and discursive strategy in discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis where “broader assumptions, structures and/or meanings that are theorized as underpinning what is actually articulated in the data” (Braun et al., 2015), QCA is better suited for the aim of this research as well as the nature of the data due to its usefulness in identifying the meanings and analyzing themes. While discourse analysis is more focused on the development of meaning and the changes occur to it over time, QCA focuses more on the consistency of the meaning which allows coding (Hardy et al., 2004). Moreover, the data was reduced through QCA hence allowing the researchers to focus on the themes relevant to the Research Questions (RQ). Therefore, QCA was selected since the main aim of the research is after all, to understand the substantive representation of women in the center-right wing parties in the European Parliament. Qualitative content analysis allows interpretation of the data as it is presented in words and themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The data analysis of this research focused more on meanings, intentions and the context of the substantive claims the MEPs made during the plenary debates and reveal the focus of the MEPs and describe the specific themes that surfaced. A qualitative content analysis approach supports several advantages, including the capacity to effectively and systematically describe the MEP’s position, uncover and understand the underlying incentive structures and motivations of the center-right wing MEPs in the European Parliament. A coding frame for the parliamentary activities was developed to analyze the data. Data-driven strategy was employed to develop the coding frame allowing the researcher to include more details and aspects of phenomenon in an inductive way. The aim of this research is to be shaped more exploratory than

normative thus through QCA approach it adds to the knowledge and understanding of conservative claims on women's issues made by the MEPs.

The main focus of this research is substantive representation of women, which applies to claims made on behalf of women by the conservative MEPs belonging to the center-right wing European People's Party Group (EPP Group). Furthermore, this research on the substantive representation of women puts the content of women's interest at the center of the study and refers to women's issues as any issues or policies affecting women's life, socio-economic status and well-being (discussed in more detail in section 2.4). As the research employs interpretivist approach, the research does not specify or operationalize variables, state testable hypothesis, or finalize either instrumentation or sampling schemes since the naturalistic and inductive nature of inquiry makes it impossible and inappropriate to do so (Patton, 2015). The following sections give more information on the data selection, data gathering, and the approach used to identify women's issues and provide justification of its measurement criteria.

2.2 Case Selection: Czech Republic, Greece, Poland and Sweden

The European Parliament (EP) was selected as the institution for this research as it is an important political and legislative institution in the European Union (EU) and it's a strong supporter of gender equality as well as the "most gender equal institution among the European Union's political institutions" (Kantola & Agustín, 2019). As for the selection of MEPs as a sample, few requirements had to be met for this research. This is mainly due to the fact that original research design was planned for an in-depth single country case study on Hungary. However, lack of sufficient data available for analysis on the Hungarian MEPs in FEMM Committee, caused the case studies to expand. However, the research aimed to keep the sample size small enough for in-depth analysis hence chose 4 country cases to meet saturation. First, because the research focuses on the conservative MEPs who belong to the biggest mainstream center-right political group, the MEPs had to belong to the European People's Party Group (EPP Group). Moreover, the MEP had to be a full-time member of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality also known as the FEMM Committee. Erzeel (2015) argued that membership on a parliamentary gender equality is an important indicator that the politicians will act for women. Although most of its motions are non-legislative, the FEMM Committee is one of the most instrumental body of the European Parliament for gender equality policy set-up and promotion. Moreover, as one of the key actors within the European Union institutional framework for gender equality policies, the FEMM Committee defines the women's interests and issues discussed on the floor of the European Parliament (Agustín, 2012). Being members of the committee provides the answer to how substantive representation occur among the MEPs and how they shape women's issues. From the list of candidates who fulfill the criteria, for the purposes of comparison, the researcher has chosen four MEPs ($n=4$)

from the European Union (EU) Member States with the highest gender equality index (Sweden) and with the lowest gender equality index (Greece) and two in between according to European Institute for Gender Equality’s 2015 data (illustrated below) to investigate if the claims made by the conservative MEPs from the center-right political group differ in relation to their gender equality index.

Table 1: Gender Equality Index scores for Sweden, Czech Republic, Greece and Poland

Member State	2005	Ranking in the EU	2013	Ranking in the EU	2015	Ranking in the EU	2017	Ranking in the EU	2019	Ranking in the EU
EU-28 average	62.0		63.8		65.0		66.2		67.4	
Sweden	78.8	1	80.1	1	79.7	1	82.6	1	83.6	1
Czech Republic	53.6	17	55.6	14	56.9	17	56.8	23	55.7	21
Poland	52.4	20	55.5	15	56.7	15	53.6	18	55.2	24
Greece	46.8	27	48.6	28	50.1	28	50.0	28	51.2	28

Source: The European Institute for Gender Equality retrieved from: www.eige.europa.eu

Gender equality index is a tool developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) that determines the progress of gender equality in the EU Member States which facilitate the policymakers to implement effective measures on gender equality as it provides visibility on areas that need improvement (EIGE, n.d.). The index data retrieved from EIGE is from 2005, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019 reports. As the gender equality index unveils the situation of gender equality in the EU Member States, it can be regarded as a national political environment and as the hypothesis suggested the higher the gender equality index would be, the more MEPs would support liberal policies towards women’s issues. Hence this expectation could be tested on Sweden as it is consistently ranked as the country with highest gender equality index since 2005 where Nordic

countries generally rank at the top of gender equality surveys regularly. Feminist scholars also emphasize the Nordic countries as more equal on gender regimes (Walby, 2009) and embody such woman friendly societies (Hernes, 1987). To further add more dimension to the data and to mitigate potential bias, MEPs from Poland and Czech Republic were chosen. There are several reasons why these two countries were chosen. First, women's political representation in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries still has unexplored aspects hence this research would make an important contribution to the literature. Moreover, the fact that both Poland and Czech Republic who joined the European Union (EU) in 2004 makes them relatively new members compared to Greece and Sweden, where perceptible differences in their involvement in women's issues can be observed. In addition, Poland and Czech Republic offer particularly interesting cases due to their communist past which also hindered their Gender Equality Index as a result. Due to their transitional period which started from 1989, their political culture and enacted policies are quite different compared to the Member States in the West. With the previous gender quotas imposed by the Communist party dissipated, the proportion of women in the former Communist countries fell significantly and has increased at a rather slow pace (Kunovich, 2016). Moreover, Poland's parliament has been dominated mainly by the two right wing political parties the Civic Platform party (Platforma Obywatelska) from the center-right and the right-wing populist Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość). In 2016, after taking office from the Civic Platform, Law and Justice (PiS) government backed a drafted law on further tightening an already restrictive law on abortion which sparked a nationwide protest of women opposing the legislation. Consequently, the gender equality index decreased and resulted in the ranking of Poland to fall from 17th place in 2015 to 23rd place among the 28 European Union member states in 2017. Moreover, Poland is a Catholic country where the church has influence in the country's politics. Inglehart and Norris

(2003, p. 50) suggests that Catholicism enforces more traditional attitudes toward women and their role as homemakers and mothers while supporting more traditional policies and regulations regarding marriage and divorce, abortion and contraception, family and childcare. On the other hand, to be electorally competitive and different than PiS, PO defined themselves to be much more liberal in both economic and social matters which makes them a conservative-liberal party (Vít Hloušek & Lubomír Kopeček, 2016). On the contrary, while Czech Republic is believed to be one of the least religious state among the Visegrad group countries, the Christian and Democratic Union- Czechoslovak People's Party also known as KDU-ČSL the Czech party that belongs to the EPP Group leans towards more religious position and they are the Christian Democrats of the political group.

2.3 Data Collection and Selection

In order to answer the research questions (RQs) and test the expectations proposed for this research, qualitative content analysis approach was employed. The main objective of this research was to understand the chosen members of the European Parliament (MEPs)' substantive contribution on behalf of women in the European Parliament (EP). This research is based on primary and secondary data. The main analysis is based on a primary data including transcripts of plenary debate and speeches, and reports. Secondary sources include party documents, biographic information on the women MEPs and scholarly literature. The primary data was retrieved from the personal homepages of the MEPs on European Parliament website by the researcher where the chosen MEP's activities were extracted. Activities included all parliamentary activities including contributions to plenary debates, reports drafted as both rapporteur and shadow rapporteur, and motions for resolutions. From all the speeches, motions for resolutions and reports of the four MEPs collected, data relevant to the research questions was extracted through general coding as "women's issues" thus speeches that did not concern women and women's issues were excluded. The definition of women's issues described in chapter 2.4.1 was used in data extraction. After the initial extraction, total of 186 speeches and written explanations of votes, 24 motions for resolutions and 10 reports were analyzed. The Czech MEP from the Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party (KDU-ČSL), Michaela Šojdová produced 80 speeches and written explanations of vote, 6 motions for resolution and 1 report as well as worked on 2 reports as a shadow rapporteur. The Greek MEP from New Democracy, Eliza Vozemberg-Vrionidi produced 14 speeches and written explanations of vote, 1 motion for resolution and 1 report. The Polish MEP from Civic Platform (PO), Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz produced 72 speeches and written explanations of votes, 14 motions for resolution, and 1 report as well as worked on 3

reports as a shadow rapporteur. Whereas, the Swedish MEP from Moderaterna, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt produced 20 speeches and written explanations of vote, 4 motions for resolution and 1 report as well as worked on 1 report as a shadow rapporteur concerning women's issues during her 8th European Parliamentary term service.

The period for which data have been considered is from 1st July 2014 to 1st July 2019 - during the 8th European parliamentary term. The 8th parliamentary term was selected for three reasons. First, 8th parliamentary term was the first term after the Treaty of Lisbon came into force in 2009 and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention, came into effect in 2014. The Treaty of Lisbon gave the European Parliament a full legal personality and expanded its powers in significant ways. At the same time, the Istanbul Convention became the first legally binding instrument to combat violence against women. Second, with the rise of populist right-wing groups in Europe, gender politics were in play during the 8th parliamentary term where certain women's issues such as the matters of motherhood and family policies were highly politicized in line with the marginalizing migrants and refugees since the European migration crisis which happened in 2015. As specific focus was given to women's issues by the populist radical right-wing parties as they instrumentalized women's issues for their anti-migration rhetoric, the center right-wing parties had to include feminist elements in their gender ideologies in order to differentiate their claims from the radical right-wing political groups and stay electorally competitive. During the 8th European parliamentary term, the Black Protest demonstrations in Poland took place where Polish women protested the proposed restrictive abortion laws drafted by the Polish parliament on 3rd of October 2016. This issue was also discussed during the October 5th plenary debate in the European

Parliament. Third, this research would contribute to the literature by providing most up to date data on substantive representation of women in center-right parties at a supranational level.

In regard to the primary data, the research has selected only relevant topics of plenary debates and written reports. Retrieved data from respective MEPs were in English, Czech, Greek, and Polish. Thus, a computerized translation was generated for all the parliamentary activities that are not in English and have been manually processed. The relevance and irrelevance of the plenary debate topics were determined based on the situation where the MEPs referred to situations or policy issues that directly affect women. The classification of “women’s issue” was determined as activities related to childbearing and child rearing, as well as to women’s position in the society, and related inequalities related to their gender such as pay gap and pension gap. More detailed description and methodology on data selection can be found in chapter 2.3. All text collected for the research were subjected to an inductive qualitative content analysis as described by Elo and Kyngäs (2008). This approach was employed in order to gain an extended understanding going beyond simply categorizing the texts.

2.4 Contextualization of Substantive Representation of Women

The literature on how substantive representation occurs emphasizes on two distinct aspects – substantive representation as a process where the women representatives change the legislative agenda and substantive representation as a policy outcome where women representatives successfully pass a law that are directed towards women’s issues (Celis et al., 2008; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2008; Wängnerud, 2009). While the substantive representation as a process focuses more on introducing women’s issues during the parliamentary debates, the substantive representation as a policy outcome focuses on the policy outcomes that emerged from those debates. In both aspects, the main focus is on the women representatives advocating for women’s

issues. However, looking into the policy outcomes to measure the impact of women representatives' contribution poses few limitations for this research as there are many instances where women representatives introduced policies during the plenary sessions of the European Parliament (EP) but failed to successfully see it through to become a legislation. Hence, it would be an oversight to say that substantive representation did not take place just because the legislation did not go through and may overlook the important process-oriented activities done by the women representatives. Moreover, another limitation for this research to investigate the policy outcomes comes from the fact that motions introduced by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM Committee) are non-legislative. According to Tamerius (1995), earlier stages of policy making is vital for substantive representation of women and other legislative minorities compared to the other stages of policy making. Furthermore, some studies also observed the roll calls for policies related to women's issues to study the voting behavior and measure the impact (Barnello, 1999; Frederick, 2011; Swers, 1998). Therefore, the research makes a contribution to the literature by analyzing the data relying on measures for the conservative members of the parliament's (MEPs) acting on behalf of women during the process of representation. Process-oriented activities refers to the contributions of the women MEPs to the plenary debates on bringing gender perspectives to the topic and advancing women's issues during the debates as well as voting for motions that deal with women's issues.

Although the FEMM Committee members are generally more cohesive and oriented towards consensus (Augustin, 2012), there are specific issues such as abortion can cause a divide between the members. Celis and Childs (2012, p.221) claimed that centrist and conservative women tend to champion women's issues termed as "safe claims" such as sex trafficking and women's development aid. Therefore, this research also aims to investigate the consensus and

contestation among the chosen MEPs on chosen motions set out by the FEMM Committee to see how national party ideology influences the MEPs' voting behavior.

Consequently, the contextualization of substantive representation of women (SRW) for this research would be how the members of the European Parliament "acts for women". The research seeks answers to what these MEPs do in the parliament, whom they represent and what issues they support. As for the definition of what the representative acts for women entails, this research has adopted Celis' (2008) interpretation – as approving and voting for policies involving women and reflecting the existing gender gap regarding issues such as welfare, abortion, domestic violence, and foreign affairs during the plenary debates. The research will be focusing on the MEPs' main political stance on certain women's issues as well as looking at the submitted proposals concerning women as well as how they generally shape women's issues during parliamentary debates and on what issues the representatives were more concerned about or contested and see how national party ideology plays at hand. Great deal of studies has been done on women's descriptive representation and to a lesser extent, on women's symbolic representation exploring the effects of quotas and increase in the number of woman politicians in political institutions as a critical mass. The main argument is based on the logic that increased number of representatives from the under-represented group will improve the reflectiveness of effective policies. Woman representatives have been "frequently either credited with bringing significant changes in policy that are supportive of women's traditional family roles, or blamed for not doing so" (Lovenduski, 2005). Descriptive and substantive representation of women in party politics are explored together by number of scholars (Childs, 2008; Childs and Webb, 2012; Evans. 2011). However, this research will not be looking into the descriptive representation of women as the MEPs chosen for this research are all members of the FEMM Committee and the FEMM Committee itself had 29 female members out

of 36 permanent members hence rendering it unnecessary to look at the descriptive representation of women within the FEMM Committee.

The research acknowledges that many different ideological stances are included under the term “conservatives” hence the conservative claims in this research refer to claims coming from the members of the European Parliament (MEPs) belonging to the center-right political group, the European People’s Party Group (EPP Group). To identify whether the conservative claims qualify as substantive representation of women is decided based on the criteria Celis et al (2009) used that are (1) directly *constructed* as being of importance to women, (2) *presented* as only affecting women, (3) *discussed* in terms of gender difference, (4) *spoken* of in terms of gendered effects, and/or (5) *framed* in terms of equality between women and men. Hence if the claims made by the conservative MEPs meet these criteria, then it shall be regarded as substantive representation of women.

2.4.1 Defining Women’s Issues

What constitutes women’s issues is a widely contested subject matter. On the matter of what are “women’s issues” may be explained in many different ways by different women with different needs, background and culture. Mansbridge (1999) argued that the diversity of women’s interest and issues are because women are not a homogenous entity. Some scholars use women’s issues and interests without differentiating between the two, however this research will distinguish between them. Celis and Childs (2014, p. 216) claim that women’s issues might be universal as it implies “the broad policy category of issues that concern women” whereas interests imply “the content given to issues,” and may not be applicable for all women. Beckwith explains how issues are derived from interests such as staying safe from domestic violence would in turn identify the issue and call for a legislation criminalizing domestic abuse and argues that hence “derived from

interests, issues are more specific, immediate and limited” (2011, p. 425). Different issues are also connected to different identities of women representatives. Party affiliation and ideology can also be a factor in which issues are significant and should be discussed in the parliament. Being a left-wing representative or right-wing conservative party members, women representatives may advocate different and sometimes conflicting interests of women. A good example could be on a topic of abortion where the left-wing representatives and right-wing representatives often clash on whether to legalize abortion or not. Hence, when investigating women’s substantive representation in the parliament, it is important to consider which women representative is considered.

The conceptualization for women’s issues would refer to legislations or policies concerning women proposed by the representatives. These legislations or policies can be very broad, ranging from women’s traditional interests as “mothers and carers”, healthcare, education and social welfare issues to issues of direct relevance such as reproductive rights, abortion, and safety issues concerning domestic violence, and sexual abuse (Dodson & Carroll, 1991; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). Therefore, the research has chosen plenary debates that took place during the 8th legislature and conceptualized the women’s issues as described by Lovenduski (2001, p. 745): “those that mainly affect women, either for biological reasons (such as breast cancer screening and reproductive rights) or for social reasons (sex equality or child-care policy). Hence the analysis of the primary data identified women’s issues as issues that would have direct or immediate effects on women’s wellbeing, individuality, social and private life. Hence, women’s issues referred in the research can be understood as follows: 1). it includes issues that has substantive value to women’s lives and wellbeing deriving from both their “rights” and “traditional role” aspects; and 2) it acknowledges the specific needs of women caused by inequalities between men and women. This definition was used to identify women’s issues in primary data analyzed in this research.

As the research employed data-driven inductive coding approach, the codes were developed and categorized by the researcher without predetermined codes. The plenary debates that took place in the European Parliament during the 8th term provided ample data saturation to analyze as the debates ranged from issues that concerns women's biological well-being relating to violence against women and domestic violence, sexual and labor exploitation of women, female genital mutilation (FGM), women with disabilities, and women's cancer and comorbidities. Whereas, plenary debate topics regarding women's socio-economic issues included gender pay gap, pension gap, work-life balance for parents and carers, women's economic empowerment etc. A coding frame with indicators of strategic and practical issues developed inductively from the primary data. Women's strategic needs concern women's position in relation to men. Strategic needs may relate to "gender divisions of labor, power and control and may include issues such as domestic violence, equal pay and women's control over their bodies" that aim for overcoming gender inequality and women's subordination which can be identified as "feminist" (Moser, 1993, p. 1803). On the other hand, women's practical needs do not necessarily challenge women's subordination but are needs that relate to responsibilities and tasks identified with their traditional gender roles and derived out of their survival (Moser, 1989). The research has defined women's practical needs as policy response to women's basic necessities identified by specific contexts such as childcare, education and health care which emerged from the data. Data-driven strategy was used in development of the coding frame where women's issues and the categorization of issues emerged from the data set in an inductive way. As a result, main categories, sub-categories, and themes emerged from the data set. The data was read with the aim to understand the meaning and open coded. Then the codes were structured into different themes basing on their meanings and commonalities. The themes were then sorted into sub-categories which were read again and sorted

into the main categories based on their belonging (See Table. 2 for overview of the inductive coding process, detailed codebook is included in **Appendix**).

Table 2: Overview of Inductive Coding Process

Examples of Quotations	Themes	Sub-Categories	Main Categories
“The EU’s accession to the Istanbul Convention is necessary” (Greek MEP)	Accession to Istanbul Convention	Violence Against Women and Girls	Women’s Strategic Issues
“We stand united to urge the Member States to do more, faster and better, to stop trafficking” (Swedish MEP)	Trafficking in Women and Girls		
“These problems are addressed by the Istanbul Convention, which clearly determines that forced marriages and marriages with children are a form of violence” (Polish MEP)	Forced Marriage/Child Marriage		
“I fully support the EU commitment to step up cooperation with third countries, providing technical assistance to encourage the adoption of laws banning FGM, and ensuring that these laws are fully enforced” (Swedish MEP)	Female Genital Mutilation		
“Our report deplores sexism and the abundance of cases of sexual harassment in the media” (Czech MEP)	Sexual Harassment and Abuse		
“The situation of refugee women deserves our attention” (Czech MEP)	Refugee Women	Civil and Political Issues	
“I want to talk about women defending human rights because they are naturally more physically and mentally vulnerable” (Czech MEP)	Women human rights defenders		
“Mr President, I am fortunate to come from the Czech Republic, a country with one of the longest maternity leave, it is 28 weeks and it grants mothers 70% of their previous salary” (Czech MEP)	Maternity Leave		
“The presence of women on the labor market has a significant impact on the amount of their pensions and is the first reason that can help close the pension gap - the 39% pension gap in Europe is a great shame” (Polish MEP)	Gender Pay Gap/Pension Gap	Economic, Social and Cultural Issues	
“Women are underrepresented; only 31% of entrepreneurship is represented by women” (Greek MEP)	Equal Presentation of Women		
“As a PPE representative, I emphasize that because for women the main obstacle in the presence of the labor market and promotion is the issue of childcare, the issue of work-life balance is absolutely crucial in this matter” (Polish MEP)	Work-family balance		
“Europe has no problem with women not having access to abortion and reproductive care, there are many abortions in Europe, but women are not sufficiently valued and supported in reconciling maternal and parental functions” (Czech MEP)	Abortion		

“What regulations or lack thereof do preclude the economic independence of disabled women?” (Polish MEP)	Women with disabilities		
“Healthy lifestyle, healthy nutrition and, of course, screening and diagnosis must be promoted as part of women's cancer prevention” (Czech MEP)	Cancer Prevention and Treatment	Health Issues	Women’s Practical Issues
“Calls on the Member States to treat thalidomide victims properly in the courts and to provide adequate social and medical care, as many of them live in poverty and without the necessary help” (Polish MEP)	Exposure to Harmful Substances		

Source: Researcher’s own table

Source:

The coding frame is described and defined as follows:

1.1 Women’s Strategic Issues: As one of the main categories, this category refers to statements and debates referring to issues related to women’s subordination to men and overcoming them. Various categories of women’s issues have emerged from the data during the coding process which were then categorized and coded accordingly into different sub-categories.

1.1.1 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG): This category was coded from statements referring to violence against women including female genital mutilation, forced marriages, child marriage, sexual harassment and abuse, trafficking in women and girls as well as the accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence also known as the Istanbul Convention. The specific themes emerged from this category are defined as below:

1.1.1.1 Accession to Istanbul Convention: This theme was coded whenever the MEPs raise concerns, discuss or urges to ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention and raised issues regarding violence against women and girls or the importance of the Istanbul Convention. Example: “The necessity and the importance of EU’s accession to the Istanbul Convention”.

- 1.1.1.2 Trafficking in Women and Girls: This theme was coded whenever the MEPs raise concerns, discuss or question the authority about the victims of trafficking, and to stop it. Example: “The full enforcement of Anti-Trafficking Directive by all Member States”.
- 1.1.1.3 Child Marriage: This theme was coded whenever the MEPs raise concerns, discuss or question the authority about child marriages, and to stop it. Example: “Ending child marriage”.
- 1.1.1.4 Forced Marriage: This theme was coded whenever the MEPs raise concerns, discuss or question the authority about forced marriages, and to stop it. Example: “Ending the practice of early, forced marriage of girls”.
- 1.1.1.5 Female Genital Mutilation: This theme was coded whenever the MEPs raise concerns, discuss or question the authority about female genital mutilation, and to stop it. Example: “Zero tolerance for female genital mutilation”.
- 1.1.1.6 Sexual Harassment and Abuse: This theme was coded whenever the MEPs raise concerns, discuss or question the authority about sexual harassment, and to stop it. Example: “Combating harassment”.
- 1.1.2 Civil and Political Issues: This sub-category was coded from statements emerged from the data that referred to women’s civil and political subordination. Three themes were developed from the data: the rights of the refugee women and their wellbeing, the rights and wellbeing of the women human rights defenders and regarding maternity leave.
- 1.1.2.1 Migrant and Refugee Women: This theme was coded whenever the MEPs raise concerns, discuss or question the authority about refugee and migrant women,

their safety and wellbeing as well as their rights. Example: “The situation of refugee women coming to the EU”.

1.1.2.2 Women Human Rights Defender: This theme was coded whenever the MEPs raise concerns, discuss or question the authority about the situation, rights, safety, and wellbeing of the women human rights defenders. Example: “Situation of women human rights defenders”.

1.1.2.3 Maternity Leave: This theme was coded whenever the MEPs raise concerns, discuss or question the authority about the issue of maternity or parental leave policy and the provisions regarding. Example: “The common minimum standard for maternity leave”.

1.1.3 Economic, Social and Cultural Issues: This sub-category was coded from statements concerning women’s economic, social and political rights. These included issues like women’s economic inequality, inequality of representation in various sectors and management boards, their work and life balance as mothers and their right to access safe and legal abortion. Therefore, if the MEP’s statement concerned any of these issues, this subcategory would apply. Likewise, when the MEPs urged to respect the economic, social and cultural rights of women and girls and calls for fulfillment of their rights, it was coded under this subcategory. Four specific themes were distinguished under this sub-category.

1.1.3.1 Gender Pay Gap/Pension Gap: This theme was coded when the MEPs raised concerns, discuss, or question the authority about equal payment for women and pension gap. Example: “Equal pay to women workers, and fair promotion”.

1.1.3.2 Equal Presentation of Women: This theme was coded when the MEPs raised concerns, discuss, or question the authority about the underrepresentation of women on boards and in the management supervisory bodies, the glass ceiling women encounter in various sectors related to women's empowerment. Example: "Ensuring transparent recruitment rules".

1.1.3.3 Work-family policy: This theme was coded when the MEPs raised concerns, discuss, or question the authority about the work-life balance for women in the area of family related leave and flexible working hours. Different from the maternity leave policy theme where the code is defined exclusively to the maternity leave policy, this theme is coded for the aspect of women's traditional role as mothers and carers. Example: "Allowing mothers on parental leave to work flexibly and return to work earlier".

1.1.3.4 Abortion: This theme was coded when the MEPs raised concerns, discuss, or question the authority about abortion. Example: "Introducing a law providing for exceptions to the ban on abortion".

1.1.3.5 Women with disabilities: This theme was coded when the MEPs raised concerns, discuss, or question the authority about women with disabilities, their rights and challenges faced by them. Example: "Better services for disabled women".

1.2 Women's Practical Issues: The practical issues of women are derived from issues related to their basic survival such as health issues. This category was coded whenever the MEP demonstrated concerns towards issues and policy related to fulfilling the basic needs of

women, rather than question the gendered structure of society. One specific sub-category was distinguished from the data which described below.

1.2.1 Health Issues: This subcategory was coded when the MEPs raised concerns, discuss, or question the authority about women's health issues, and improvement in treatment and health services. Two themes were identified from the data.

1.2.1.1 Cancer Prevention and Treatment: This theme was coded when the MEPs raised concerns, discuss, or question the authority about prevention of cancer and access to treatment available for women. Example: "Methods on cancer prevention and effective treatment".

1.2.1.2 Exposure to Harmful Substances: This theme was coded when the MEPs raised concerns, discuss, or question the authority about women being exposed to harmful substances causing health issues and disorders. Example: "Supporting the victims of thalidomide".

These categories were used to assess the policy priorities of the conservative MEPs as well as examine their extent of substantive representation of women and variations among them.

2.5 Data Analysis

This research is an exploratory qualitative research grounded in an interpretative epistemology. The main aim of this study was to investigate the conservative MEPs' substantive representation of women in the European Parliament. Hence, research has applied qualitative content analysis (QCA) method to systematically describe the primary data. Schwandt (2001) defines the qualitative research as a diverse term covering an array of techniques seeking to describe, decode, translate and somehow come to terms with the meaning, beyond the measurement or frequency of texts in the social world. QCA focuses on examination of

underlying meanings embedded within the text. Therefore, the QCA approach suits well with the primary data and the philosophical underpinning of this research. In terms of methodology, “interpretive research does not predefine dependent or independent variables, does not set out to test hypotheses, but aims to produce an understanding of the social context of the phenomenon and the process whereby the phenomenon influences and is influenced by the social context” (Walsham, 1995 as cited in Rowlands, 2005, p. 81-82). Therefore, the research did not employ predefined hypothesis and dependent or independent variables, but defined two expectations, two research questions and employed data-driven inductive approach to explore the conservative MEPs’ substantive representation of women. The research found that QCA method was appropriate as it allowed the data to be efficiently reduced hence limiting the analysis to those aspects that are relevant to the research questions. Moreover, Bruce and Lune (2017) identifies two main categories of content analysis known as manifest analysis and latent analysis. Manifest analysis is described as “the surface structure present in the message, and latent content is the deep structural meaning conveyed by the meaning” (Berg & Lune, 2017, p. 242). Hence, the research has focused on both manifest and latent content analysis as the researcher aimed to investigate what is said and argued by the conservative MEPs on women’s issues and also the underlying meanings of their speeches to generate useful interpretations instead of reflecting word frequencies and manifest characteristics of the data. Moreover, Zhang and Wildemuth (2009, p. 2) explained that QCA can be based on inductive reasoning or deductive reasoning where application of inductive reasoning allows the researcher to develop themes from the data whereas themes and categories are predetermined from a theory in a deductive research. Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1279) explained that application of inductive content analysis is appropriate when “existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited”. The

inductive coding process requires the researcher to avoid using preconceived categories and instead allows the categories to emerge from the data. On the contrary, deductive content analysis is suitable when the aim is to “validate or extend conceptually a theoretical framework or theory” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281).

Unit of analysis refers to different kinds of objects of study which can be any person, program, organization, or interviews and diaries (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). In this research, the four chosen conservative MEPs are each regarded as unit of analysis. A meaning unit or the coding unit is the smallest unit of data that contains information and insight the researcher needs to answer the research questions (RQ) set out in the aim (Bengtsson, 2016). Then each meaning unit or coding unit is labeled with a code in relation to the context – a process also known as “open coding process” in the literature (Berg, 2001). Accordingly, the research has employed sentence as a coding unit. Choosing a sentence as a coding unit allowed the researcher to code more efficiently opposed to coding line per line which had higher probability of containing two or more codes hence coding sentence by sentence enhanced the validity. A coding frame for parliamentary activities was developed to analyze the proceedings which aimed at exploring the activities of the conservative MEPs within the European Parliament. Data-driven strategy was used to develop the coding frame to include aspects and details under each categorization of issues when they emerged from the data. Hence, the analysis started with the data being reviewed to gain overall impression and sense of the context. Then, data was structured into themes basing on their commonalities and guided by the codes which described the aspects of the content. The themes were labeled using words that characterized their main content. Furthermore, the subcategories were read and analyzed again and then grouped into main categories. To ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, direct quotes from

the MEPs are reported in the findings. For data-driven coding (also known as open coding) “as far as possible the researcher should attempt to pull out from the data what is happening, not impose an interpretation based on pre-existing theory” (Gibbs, 2007, p. 46). The coding frame was finalized whilst going through the data hence allowed the research to include more variables and aspects of the phenomenon in an inductive way.

Analyzing speeches made during the plenary debates allows the researcher to investigate and understand the individual MEPs’ positions and preferences, and it also allows the researcher estimates on consensus and contestation within the political group. Moreover, MEPs with positions and opinions deviating from the party line are more likely to be expressed in parliamentary speeches than in for instance, voting behavior. Hence the speeches are more likely to provide the researcher with some of the motives for behaviors and real preferences of the chosen MEPs. The analysis of speeches also has potential drawbacks. For instance, there can be lack of data due to the MEP’s inactivity and absence of speech during plenary debates. In order to minimize this setback, the researcher has chosen MEPs who are members of the FEMM committee hence the chosen MEPs would be more active on debates concerning women’s issues. The possible selection bias is avoided by the researcher in case when not all MPs speak in each debate by identifying the selective preference of participation by the MEP. For instance, FEMM committee is one of the five neutralized committees meaning that membership of the FEMM committee can be combined with membership of another committee. Hence, if a MEP is a member of FEMM committee and Employment and Social Matters committee (EMPL), it is expected that the MEP will be more likely to speak on issues related to pay gap and pension gap. In addition, the researcher assumes that the speeches made by the MEPs are structured by their national party affiliation on the given

subject matter thus would aid in identifying the contestation and consensus among the MEPs on certain issues.

3. Chapter Three. Setting the Context: Conservative Members from the Center-Right Political Group in the European Parliament

3.1 Women in the European People's Party Group

In 2014, the European People's Party Group (EPP Group) has won 221 seats in the European Parliament and although the group won the most seats, unfortunately the percentage of women MEPs were only at 31.22% (EP, 2014). The EPP Group has an official association for women called EPP Women consisting of likeminded European party members fighting for equality between men and women. The EPP Group has adopted gender equality policy which resulted in 50% of women in the Presidency of the group (EUW, 2015). In each year's EPP Women congress meeting, they adopt resolutions with specific framework such as on issues around violence against women, women's role in digital transformation of economy and society, and impact of migration and immigration on women. However, the manifesto of the EPP Group for 2014 election was criticized by the European Women's Lobby (EWL) for not including gender equality and women's rights as a priority (EWL, 2014).

3.2 Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party of Czech Republic: MEP Michaela Šojdrová

Christian and Democratic Union - Czechoslovak People's Party of Czech Republic (KDU-ČSL) is a center-right Christian-democratic party and is one of the opposition parties of Czech Republic with priorities targeted towards family and believes that a marriage is union between a man and a woman only (KDU-ČSL, n.d.). According to the party's 2014 European Parliament's manifesto, their pro-family policies included flexible working hours for parents (work-life balance) and "rejecting the promotion of gender ideology and denying the different roles of men and women, rejecting the reduction in the importance of motherhood in favor of employment"

(KDU-ČSL, 2014c). On September 14, 2019, the chairman of KDU-ČSL, Marek Výborný spoke to the supporters of the “traditional” family who were rallying and marching in support of family saying: “I greet you at an event that is very important to me, because the family is the foundation and we must fight for the family so that the family remains what it is for all of us. Family is mom, dad, children, grandmother, grandfather. We really have to repeat it over and over again, because that's just the way it is.” (České noviny, 2019). In line with their position on “traditional” family, KDU-ČSL is one of the main critics of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention.

After 2013 national elections, the party held 14 seats in the national parliament from which 1 was a woman member of the parliament. As for the European Parliament elections in 2014, they won three seats and one of them belonged to a woman MEP – Michaela Šojdrová. Michaela Šojdrová has been serving as a MEP since 2014 and has served as the Vice-Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education as well as a member of the FEMM Committee. She has worked on 3 reports during the 8th EP legislature which includes report on gender equality in the media sector in the EU, report on promoting youth entrepreneurship through education and training, and on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Solidarity Corps programme and repealing [European Solidarity Corps Regulation] and Regulation (EU) No 375/2014.

3.3 Civic Platform of Poland: MEP Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz

Civic Platform, or Platforma Obywatelska (PO) is a center-right liberal-conservative party that emerged from a coalition of Polish center-right parties called Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarnosc, AWS) which ruled Poland in the late 1990s. First established in 2001, PO was in the government in 2007-2011 and from 2011-2015 (National Electoral Commission, 2011).

PO is one of the main two ruling parties in Poland and as the main adversary of another conservative right-wing party, Law and Justice Party (PiS), although PiS is more socially conservative than PO. PO sought to strengthen its image as a defender of liberal values during its electoral campaigns indicating their leniency more towards to the left. Hence, in 2015, Polish parliament led by PO passed a legislation allowing in vitro fertilization married couples with the exception of same-sex couple as well as single mother, a legal framework which has been strongly opposed by the Catholics since PO's initiation of the bill in 2007 (Mishtal, 2018). Reproductive rights have been the main topic of conflict in Poland. In 2016, after the right-wing populist PiS won the 2015 national elections, a parliamentary debate on a total ban of abortion was initiated by citizen's legislative proposals although Poland already had restricted access to abortion where it is allowed only in case of rape, fetus defects, or if the mother's life is in danger (Gwiazda, 2017). At that time, Civic Platform preferred to keep the status quo of the present law than considered the proposed bill ultraconservative (Gwiazda, 2019). In opposition, citizens along with feminist NGOs initiated a more feminist abortion law allowing unrestricted abortion within the 12 weeks of pregnancy along with provision to provide sex education and unrestricted access to information about reproductive rights policies, which unfortunately was rejected by the parliament (Gwiazda, 2019). Thousands of women in Poland marched wearing black demonstrated on the streets protesting the abortion ban which is internally known as the Black Protests. During the parliamentary debate on abortion, Civic Platform, at the time in opposition, was supporting the feminist law on abortion and the deputies were voting against the rejection of it (Gwiazda, 2019).

Poland is the only country from the Visegrád Group countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland) that uses gender quotas. According to Anna Gwiazda (2019), Civic Platform had been using its own party quota to promote women's participation since 2007, by requiring at

least one woman in the first three places on party lists which was later revised in 2011 to require “at least one woman in the top three places and at least two women in the top five places”. Moreover, the legislative gender quotas in Poland was approved by the PO government in 2011 under the leadership of Donald Tusk who supported gender quotas and promoting women (Gwiazda, 2017). Hence, the PO government introduced the legislative gender quota was introduced before the October 2011 legislative election. After the introduction of gender quotas, percentage of woman candidates for political parties in Sejm has increased overall while PO has maintained relatively high percentage alongside the Democratic Left Alliance later known as the United Left. In 2007 election, the percentage of woman candidates were from little over 18 to 22 percent for the four main parties, in 2011 the number has increased to over 39 to 44 per cent (State Electoral Commission 2007, 2011). As for women deputies, Civic Platform was the best performer for having the highest number of women deputies in Sejm among the parties which increased steadily over the years from 23% in 2007 to 34.8% in 2011 and 36% in 2015.

On July 9th, 2015, before the parliamentary election, Resolution No. 11/2015 was adopted by the National Board of Civic Platform, stating that:

“Party regional authorities are required to shape the regional lists of candidates for deputies in such a way that: 1) The number of woman candidates and the number of men candidates cannot be less than 35% of the total number of candidates on each constituency list. 2) Among the first five places on each constituency list neither men nor women can occupy more than 3 places. 3) Among the first three places on each constituency list neither men nor women can occupy more than 2 places.” (Civic Platform, 2015)

Moreover, PO has also appointed Ewa Kopacz as the leader of the party in 2014 when Prime Minister Donald Tusk stepped down to take the office as the President of the European

Council. Hence, Ewa Kopacz became the second woman Prime Minister (PM) of Poland, and the first woman PM to be elected from the right-wing. Prior to her appointment as the Prime Minister in 2014, she also became the first woman Marshall (Speaker) of the Sejm when she was appointed in 2011 (EPP Group, n.d.-a).

The Polish MEP from PO, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz served as a member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM). Her party won 19 seats in the European Parliament from the 2014 European Parliamentary election which 7 of them were women MEPs including Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz. During the 8th EP term, she worked on one report concerning equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.

3.4 New Democracy of Greece: MEP Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi

Νέα Δημοκρατία or New Democracy (ND) is a pro-European liberal-conservative party of Greece founded in 1974 and is one of the two main political parties in Greece. Despite being the second biggest party in Greece, in 2015 Greek parliamentary elections, New Democracy had 76 MPs (which only ten of them women), losing vast majority of its seats to the radical left party, SYRIZA (Kambouri, 2015). For the 2014 European Parliamentary elections, New Democracy won 5 seats out of 21 seats in the European Parliament. Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi was one of the two women elected from the New Democracy. In 2017, Greece has the lowest Gender Equality Index and the lowest employment rate for women among the 28 member states of the European Union hence gender equality is a crucial matter for Greece. New Democracy has a secretariat for family policy and gender equality that aims for policy formulation aimed at eradicating gender inequalities and supporting family. According to the speech of the President of New Democracy, Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, New Democracy supports women's participation

in the politics and adopted a party quota for women (New Democracy, 2019). In July 2019 election New Democracy won parliamentary majority and nominated Greece's first female President Katerina Sakellariopoulou, a former high court judge. As for the Greek MEP from New Democracy Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, a lawyer by profession, initially served as the Greek parliament member from October 2009 to May 2012, Vozemberg-Vrionidi has been serving as the member of the European Parliament since 2014 and been a member of the FEMM Committee. Aside from serving as the member of the FEMM Committee, she has also served as the member of the Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) during the 8th European parliamentary legislature. She has also served as a Vice-Chair of the Working Group of the EPP Group for Legal and Home Affairs (New Democracy, 2017). According to her personal website, she has prioritized women's entrepreneurship, equal pay, women in senior positions, women's involvement in research and technology (Vozemberg, n.d.). During the 8th EP term, MEP Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi has worked on two reports concerning fight against cybercrime and on women's careers in science and universities, and glass ceilings encountered.

3.5 The Swedish Moderate Coalition Party: MEP Anna Maria Corazza Buildt

Gender equality is one of the most important issue in Swedish politics and is an integral part of country's political culture and the conservative parties are no exception (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014). The Swedish Moderate Coalition Party known as Moderaterna is a liberal-conservative, largest center-right political party in Sweden. In 2014 general election, out of 793 candidates from Moderaterna, 42.1 per cent were woman candidates whereas from the 84 seats which they won in the government, 52.4 per cent of the member were woman candidates (Valmyndigheten, 2014). The number of female deputies in the parliament after the 2014 elections was at 52%, placing Moderaterna as the second party with the highest number of women deputies in the parliament

(Jungar & Jupskås, 2014). Since the 2009 European Parliament election, the party has adopted a voluntary quota that instigated two women and two men to be placed on the top four positions on the party list (IDEA, 2018). As for the European Parliament's election, Moderaterna won 3 seats and the only woman candidate was Anna Maria Corrazza Bildt (European Parliament, 2014). Moderaterna had only one woman leader – Anna Kinberg Batra from 2014-2017.

Sweden is one of the fourteen countries in the European Union to have legalized same-sex marriage. Moreover, Sweden has also legalized adoption and medically assisted reproduction at low cost for same-sex couples (Kolk & Andersson, 2020). Subsequently, Moderaterna also supports same-sex marriages and LGBTQ rights proposing to introduce gender-neutral family legislation and improve the legal framework and awareness concerning the LGBTQ people as well as promote LGBTQ rights internationally (Moderaterna, n.d.-b).

Moderaterna acknowledges that crucial conditions for women's autonomy and independence is financial independence. Hence the party's action plan supports women's empowerment, equal income, access to jobs and employment including vocational trainings for immigrant women and as well as comprehensive family policy to support parents, reduce tax and strengthen penalties for all rape crimes and sexual harassment as well as honor related violence against women (Moderaterna, n.d.-c). To promote gender equality internally, Moderaterna has internal women's network Moderate Women which led by a central board operates to close the gender gap within the party as well as training and recruiting new women members to the party and highlighting women representatives and women's issues in the politics. In its official website, Moderaterna has acknowledged the employment gap between not only men and women but also between native born women and foreign women in employment stating that foreign born women cannot be left out of the equation (Moderaterna, n.d.-c).

An Italian-Swedish MEP from Moderaterna, Anna Maria Corazza Builtt served as a Vice-chair of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO), and a member of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) during the 8th European Parliamentary term. During her one-minute speeches on matters of political importance, she pointed out that she was the founder of the Intergroup of Children’s Rights and also European Parliament coordinator on children’s rights. During her time serving as a MEP, she has worked on three reports concerning the free flow of non-personal data in the European Union, report on combatting the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography and an interim report regarding the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

From 2017-2018 she has also served as a member on the Special Committee on Terrorism (TERR). Although Sweden had the highest gender equality index score according to the European Institute for Gender Equality, Anna Maria Corazza Built was the only woman MEP elected from Moderaterna.

Table 3: The Conservative MEPs

Name	Political Party/Political Ideology	EP Committee(s)
Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz	Civic Platform/ Conservative-liberal	FEMM: Full member EMPL: Employment and Social Affairs, full member
Anna Maria Corazza-Bildt	Moderaterna/ Liberal-Conservative	FEMM: Full member IMCO: Internal Market and Consumer Protection, Vice-chairwoman TERR: Full member LIBE: Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, substitute member
Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi	New Democracy/ Liberal-Conservative	FEMM: Full member TRAN: Transport and Tourism, Full member

		LIBE: Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, substitute member
Michaela Šojdrová	Christian and Democratic Union – Czechoslovak People's Party/ Christian Democrat	FEMM: Full member CULT: Culture and Education, Vice-chairwoman ENVI: Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, substitute member EMPL: Employment and Social Affairs, substitute member

Source: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en>

4. Chapter Four. Findings

4.1 Introduction

Drawing up on the need to look more into the different types of conservative parties and actors from different countries and examine how these differences mediate women's political representation introduced by Childs and Celis (2012), this research looks into the women's representation in the center-right conservative parties of the European Parliament. The European Parliament is an interesting political body to examine as it is a vital institution in the European Union to mandate and promote gender mainstreaming and gender equality at the same time, housing many different actors from different national political parties with varying ideologies within the same political spectrum. Hence, in order to investigate the conservative claims of the conservative MEPs, the highly influential mainstream center-right political group known as the European People's Party Group (EPP Group) was selected. A study on women's representation in far-right wing was done recently by Krizsán & Siim (2018). However, there lacks an in-depth research on the claims of politicians from the center-right wing in particular. From within the EPP Group, four MEPs from four different countries were selected as case studies: Czech Republic, Greece, Poland, and Sweden. All four chosen MEPs happened to be women as the selection criteria required the MEP to be a member of the FEMM committee, advocating women's rights and gender equality. According to the Gender Equality Index data from 2015, Sweden represents the country with the highest gender equality index with the score of 82.6 out of 100, Greece with the lowest score of 50.0 out of the 100, and Czech Republic and Poland representing the countries in the middle one who has ratified the Istanbul Convention and one who did not out of the 28 members of the EU with the average score of 66.2. Globally, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index data from 2015, Sweden was in the 4th place with the score of 0.823

out of 1, Poland in the 51st place with the score of 0.715, Czech Republic came in the 81st place with the score of 0.687 whereas Greece with 0.685 ranked on the 87th out of 145 countries in the world. According to the 2014 election, the percentage of women MEPs elected for the European Parliament was 55% for Sweden, 24% for Czech Republic, Poland and Greece. The research expectation is that, for the MEPs from a country with high gender equality index score, women's representation would be equally higher among them as opposed to the MEPs from countries with lower gender equality index score.

The 8th parliamentary term (2014-2019) was selected in line with the year 2014 where the Istanbul Convention was put in effect giving the research ample debate topics on gender equality and women's rights and issues. Drawing on the signing and ratification of the Istanbul Convention, Sweden along with Poland and Greece has ratified the Convention whereas Czech Republic has signed the Convention in 2016 but did not ratify it.

Globally the year 2014 was important in terms of promoting gender equality and fighting sexual violence against women and girls. The UN Commission on the Status of Women discussed about the progress against millennium development goals and critically looked at how women would feature in what comes the next (Ford, 2014). Moreover, the HeForShe campaign for gender equality was initiated by the UN in the same year. Several European parliaments implemented laws on gender equality. For instance, the French government passed the *Loi pour l'égalité réelle entre les femmes et les hommes* – the law for real equality between men and women in August 2014. This law contains provisions that are aimed at promoting equal pay as well as professional equality and combatting gender-based violence and sexual violence against women at work. The United Kingdom also passed a bill on International Development (Gender Equality) Act in March 2014 and became an Act of Parliament (UK Parliament, 2014). The main purpose of this bill is to

bolster gender equality in development programs by putting the government responsible for considering ways in which its development and humanitarian overseas aid will promote gender equality.

4.2 Data Analysis and Findings

Given the nature of the data source this research qualitative content analysis with an inductive coding frame was used for analyzing the data collected. The primary data collected were plenary debate transcripts retrieved from the European Parliament website. This research employed qualitative content analysis as the approach would help in understanding the distinct stances and preferences of each members of the European Parliament (MEPs) while representing women's issues. The research also applied descriptive statistics such as the simple frequency analysis to examine the extent to which MEPs represented women's issues during the plenary debates. Through the application of inductive content analysis in which text patterns in the MEPs' speeches were searched and identified (Krippendorff, 2013). All speeches, questions and written explanations were read through to get a sense of the whole. Then speeches referring to women's issues as described in chapter 2.4.1 were extracted from the data for analysis. The speeches were then re-read independently and coded inductively. Frequencies of speeches and statements were structured into themes based on their commonalities. Then these themes were categorized into four sub-categories which then was developed into two main categories: women's strategic issues and women's practical issues.

The first section of the analysis examines the presence of substantive women's representation among the conservative MEPs and their prioritization of women's issues. The key indicators of presence of substantive women's representation among the MEPs include attitudes towards women's issues and gender equality, as well as membership on gender equality committees aside

from FEMM. The analysis looked at the conservative MEPs' selection and prioritization of women's issues and displayed their variation, agreement and disagreement. The following subsections of the analytical process looks in depth look at specific issues championed by the MEPs and how they shaped their arguments by focusing on the latent content involving an interpretation of the underlying meaning of the speeches looking at how national political environment and ideology affected the MEPs' stances on certain issues. This explains the possible reason for contention and contestation of the conservative MEPs within the same political group. The conclusion section discussed the overall observations and described the conservative women's substantive representation in the European Parliament.

4.3 Prioritization of Women's Issues

This section analyses the first question of this research: "Which women's issues do conservative members of the European Parliament (MEPs) prioritize when addressing women's issues and gender equality?" The content analysis approach helped reduce the data and construct women's issues specified by the MEPs which allowed the researcher to focus on the data relevant to the research questions (RQ). Through inductive coding scheme, the researcher has developed two main categories with four sub-categories and thirteen themes. To investigate the prioritization of the women's issues, first the researcher investigated which women's issues the MEPs were most actively addressing. Regarding women's strategic issues versus practical issues, the findings of this research suggested that the MEPs were more active on addressing women's strategic issues than addressing women's practical issues. The strategic issues of women were mostly concerned about protecting women's rights, overcoming inequalities and challenging women's subordinate position in the society (as discussed in Chapter 2). The

strategic issues of women included generic categories such as violence against women and girls, civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural issues related to women.

Out of the total 186 speeches made by the four conservative MEPs regarding women’s issues, over 90 per cent of their speeches were regarding women’s strategic issues, leaving a little room for the speeches regarding women’s practical issues. The following table breaks down the number of the speeches made by each MEP regarding women’s strategic issues and women’s practical issues.

Table 4: Speeches made by the MEPs concerning Women’s Strategic and Practical Issues

MEP	Women’s Strategic Issues	Women’s Practical Issues	Total
The Czech MEP from KDU-ČSL	73	7	80
The Greek MEP from ND	14	0	14
The Polish MEP from PO	66	6	72
The Swedish MEP from Moderaterna	20	0	20
	170	16	186

Source: Researcher’s own table

Moreover, the MEPs each authored a report concerning women’s strategic issues. The Czech MEP from KDU-ČSL, Michaela Šojdrová (Czech MEP) worked on the report on gender equality in the media sector in the EU highlighting the underrepresentation of women in both public and private media services as well as in management and top-level positions. The Greek MEP from New Democracy, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi (Greek MEP) similarly worked on a report tackling women’s issues in work and career in science and universities and the glass ceilings women encounter. Moreover, the Polish MEP from Civic Platform, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz (Polish MEP) worked on a report that concerns a Directive tackling gender

discrimination in the field of goods and services. Lastly, the Swedish MEP from Moderaterna, Anna Maria Corazza-Bildt co-authored a proposal of provisions to be included in the Istanbul Convention. Women’s strategic issues raised by the MEPs included discussions on elimination of violence against women including girls, trafficking in women and girls, forced marriage and child marriage, female genital mutilation as well as sexual harassment and abuse, ratification of the Istanbul Convention, overcoming gender pay gap, pension gap, work-life balance of women especially mothers, equal representation of women in sectors such as the media, science and universities as well as company boards. These issues were classified in sub-categories. The findings confirmed that whereas the majority of the Swedish MEP from Moderaterna and the Greek MEP from New Democracy’s speeches were concerned with issues regarding violence against women and girls, the Polish MEP from Civic Platform (PO) and the Czech MEP from KDU-ČSL were significantly much more concerned with the economic, social and cultural issues regarding women as majority of their speeches were identified in this category. Overall, over 50 per cent of the speeches made by the conservative MEPs belonged to the economic, social and cultural issues.

Table 5: Strategic Issues Raised by the Conservative MEPs

MEP	Violence Against Women and Girls	Civil and Political Issues	Economic, Social and Cultural Issues	Total
The Czech MEP from KDU-ČSL	21	6	46	73
The Greek MEP from ND	9	1	4	14
The Polish MEP from PO	17	2	47	65
The Swedish MEP from Moderaterna	13	4	3	20
	60	13	97	170

Source: Researcher’s own table

The findings of this research have also suggested that when the conservative MEPs were addressing the same issues, they perceived those issues differently. The following sections will describe the preferences and prioritization, consensus and contention over women's issues by the conservative MEPs in more details.

4.4 Economic, Social and Cultural Issues

On the prioritization of the economic, social and cultural issues, the Czech MEP from KDU-ČSL and the Polish MEP from PO were active on two different issues. As the Polish MEP was serving as a member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), most of her speeches were centered around the employment of women and the obstacles women face when they enter the labor market such as gender pay gap, pension gap, glass ceiling and the difficulty balancing work and life matters. Moreover, different from the popular position among her peers from the EPP Group, the Polish MEP supported the quotas on company boards, easier in-vitro access, and on quotas on electoral lists. Moreover, she has brought holistic and diverse women's economic issues to the table as well as acknowledging the intersectional challenges faced by women with disabilities, but also suggested dynamic solutions to the challenges such as guaranteed pension, same pay and fair promotion, flexible working hours as well as building infrastructure such as nurseries, kindergarten and care homes. On the other hand, the Greek MEP from New Democracy, emphasized that the solution lies in changing the social mentality embedding the understanding of equality between men and women in the education. Moreover, despite the fact that Poland was one of the Visegrád group countries opposing refugee quota and had a rising anti-refugee sentiment during the European migrant crisis in 2015, the Polish MEP supported the integration of women migrants and refugees into the labor market pointing out the economic gains for both the state and the refugee women.

Whereas for the Czech MEP, although her speeches concerned challenges of women in the labor market and equal participation and representation, her theme was more around the traditional role of women as mothers and carers. She argued that the main reason for women's disadvantaged position is due to their incompatibility of their parental and professional career thus creating pension gap, pay gap and poverty in women. She has suggested that the European Union's (EU) strategy should be "supporting motherhood and rewarding the work of caring parents" stating:

"I think it is also up to us, the European Parliament, to add what, at least for me, is missing, and that is a greater appreciation for women who care and want to take care of their children, because they see their irreplaceable place there, and that is their motherhood and family care." (February 2, 2016).

Moreover, although the Czech MEP emphasized the importance of pro-family policies, parental leave and better representation of women, she argued that pension forms, tax-decisions and parental leave policies are matters of national competence, an argument which was also supported by the Swedish MEP from Moderaterna.

One issue in which the MEPs did not see eye to an eye was on the issue of abortion. The Polish and the Greek MEPs stated that although they do not support free access to abortion, they do not support strict laws and total ban on abortion and supports exceptions that recognize the rights and health of the women and contraception. On the other hand, loyal to her national party ideology, the Czech MEP was not supportive of abortion aside from life-saving interventions and stated that life must be protected from the moment of conception. With one of the most liberal abortion laws in the world, Swedish MEP Anna Maria Corazza Bildt argued that when it comes to women's health and life at stake, abortion is not a question of pro or con but a matter of

health. Whilst arguing about how the issue is about women's body, rights and freedom of choice, however, she has also maintained her loyalty to the political group acknowledging that family legislation is a national issue.

4.5 Violence Against Women and Girls

Perhaps, one of the most controversial and debated topic in the realm of gender equality is the ratification of the Istanbul Convention of the Member States. The 8th legislature of the European Parliament from 2014-2019 was an important period because crucial debates on the EU's accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by EU member states took place during the legislature. The Istanbul Convention is an important treaty that calls for legally binding standards on preventing, protecting and prosecuting all forms of violence against women while suggesting integrated policies involving governmental and non-governmental agencies as well as national, state and regional authorities (Council of Europe, n.d.). The Convention recognizes all kinds of gender-based violence including domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, forced marriages, crimes committed in the name of so-called "honor" and female genital mutilation (Istanbul Convention, pmbl., 2011). It is also an instrument to address gender equality as it recognizes that the nature of violence against women is a consequence of unequal power between women and men. Upon its opening for signature in 2011, it entered into force on 1 August 2014 following its 10th ratification by Andorra. In terms of European Union, the Union signed the convention on 13/06/2017 and Member States including Czech Republic, Greece, Poland and Sweden has all signed the convention, although Czech Republic is yet to ratify despite it has signed the treaty on 02/05/2016 (Council of Europe, 2020). The controversy surrounding the

Istanbul Convention is still prevalent even today with the Catholic churches, religious organization, political parties and even some Member States rejecting the Convention on the grounds that spreading “gender ideology” and “anti-family agenda”. During the initial coding process, Istanbul Convention was put as a generic category, however after additional reviews, the researcher deemed the ratification of Istanbul Convention as a separate sub-category and preferred the generic category to be named as violence against women and girls.

Some of the agreements on matters related to Violence Against Women and Girls is the fact that both Czech MEP and the Swedish MEP framed the trafficking victims to be understood as non-EU women such as the refugees and migrants as well as those living outside the EU such as in Albania, China, Morocco, Nigeria, Vietnam and Libya. Although all four MEPs in fact stated that they are committed to zero tolerance of violence against women, not all of them voted in favor of Istanbul Convention. Moreover, the ways they have highlighted the importance of the Convention were also different. From the speeches made by the MEPs during the plenary debates regarding the fight against violence against women and girls and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by EU Member States, 3 out of 4 MEPs were supporting the ratification and urged the other member states (Greek, Polish and Swedish) to ratify the convention. Whereas the Czech MEP from KDU-ČSL, Michaela Šojdrová expressed her opinion that the Istanbul

Convention is redundant stating:

Because we have here the European Convention on Human Rights, which clearly fights against torture, inhuman treatment, protects the dignity of human life and respect for family and private life. Citizens ask me, "What happens if we do not accept the Istanbul Convention?" And I tell them: "The Istanbul Convention does not bring anything new in the Czech Republic. "The Czech Republic has had a law against domestic violence

since 2006. The Istanbul Convention does not bring anything new in the Czech Republic." (June 13, 2018).

Moreover, she rejected number of reports and directives related to the Istanbul Convention for reasons such as it states about the use of contraception, safe legal abortion which in her opinion is one form of violence against women itself, healthcare for transgender people, allows its use for gender ideology and undermines the sovereign right of the Member States. One such example is how she rejected the recommendation of incorporating the ratification of the Convention with the equality of women with disabilities. Moreover, she rejected the recommendations on work-life balance initiatives for the reasons that it did not pursue pro-family policy stating: "Instead, the European Parliament calls on the Commission and the Member States to recognize and also support all the various forms of relationships to replace the traditional family, such as registered same-sex partnerships or 'parents', etc. These unacceptable proposals have nothing to do with the original within the competence of the Member States." (September 13, 2016) This position puts her en lieu with the position of her national party KDU-ČSL which also rejected the Convention en bloc, for the same reasons. Furthermore, when the Czech MEP supported a report regarding Istanbul Convention, she has explained her decision as an agreement with EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention as a symbolic gesture as violence against women needs to be eradicated. On the contrary, the Greek MEP from New Democracy, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi and the Polish MEP from Civic Platform both presented claims opposite to the Czech MEP's claims and calling the Istanbul Convention as "the most comprehensive legislation of supranational power" (Vozemberg-Vrionidi) and "the gold standard for anti-violence policy" (Kozłowska-Rajewicz). The Greek MEP's statements reflected more judicial point of view due to her judicial background. The Polish MEP specifically highlighted the fact that the Convention states that

neither tradition nor religion can be used to justify violence against women such as FGM, child marriage, as well as sexual harassment. Moreover, she has described the heated debate that took place in Poland on this matter as the Catholic church and the Polish right-wing MPs who issued official statements on “gender ideology” and opposed the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Poland whereas the government (in which her party PO was ruling) supported by the Sejm (the lower house of the Polish parliament) and civil society, initiated the signing and ratifying the Convention. Given her position as the European Parliament coordinator on children’s rights and co-rapporteur of the Istanbul Convention, the Swedish MEP from Moderaterna, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt emphasized the role of the Istanbul Convention and her commitment to zero tolerance of all discussions categorized under Violence Against Women and Girls. While strongly urging the remaining Member States to ratify the Convention, she also pointed out that the Convention is neither about ideology nor about religion dismissing the claims of other Member States on their rejection to ratify the Convention. On all her speeches she addressed both women and girls as victims an indication of her commitment to children’s rights. Moreover, she has strongly disapproved the French populist radical right-wing politicians for using women victims of violence to campaign for an election and portraying the perpetrators as non-white.

4.6 Civil and Political Issues

Among the strategic issues discussed by the MEPs, the least discussed issues by the conservative MEPs were the Civil and Political Issues. As limited number of discussions were present in the data, only three themes emerged from the subcategory. Nevertheless, they are by no means insignificant as they discussed about crucial matters such as the situation and rights of refugee women, supporting women human rights defenders and directives on maternity leave policy. On this matter, party ideology was reflected on how the MEPs supported the legislation.

Czech, Polish and Swedish MEPs all agreed on the necessity and the importance of maternity leave policy for compensating mothers on maternity leave and both Swedish and the Czech MEP stated that although maternity leave is a state competence, they welcome the motion to have a standard minimum across Europe whereas the Polish MEP has approved the incentives for the mandatory paternity leave, and voted in favor of the maternity directive as a whole of the EU. On the issue of supporting women human rights defenders all three MEPs (Czech Republic, Poland and Sweden) were in agreement that women human rights defenders are particularly vulnerable and face numerous difficulties due to their gender and deemed supporting important and necessary. Unfortunately, there was no data available for the Greek MEP to be included in the analysis. It can be concluded that she did not partake in the discussion on these matters. On the discussion about the situation of migrant and refugee women, all four MEPs acknowledged the gender dimension of the situation and the vulnerability of the refugee and migrant women. They all raised the importance and the urgency of protecting the refugee and migrant women from violence, exploitation, sexual harassment and trafficking however, the Polish MEP and the Swedish MEP raised the issue of integrating them into the labor market thus aiding for their economic independence and equality. Whereas the Greek and the Czech MEPs supported the alternative proposal of the EPP Group, the Polish MEP stated that she supported the original proposal drafted by MEP from the center-left S&D group.

4.7 Practical Issues of women

From the data set, two themes emerged as practical issues of women: 1. Cancer prevention and treatment and 2. Exposure to harmful substances. In regard to the European Code Against Cancer initiative of the European Commission, the European Parliament discussed about the policy challenges and strategies against women's cancers and related comorbidities. During the

plenary sessions, the Czech MEP emphasized the commonality of breast cancer in Europe and highlighted the importance of healthy lifestyle, healthy nutrition and screening and early diagnosis to be promoted as part of women's cancer prevention program bringing gender dimension to the issue. Whereas, the Polish MEP emphasized the importance of accessibility to the best standard of treatment both in Western Europe and Eastern Europe. Moreover, she has contributed to the debates regarding women's exposure to harmful substances and drugs that cause infertility, reproductive system diseases and fetal malformation, compensating and supporting the victims who were exposed to thalidomide, a harmful drug that caused miscarriages and deformities in thousands of children during the 1950s and 1960s. She encouraged workplace safety and stricter drug safety testing of substances as well as increased research on pregnancy and prenatal drugs.

In summary, the analysis in this section drew attention to the particular contributions that conservative MEPs brought to the floor of the European Parliament. Qualitative investigation and categorization of different women's issues allowed demonstration of the policy prioritization and preferences of the conservative MEPs. Even, while discussing about the same women's issues under same theme, ideological differences between the conservative MEPs were observed. Findings suggested that whereas similar arguments were made on the basis of the political group ideology, differences were mainly observed due to the national political party ideology and secondary committee membership. Nevertheless, despite the variation among them, the conservative MEPs placed women's economical, social, cultural and political issues at the center of their legislative contribution thus indicating the presence of substantive representation of women.

5. Chapter Five. Conclusive Discussion

Limited number of studies looked at the conservative substantive representation of women in the European Parliament. Conservative women and their views on women's issues as well as their relationship to their parties are poorly understood. Consequently, conservative women's unique, but gendered, perspectives on policies are never fully evaluated. This research's investigation of conservative MEPs' framing and prioritization of women's issue contributes to the literature by shedding light on the understanding of the conservative MEPs' views on women's issues and their relationship to their parties and hence the consequences of having conservative women's participation in the European Parliament to an extent. The first analytical puzzle of this research was to look into the policy prioritization and preference of the conservatives MEPs. The findings from Chapter 4.3 suggested that the conservative MEPs prioritize strategic policies related to women's economic, social and cultural issues. The findings also confirmed to an extent that even when the conservative MEPs agree on the same issue, party ideology reflected the differences on how they construct certain issues. This was more prominent in the case of when the MEPs stated their positions on discussions about work-family issues and on instruments that require a change in their state gender regime such as the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and on abortion matters. This analysis thus confirms the first suggested expectation of the research generating the below hypothesis:

H1: The conservative MEPs are more in agreement with women's traditional and practical issues such as family, and childcare than strategic women's policy issues such as crimes related to women and women's reproductive rights

An in-depth look allowed for identification of intragroup variations and types of conservatism among the MEPs. The conservative MEPs could be divided into ultraconservative

and moderate. The Czech MEP showed more ultraconservative tendencies compared to the other three MEPs by rejecting legal abortion and denying the recognition of same-sex couple's rights although Czech Republic legalized registered partnership for same-sex couples. The gender constructs of women as workers and mothers are predominant in all speeches made by the Czech MEP reflecting her national political party ideology. Consistent with the Celis and Childs' (2012) argument that the interests and issues championed by the conservatives tend to be claims that can be "safely" including sex trafficking and women's development aid. Accordingly, the conservative MEPs championed such claims such as the rights of refugee women and children and rights of women human rights defenders. Moreover, Childs and Krook (2009) argued that such claims prefer to exclude domestic women as victims as it might require disturbance in the gender regime or state intervention. A specific example of this is the Swedish and Czech MEPs' portrayal of human trafficking affecting only foreign-born women outside EU. From the general pattern of the issues evoked and mandated by the MEPs, it can be inferred from the findings that the conservative MEPs were divided as ultraconservative who are loyal to their national party and disloyal to their political group EPP Group in the case of the Czech MEP, moderates who are loyal to their national party as well as to their political group in the case of the Greek MEP, and liberal conservatives who are loyal to their national party and disloyal to their political group on certain issues in a more feminist approach in the case of the Polish and the Swedish MEP. The Polish MEP and the Swedish MEP case shows that both conservative and feminist interests are represented by the conservative MEPs. Liberal feminism refers to a perspective of the political, economic and social equality of both genders (Rhodebeck, 1996). The second expectation of this research predicted that conservative MEPs from countries with higher gender equality index would be more supportive of the liberal stance on women's issues. However, according to the

findings of this research, it can be concluded that the Polish MEP emerged as an outlier in the line of expectations for this research thus rendering the second expectation of this research inconclusive as both Polish MEP and the Swedish MEPs were more supportive of the liberal and feminist stance on women's issues although the gender equality index of Poland is much lower than Sweden and even lower than the EU average. However, the hypothesis (H1) presented in this research can be tested in other studies because findings developed through comparative analysis improve generalizability. The findings based on the data taken from parliamentary debates in the European Parliament contributes to the study of substantive representation of women from a comparative conservative perspective and of conservative women's representation in Central Europe.

The research analysis and findings are clearly limited by the fact that data comes from only plenary speeches and from only four member states (Czech Republic, Greece, Poland and Sweden) within the European People's Party Group (EPP Group). For instance, Pauline Cullen (2018) interviewed six Irish women members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to provide insights into their substantive representation of women in the EP and Kantola and Augustin (2019) interviewed 18 women MEPs from Denmark and Finland to investigate the perceptions of gender equality in their European Parliament (EP) party groups. Cullen noted that "although the research provided focus on the views with strategically placed actors, the generalizability of the research findings and explanatory capacity is of course limited" (Cullen, 2018, p. 485) whereas Kantola and Augustin claims that they were able to produce similar interview data enhancing its quality. Although the initial purpose of this research was to conduct similar interviews from the MEPs, extraordinary circumstances caused by worldwide pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has rendered the interviews impossible hence limited the primary data to plenary

speeches only. Nevertheless, an analysis of these four countries' conservative women MEPs' enactment on substantive women's representation is valuable as it exposes the issues mandated by the conservative women and their contestation and consensus within their party group on certain women's issues. Moreover, explaining the consensus and contestation among the conservative MEPs by looking at the national political party ideology and national political environment, also creates an insight on different factors that affect the substantive representation of women by the conservative women MEPs. However, the research findings need to be supplement with interviews and data from more member states to diversify the representation from MEPs from different member states in the EPP Group. Following this thinking, further research on investigating the relative impact of feminist and conservative women on policy debates and outcomes in the European Parliament would also be an important contribution to the literature. Such research would give a broad understanding of conservative substantive representation of women in the European Parliament.

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Appendix

The codebook

Violence Against Women and Girls

Violence Against Women and Girls					Sub-subcategories
Raised by the Czech MEP	Raised by the Greek MEP	Raised by the Polish MEP	Raised by the Swedish MEP	Codes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe legal abortion is one form of violence against women - The EU should protect the right to life - Sexual and reproductive health and sex education is a national matter. - IC is redundant since law against domestic violence is already implement in Czech Republic - Enforcement of zero tolerance of violence in practice is more important than the ratification of the Convention - I do not agree with the recommendation for the adoption of the Istanbul Convention, with the inclusion of sexual and reproductive health issues and with specific health care for transgender people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention is necessary - IC is the comprehensive and targeted approach to tackling gender-based violence - IC is the most comprehensive legislation of supranational power - Change the mentality of the society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Istanbul Convention as the gold standard for anti-violence policy and a road map for building national programs to combat violence - Violence cannot be justified by tradition or religion - Importance of provisions on the protection of women during motherhood - Key to preventing violence is to promote gender equality - Appeal to the Commission and the European Council to implement the plan for the accession of the EU to the Istanbul Convention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The EU accession to the Convention strengthens accountability for Member States and external action of the EU in promoting women's rights globally. - I do ask the Commission again to clarify, together with the Council of Europe, this misleading interpretation and engage in dialogue with the Member States on the issues that prevent the full ratification and implementation. - So together today, let's call on the Presidency to put the Istanbul Convention on the agenda of the European Council for as long as it takes, and call on all countries – Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia and Ukraine – to engage with civil society, with religious leaders, across political parties based on facts. - All women and girls should feel free and safe in Europe, and no tradition or culture can justify men's violence against women. - I will remain committed to zero tolerance to any violence against women and girls. 	<p align="center">Ratification Accession Zero Tolerance Istanbul Convention Gold standard Comprehensive legislation No cultural or religious justification</p>	<p>Accession to Istanbul Convention</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If we look at geography, it is mainly women from Albania, China, Morocco, Nigeria and Vietnam. Of course, such human trafficking cannot be tolerated, and it is therefore right that we are looking for solutions that are more effective. - I agree that the dignity and human rights of every human being, including migrants and refugees, must be respected and that illegal migration and human trafficking must be prevented in all possible ways. - I would like to emphasize that it is the non-profit sector that is a very important partner in the fight against human trafficking, and I would therefore recommend that other countries also consider involving it more. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although European law on the prevention and suppression of human trafficking is present, the harmonization of Member States remains incomplete with the introduction of effective legal protection mechanisms, criminal punishment of perpetrators and victim protection - It is our duty to join forces and work together more effectively at the cross-border level, because the trafficking of women and girls does not discriminate and concerns us all 	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Together with the EPP, and as co-chair of the Intergroup on Children's Rights, I will continue to be committed to zero tolerance against trafficking. - Tonight, we stand united to urge the Member States to do more, faster and better, to stop trafficking - The time has come for the Anti-Trafficking Directive to be fully enforced by all Member States - The EU and the Member States must urgently act to deal with Libya and the trafficking routes, taking into account the gender dimension. - We welcome the Commission's commitment but, once again, we ask for a new anti-trafficking strategy post-2016. - Most victims are women and girls, exploited for prostitution in Europe and more and more are migrants, and more and more are abused online. - The majority of victims of trafficking in human beings continue to be women and girls, and now increasingly migrants. - We are calling on you, Commissioner, to present as soon as possible the report on compliance, ensuring a clear gender perspective because, as you said, sexual exploitation is one of the biggest causes of trafficking, as are the protection of victims (girls, women and people with special needs), reducing demand and supply and holding the users responsible. 	<p>Zero tolerance against trafficking Stop trafficking Human trafficking Women victims Trafficking Strategy Human rights</p>	<p>Trafficking in Women and Girls</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures against these practices, with which we cannot agree, are above all education, a change in society's approach to human rights, to human dignity 	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This is Art. 12 conventions and today, when we talk about marriages with children, it is worth recalling this message of the convention, because in this room there are MPs who oppose this convention and are just opposing the content of art. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I call on the High Representative on the Commission to do more in all EU external action to eliminate child marriage by helping countries to adopt and to enforce legislation. - This Parliament should join forces and send a clear message – we are 	<p>Marriages with children Force children to marry Education Child marriage</p>	<p>Forced Marriage /Child Marriage</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This means more education and better living conditions are the solution. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These problems are addressed by the Istanbul Convention, which clearly determines that forced marriages and marriages with children are a form of violence and requires signatories of the convention to recognize that it is a criminal act to force children to marry. - Another very important tool is, of course, the Istanbul Convention, which prohibits forced marriages - and I am proud that Poland has recently joined the group of European Union countries that have ratified this convention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - committed to a zero-tolerance policy on child marriage. - It is a global phenomenon affecting millions of girls, and with access to the Istanbul Convention we have more legal tools and more comprehensive means to deal with it in the world. 		
<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A prerequisite for promoting gender equality is the elimination of violence against women and harmful practices such as forced marriages, honor killings or female genital mutilation. - Opposition to genital mutilation of girls and women is also reflected in art. 38 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which has already been ratified by 8 EU countries, and a further 14 member states have signed it and is in the process of ratification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I fully support the EU commitment to step up cooperation with third countries, providing technical assistance to encourage the adoption of laws banning FGM, and ensuring that these laws are fully enforced. - And no culture, no tradition can justify this terrible violence. - We call once again on all Member States to ratify and enforce the Convention fully. - The time has come for the Member States to enforce the laws that criminalise FGM. - To eradicate FGM in Europe we need to eradicate impunity in Europe. 	<p>Honor killings FGM No cultural justification Enforcement of IC Criminalise FGM</p>	<p>Female Genital Mutilation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - So if we want to support and encourage women, Union law establishes a framework for the operation of audiovisual services and provisions guaranteeing equal employment opportunities as well as protection against 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I think that today's debate is very important, not because we are currently discussing it and giving the victims another incentive to denounce and claim their rights, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After all, no new law entered into force, no breakthrough in procedures took place. - The problem is that this is a hidden phenomenon and that these cases are not reported because there is widespread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Too many women are still victims of sexual harassment at work. - In public there are cases where even going to a swimming pool or to a music festival poses a danger of harassment or rape, and persecution in the social media has become a global phenomenon affecting an entire generation. 	<p>Protection Discrimination systematically intimidated Harassed Sexual exploitation Sick mentalities No new jurisdiction</p>	<p>Sexual Harassment and Abuse</p>

<p>discrimination, harassment and sexual violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our report deplors sexism and the abundance of cases of sexual harassment in the media. - In cyberspace, women are systematically intimidated and harassed on a daily basis, not to mention cases of sexual exploitation. 	<p>but because it is a matter of which existed, exists and unfortunately will exist, as long as there are relaxed consciences and sick mentalities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective treatment of all forms of gender-based violence requires coordinated action to prevent, inform and raise awareness and encourage victims to report any act of violence, away from fear, shame, social stereotypes and economic or emotional dependence on perpetrators. - It is imperative that the Istanbul Convention be ratified by all Member States and that new legislation be put in place to further protect the rights of abused women - Therefore, we must systematically ensure that there is special education at all stages of education, which will analyze the causes of violence, the profile of perpetrators / victims and the conditions under which violence takes place. 	<p>public consent for this phenomenon to remain hidden.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the era of increasing cultural diversity in Europe, this document takes on a new meaning and becomes a direct tool helpful in resolving conflicts of values that may affect the assessment of events, e.g. sexual attacks on women, depending on the ethnic origin or religion of the attacker or victim. - In my opinion, the basic tool to combat this phenomenon is education, because it gives you a pass to further professional life, gives you the opportunity to be economically independent - and awareness of your rights and money are the basic tools to prevent and protect yourself against violence 	<p>-</p>	<p>Sexual attacks on women Sexual harassment persecution</p>	
<p>Civil and Political Issues</p>					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The situation of refugee women deserves our attention, we must take into account their vulnerability, the threat of violence and their obligations to children. - That is why I supported the PPE resolution, which addresses the situation of refugees with the necessary understanding - We want to be in solidarity, but we cannot guarantee them more care and rights than women and children in the European Union. - I am very sorry that Members of the European Parliament have misused the situation of the migration crisis to promote 'gender' ideology in asylum and integration policy - The report contains provisions encouraging Frontex to take a "gender" approach into account in its work, encourages Member States to guarantee women unrestricted access to quality education, health services, employment and accommodation. to guarantee women broad access to sexual and reproductive health and other rights that go beyond EU competences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That is why, far from populist interventions and amendments, I have supported the alternative proposal of the European People's Party, which focuses purely on the problems facing women refugees in particular, as a consequence of their forced displacement. such as violence, exploitation and sexual harassment, including trafficking for reasons of sexual and labor exploitation. - Recognizing the rights of women at all levels, especially refugee women, who are vulnerable, possibly with children in their arms, are at risk of becoming victims of all forms of violent behavior is a priority for our political group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - However, the main theme of the report - the situation of women refugees - is extremely important and urgent. - It condemns the sexual violence against refugees, which occurs both in the country of origin, when traveling to Europe, but also in reception centers already in the EU - Mrs Honeyball's report calls on the Member States to properly safeguard the rights of refugees, provide them with separate accommodation, restrooms and showers in reception centers, basic medical care, including for pregnant women, and legal advice. - It condemns the sexual violence against refugees, which occurs both in the country of origin, when traveling to Europe, but also in reception centers already in the EU. Condemns forcing refugees into prostitution (to pay off the trip), undeclared work, using their desperation and the need to raise funds for themselves and their children; calls for support in family search and reunification programs - I voted in favor of the report on the implementation of the European Progress Microfinance Facility and supported the amendments highlighting the value of this instrument for the integration of women, immigrants and refugees into the labor market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr President, I welcome the UN Global Compact on migration and refugees. - Migrants suffer ransom, forced labour, sexual abuse, torture - Let's do more: fewer traffickers in Agadez, Niger, means fewer irregular migrants to Europe, but also fewer deaths in the Mediterranean, in the desert and less labouring in Libya and I finish by saying that the Global Compact should also focus on children and promote gender equality in the world, with zero tolerance for violence against women and children. - Respect for women should become a social norm, but we can never stigmatise migrants for violence in Europe. - My last point, Mr President, raised by colleagues, is the issue of migrants also having rights and duties, and having to respect our laws, and religious culture never being an excuse to oppress women - To have a job and economic independence are key for women's equality and, in particular now, for the integration of migrant women in our society 	<p>Vulnerable Obligations to children PPE proposal UN global compact on migration and refugees Migrants Refugees 'gender' ideology in asylum stigmatise migrants the rights of refugees, of migrants also having rights and duties</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Migrant and Refugee Women</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That is why I support the use of this instrument to integrate refugees and migrants into the labor market, but I am against making asylum seekers the main recipient of the program, because even because of the unclear legal situation they could not properly use these funds and act in accordance with the purpose for which the microfinance instrument was called. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I want to talk about women defending human rights because they are naturally more physically and mentally vulnerable. - Although we do not have to look only for women activists and human rights activists in third countries, these are still much more serious problems that women outside the EU face. - It can also be helpful in monitoring and supporting concrete examples of human rights defenders. - Mr President, let me mention one more human rights defender, which we must not omit, and that is Mother Teresa 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women human rights defenders, especially those operating in remote, poorer, developing regions of the world experience many obstacles in their work. - We should recognize the difficult role of human rights defenders and understand the scale and type of difficulties they face on their way in seeking human rights, including women's rights, and understand that some of these difficulties are due to the fact that they are women. - I would like to ask you what mechanisms and practices the European Commission uses to support human rights defenders, and what role do EU delegations play in this? What is the Commission doing to strengthen the position of women human rights defenders and increase the value and recognition of their positions? Finally, are the local cultural context sufficiently taken into account in these actions aimed at supporting women human rights defenders? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We need also to support the courageous women who dare to speak out and to stand up against long-standing tradition. 	<p>support the courageous women women defending human rights women activists and human rights activists Challenges of human rights defenders Support women human rights defenders</p>	Women Human Rights Defenders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From its level, the European Union cannot tell the Member States what to do, but we can say from this level that we 	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Therefore, it is necessary to compensate for breaks in work resulting from the birth of a child by the state paying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I abstained in the final vote, as many other parts should be dealt with at national level, such as the Maternity Leave Directive. 	<p>Compensation for breaks Birth o</p>	Maternity Leave

<p>respect women who have children, that we respect women who have the courage to have more children, and that these women need to have adequate maternity leave, parental leave and also financial security at this time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It names specific measures that need to be taken so that women can return to scientific life after maternity leave without being missed by the train and losing touch with developments in the field. - I think that supporting mothers on maternity leave, creating the best possible conditions for the compatibility of maternity and professional roles, is in the interests of the European Union, but it is above all in the interests of the Member States. - Mr President, I am fortunate to come from the Czech Republic, a country with one of the longest maternity leave, it is 28 weeks and it grants mothers 70% of their previous salary. - But I know that it is different in the European Union, which is why I agree with the ambition to have a common minimum standard 		<p>pension contributions for the time spent on maternity or parental leave</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On issues that differentiate positions within the group, I voted in favor of the maternity directive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maternity leave, Madam President, should be parental leave. - Family policy should be decided at national level. - It is okay that we can add the minimum but not the obligation at European level, when we are finally talking about subsidiarity, to start doing better at European level 		
Economic, Social and Cultural Issues					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Madam President, I understand the intention of colleagues who are trying to establish equality between women and men to reduce the gender pay gap, but ladies and gentlemen, this is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A third category is due to the pay gap between men and women, a problem that in many cases requires an appeal to the courts to restore equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In fact, we are talking about incentives for women here, we should be talking not so much about incentives as about stopping throwing logs at the feet of women, so that the visible and invisible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Because wages, working time, pensions, parental leave and unemployment benefits are a national competence - Member States should take concrete measures to eliminate the gender pay gap, including addressing the root causes. 	<p>Pay gap National competence Barriers on the labor market</p>	Gender Pay Gap/ Pension Gap

<p>not a good path that you have chosen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tax decision-making, the tax system, is, after all, primarily the competence of the Member States. - For example, in the Czech Republic, even at a time of economic growth, we still have a gender pay gap of more than 12%, both in the government sector and in the business sector. - To support women in flexible working hours through public policies, incentives for businesses, it is necessary to ensure that the pay gap and women's pensions are reduced. - I would like to stick to the European Commission's 2013 monitoring, which provides clear data that the pay gap between women and men has still narrowed only minimally by only 1%, and that a large employment gap of around 5% persists. - Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, I consider the private pillar and supplementary pensions to be a complementary form to be decided by the Member States. - However, the question of the future of pensions should not be reduced to just what is better, whether public or private pension systems - The EP truly reveals in its report that the reason for the difference in women's and men's pensions is the interruption of professional careers and fewer years of 	<p>and equal access for women to specific positions in research programs.</p>	<p>barriers on the labor market will finally disappear, so that there is no pay gap, glass ceiling so that there is no pension gap and a number of other things that women have to deal with when they enter the labor market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In our daily work in Parliament, we often talk about unsolved women's problems in the European Union, the pay gap and the pension gap, promotion rates, and violence against women. - The pay gap or work in less paid sectors and in lower positions is similar. - I would like to point out that the pay gap illustrates and diagnoses only a fragment of the pay and economic disparities between women and men - Commissioner! I am calling for a change in the methodology for calculating differences in earnings and for using the overall gap or the pension gap as an indicator of differences between men and women. - I voted in favor of the report on the implementation of Directive 2006/54 / EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, because it recommends the introduction of practical solutions to reduce pay gap, such as job classification and valuation systems based on clear and comparable criteria. - At the same time, he points out that for the full liquidation of the pay and wage gap and the related 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The principle of equal pay for equal jobs is still not respected in all the Member States. - This creates inequality even later when women have lower pensions. - Mr President, it is clear that much more needs to be done to ensure equality for women in employment 	<p>Equal opportunities of work Pension gap Gender pay gap Unsolved women's problems Equal opportunities Equal treatment Lower pensions for women Gap indicator</p>	
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<p>work due to unpaid work that women and mothers do in their families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - But it turns out that the funds seem to be missing their goals, because in the long run the goal of equal pay as well as equal pensions, which are constantly very different, and women who take care of children and families all their lives, then have undignified pensions. - In particular, income inequality persists, which is reflected in the large pension gap (39% EU average). - Childcare families are at risk of poverty because, instead of earning money and investing in pension funds, they spend part of their professional careers caring for children. - Parents of children are discriminated against because they take care of children instead of saving and making money and investing in pension funds - We do know that it has not been possible to increase women's salaries, that there really is still a 16% difference in the European Union, that there is still a difference in pensions, 39% between women and men, that although there is a large representation of women in universities, this does not correspond to this. , in what number are women represented in leading positions in companies, in political positions or at universities - Sadly, women in the European Union have, on average, 39% 		<p>pension gap, wider actions are also needed in the form of an effective policy of combining professional and family responsibilities, which will ensure that women and men participate in the labor market on an equal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is also a pension gap between men and women of almost 40% and a work-home balance. - Let me remind you that the pension gap in the European Union is currently 38%. - This is not fair and should also be changed because care responsibilities are the first obstacle for women to work, and breaks and restrictions at work result in a 40% pension gap in the world's richest economy. - We also know that increasing the number of women in these high-paying, attractive sectors could help reduce the pay and pension gap, because women would simply earn more - Hence the pension gap is the best, most aggregate indicator of gender inequality - much more accurate and true than the wage gap, because it covers a broader spectrum of time and causes, as well as effects. - You need to look for answers to the pension gap also in the pension system, but proposing e.g. a guaranteed pension regardless of your work history - because such proposals were made when working on the report - must be met with opposition from politicians seeking effective and lasting solutions focused on the gender gap, and not on pensions as such - The presented report by Constance Le Grip is a balanced, 			
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<p>lower pensions and 15% lower wages than men</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The pension gap has not improved at all, 39%, which is an alarming figure, and I think it clearly shows how women are in a socio-economic position - 		<p>rational proposal in which, according to the opinions of experts, we combine the pension gap and potential solutions with the causes of this phenomenon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To close the pension gap, women must be allowed to work out a pensions in accordance with their professional preparation and potential on an equitable basis. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You also need to constantly monitor the pension gap, for which we need properly collected data and appropriate indicators to adjust your policies and reduce the pension gap in the future. - Greater participation of women in the labor market based on the principles of the same pay for the same work and fair promotion is the best recipe against women's poverty, the pension gap and a chance to make full use of talents in the economy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Because the pension gap is a cumulative indicator of inequalities that women experience in connection with their professional life and participation in the labor market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The pension gap should be addressed by looking at its causes, not symptoms - And I am very pleased with the announcement of the creation of a strategy, a strategy to examine the pension gap in general, because this is a problem of all Member States, therefore it should be solved also at the level of the European Union. - I also welcome the fact that the report addresses one of the most important problems in the European Union, which is the 38% pension gap. 			
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The presence of women on the labor market has a significant impact on the amount of their pensions and is the first reason that can help close the pension gap - the 39% pension gap in Europe is a great shame - The pension gap accumulates inequalities in the labor market throughout life and shows uneven, asymmetrical distribution of roles in homes. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We invite the Member States and the actors of the sector to implement positive measures so that women are more equitably represented, and to introduce quotas if possible and necessary. - The Union directive on women on boards of directors "shows us a way to go and criteria to be respected, - Our job, our business, is to ensure that women are better represented in the media and treated with respect - After all, it is precisely in the interests of companies and organizations that there be more women on the administrative and supervisory boards, as has already been said here. - The proposal for an EU directive on the 40% representation of women on the supervisory and boards of directors of companies argues that only 15% of women in these bodies and the resulting inequalities. - Those who appoint and elect governing bodies should be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women are underrepresented; only 31% of entrepreneurship is represented by women, the self-employed, while the goal of the "EU 2020" strategy is, as you know, to cover about 75%, but the underrepresentation of women is, as I said, in all levels; in business, in finance, in senior positions, in science, in research, in technology, in academia. - Because, if these prejudices are not removed and new perceptions are not born through the projection of the right standards and achievements of women, then we will again reach five years, in ten years to talk about inequalities; a discussion that distinguishes women from men, which does not recognize that women are men and half the planet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moreover, virtually no Member State is questioning the purpose of this directive, so the question may be asked: why is it not yet available and why is the presence of women on boards in some Member States, in the top bodies of listed companies of large companies, only 7%? - If the subsidiarity argument were true and honest, Member States would introduce solutions that would eliminate this disproportion. - It is obvious that there are other mechanisms that need to be reacted here, and apparently, since there are no effects at Member State level, this response must come from the European Union level - I strongly support this directive - Commissioner Viviane Reding's excellent directive - and it is high time that it is competence and not other factors that decide about the appointment of people to the highest positions - Let me remind you that this directive speaks of transparent recruitment rules, that recruitments for such high positions have clearly defined criteria, that we know how this process takes place, and that it does not take place on the basis of the selection of colleagues from the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women are important actors in our economy, an asset for our economies, and the time has come for Member States to recognise the full potential of female entrepreneurship and to adopt clear strategies to remove all forms of discrimination and existing obstacles, from facilitating access to capital and reducing red tape to any other form of discrimination. We must also combat stereotypes. - It should be easier for women to start a business and to be entrepreneurs - Women's empowerment is crucial, and – as you said, Commissioner – it is also for the benefit of the European economy and growth - It is crucial to increase business training and education, and to develop a culture of second chance, so that women can believe that they can do it and start a company. - We need to create the conditions for all women to access the labour market without discrimination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Glass ceiling - Women on Boards - Women in Media Sector - Women in Science and Universities - Professional Women - Women in Management Positions - Gender Mainstreaming 	<p style="text-align: center;">Equal Representation of Women</p>

<p>interested in harnessing the potential of women.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personally, I have long supported the representation of women in political and public positions, I support the building of their professional and academic careers. - Greater sense should be considered for quotas for gender balance in public administrations, possibly in the governing bodies of companies owned by the state or public entities and also in electoral laws. - However, the representation of women on the supervisory boards of large companies is more in the interest of the companies themselves - For private companies, the European Commission should come up with positive motivation rather than regulation - Promoting equal treatment in employment is therefore an ongoing task that we must continue to support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is a debate that does not honor our values, does not honor our principles, does not honor women, does not honor Europe. - The result is, in essence, the underrepresentation of women in science and technology, as well as in business councils. - Only if the mentality changes and to change the mentality, ladies and gentlemen, does the nursery called family, the nursery called school, with education and systematic guidance need to educate children so that future generations understand that between men and women there is no difference in the opportunities that individuals are entitled to, especially in key areas such as education, higher positions, 	<p>calendar from school years, only that they are transparent and clear for everyone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full use of women's qualifications, education and talents brings real profits to companies and the economy. - Perhaps these alternative methods of achieving the goal, other than in the directive, could be somehow said good-bye to this directive and then maybe we would achieve the goal, because in fact we want women to break through the glass ceiling, that women's competences and women's talents are not wasted and that women could take responsibility for the effects of work not only in politics, but also in business. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For the reasons set out above, I would expect the European Parliament to encourage the Member States to pursue a pro-family policy - I also find it unacceptable for the European Parliament to call on the European Commission to present a directive on compulsory two-week and fully paid paternity leave - Paternity leave yes, but it must be on a voluntary basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motherhood, a woman's privilege and gift from nature, becomes an obstacle when she absorbs time that could otherwise be devoted to the realization of a woman's ambitions. - It is an obstacle that stems in part from stereotypes about how much time a woman should devote to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - as a PPE representative, I emphasize that because for women the main obstacle in the presence of the labor market and promotion is the issue of childcare, the issue of work-life balance is absolutely crucial in this matter, which does not mean that this directive is not a necessary and important additional impulse that can fix the matter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women and men should also have the same opportunity to combine family and career - Women should have the same rights and opportunities as men to achieve work—life balance - Mothers are not the only parents responsible for taking care of children - To improve equality for women we need to stop considering women as the sole parent responsible for children and encourage both parents to take care of their kids. 	<p>Work-life balance Family policy Paternity leave Voluntary paternity leave Privilege of motherhood Both parents as caretakers Support for mothers</p>	<p>Work-family Policy</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discrimination is unacceptable, which is why we should support, at this European level, all measures that promote the position of women in society and enable them to make free choices, a decent motherhood and a professional career. - Surprisingly, no woman has asked me to introduce quotas, but women have repeatedly asked me to improve the conditions for the compatibility of their parental role and employment. - I am convinced that we will support the economic position of women by recognizing the value of motherhood and their parental care, by enabling a choice between parental and professional careers. - And I think it is also up to us, the European Parliament, to add what, at least for me, is missing, and that is a greater appreciation for women who care and want to take care of their children, because they see their irreplaceable place there, and that is their motherhood and family care. - However, the EU's strategy must be a fundamental challenge, supporting motherhood and rewarding the work of caring parents - To encourage young people to have children, mothers, not to be afraid to give birth, we need to create favorable conditions for this and be able to appreciate motherhood. - We have also stated that the issue of the disadvantaged 	<p>motherhood and how much time she can devote to pursuing her goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The issue of maternity and parental leave, flexible working hours, the home worker market, nurseries, kindergartens and nursing homes is also still valid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first emancipates fought for the right to education and to work, and we here in Parliament today, having largely dealt with this matter, are fighting for the right to motherhood and to have a family on some rational terms. - Our fight for equal treatment should not be ideological and it should not involve imposing a model. - It is about women's individual choice and dignity. 		
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<p>position of women, which is linked to their motherhood, needs to be addressed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For women's housework and childcare, we must value women and allow them to return to work, if that is their choice - I would also like the European Union's policy to clearly appreciate motherhood and parenthood. - I want society, including the European Parliament, to appreciate the irreplaceable role of women in their motherhood and for women to be supported in fulfilling this mission. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The European Union should protect the right to life and not promote abortion. - I believe that we should protect the lives of everyone, both women and unborn children. - Do you really think that abortion is the best solution to prevent further rape? - Where violence and rape are part of everyday life, my colleague mentioned it, we can say Sudan, Syria, where supporting abortion is really not the answer. - Namely, the report approved passages calling for the expansion of sexual and reproductive rights, in other words, the promotion of abortion in the world. - I do not see a difference, but unfortunately paragraph four has not been deleted and so the report combines the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The abortion and reproductive rights of women have always been sensitive social issues, which still concern societies and people of all ages, regardless of gender - This explains the differences in the legislation of the Member States on this issue, which proves the dependence of the legal regulation of the issue in many cases on established social and religious perceptions. - What we need to understand, in any case, is that in this field not only white or black is valid, so all different views seem to have their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These are the exceptions that we are currently fighting for to be in El Salvador, and which make it possible to construct a law that is conservative and that protects life, but also which notices that a woman is a living being and a citizen. - As in the previous report on this subject, I was against the paragraphs on increasing the availability of abortion for social reasons. - I voted in favor of the resolution on the dramatic consequences of the introduction of a total ban on abortion in El Salvador in 1998 - In addition, in El Salvador, women who have miscarried, gave birth to a dead child or experience pregnancy complications, are suspected and often accused of attempting an abortion or even 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That is a general shared women's right, and women's rights are human rights. - It is the right to our health, to our reproductive health, to our body, and to our freedom to choose. - It is about women that are being raped, women that are victims of incest, possible health complication, miscarriages. - It is a matter of our health. - We cannot be criminalised; no woman in the world can be criminalised for that - No doctor who is trying to help a woman with a health problem related to birth can be sent to prison when doing their job. - And yes, we in the PPE, think that family legislation is a national issue - The risk is that women's mortality is going to increase and that there will be more illegal and unsafe abortion. - What we are talking about is not whether you are for abortion or against abortion 	<p>Abortion Protection of Unborn children Right to our body Freedom to choose Miscarriage criminalized Restrictive abortion Promotion of abortion</p>	<p>Abortion</p>

<p>incompatible, the fight against violence against women and the right to abortion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In addition, this report extends the concept to other irrelevant groups and, in particular, calls for the availability of abortion and recommends that Member States enforce abortion, regardless of the right of doctors and health professionals to make their own decisions - I do not agree with EU funding for abortion beyond life-saving interventions - Personally, I am against abortion, and I think that everything must be done so that women do not have to make abortion decisions so that they can look forward to their children - As a member of the Christian Democratic Party, I say that this policy protects women, protects the unborn life, protects every life, so we should also support this policy, which protects motherhood and parenthood, in the interests of life - When I presented a bill in the Czech Parliament in 2003 to protect the unborn life and to tighten access to abortion, I was inspired by the law that is in force in Poland today. - Poland has a law that allows abortion only in the event of a woman's life threatening or rape, and the number of abortions, 2000 per year, corresponds to this. 	<p>own social, moral or legal basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personally, as a woman but also as a lawyer, who is particularly concerned with family and criminal law in Greece, where abortion is allowed under certain strict conditions, I believe that the gap between free access to abortion and the protection of pregnant woman's rights can be bridged after careful legislative study, taking into account serious medical factors 	<p>the murder of a child, and are sentenced to dozens of years of severe prison.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At this point it is worth noting that the ideas of a total ban on abortion appear in public space also in Europe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No woman or girl should have to risk her life to have a baby. - 		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Life is worthy of our protection from conception to the natural end. 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr President, ensuring a level playing field for women with disabilities, whether in education, health or the workplace, should be a matter of course. - For example, women with disabilities often have difficulty seeking the help of regular doctors in practice. - These women also face a difficult approach in other services and face various forms of violence. - It draws attention to these problems and hopes that this resolution will provide an impetus for states to ensure better services. - Madam President, although I consider equal access for women with disabilities to be very important and I agree that Member States should make greater efforts in this area, I could not support the draft report because of the fundamental reservations I have about some of the recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are 80 million people with disabilities in Europe, of which 46 million are women. - Only 18% of them (women) have employment. - Why are so few disabled women entering the labor market? - What regulations or lack thereof do preclude the economic independence of disabled women? - After all, today's technologies, as the resolution draws attention, give people with disabilities great opportunities to lead a normal life and self-realization. - The recommendations of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Disability Strategy should be implemented in practice as soon as possible. - I also call on the Commission and Member States to review and fully apply the provisions for the benefit of people with disabilities, to include universal design principles in these provisions and to make 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - N/A 	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Support for women with disabilities Low employment in women with disabilities Implementation of tools for the rights of people with disabilities Equal access for women with disabilities</p>	<p>Women with disabilities</p>

	better use of digital technologies and medical progress to increase the independence, employability, and sense of freedom and dignity of women with disabilities. and men.				
Women's Practical Issue					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One of the most common forms of cancer in the EU is breast cancer - Healthy lifestyle, healthy nutrition and, of course, screening and diagnosis must be promoted as part of women's cancer prevention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We need joint solutions, joint financing and, above all, ensuring access to such the best standard, so that every woman living in Europe - regardless of whether she lives in Eastern Europe or Western Europe - has the same chance of being cured when her cancer occurs. - It is very good that there are very specific methods on how to prevent cancer and how to treat it effectively - And that is why, in addition to medical care, fighting cancer requires very broad measures for the entire civilization that surrounds us 			<p>Commonality of breast cancer Women's cancer prevention Access to cancer treatment Fighting cancer</p>	Cancer prevention and treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is necessary to compensate the victims, even if we do not restore their health, but it is a debt for poor health care, which the state should guarantee. - Medicines and their development, use and healthcare are exactly what cannot be left to the free market, because it is about human health and lives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infertility, reproductive system diseases, lactation disorders or fetal malformation are some of the potential effects of harmful substances, and they are also one of the employees' strongest concerns in terms of contact, exposure to harmful substances in the workplace. - Today we know that there are at least several dozen potentially harmful substances 			<p>Compensation for victims Careful medicine development Side effects caused by exposure Harmful substances Workplace safety Victims of thalidomide Infertility Fetal disorders</p>	Exposure to harmful substances

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From this point of view, I have a report from the Czech Ministry of Health that there are no known cases of the use of thalidomide in the Czech Republic that would lead to damage to health and, consequently, to lawsuits and disputes. - This is probably also due to the fact that Contergan containing thalidomide was not used, registered or traded in the former Czechoslovakia. - But I am all the more supportive of colleagues from Spain, Britain and Germany, who have spoken out here in order to compensate these victims. - There is also a need to learn lessons for the future within the European Union and to be very careful when developing and marketing new medicines. 	<p>that are harmful to the reproductive system and reproduction, so it is very important to catalog them, to analyze them and to gradually introduce them into this directive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resolution on the victims of thalidomide, a medicine recommended in the 1950s for pregnant women, which caused fetal development disorders, including the lack of arms in the later-born children, sheds new light on the victims of this once underdeveloped drug. - The resolution recalls the effects of thalidomide and the responsibility of states in this regard. - Calls on the Member States to treat thalidomide victims properly in the courts and to provide adequate social and medical care, as many of them live in poverty and without the necessary help - I believe that the history of thalidomide use should be remembered when approving drug safety testing and marketing procedures; risk and liability issues must be clearly defined. - This story should also help develop research into the physiology and pathology of pregnancy and related education, increase access to prenatal examinations and perinatal medicine, as well as disseminate knowledge about pregnancy prevention so that 			<p>Future medicine development and research</p>	
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	such stories will not be repeated in the future.				
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