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Abstract

This paper explores the European Union's discourse in response to the #MeToo movement. To this aim, a qualitative exploratory study with a critical discourse analysis was conducted after in-depth reading and manual coding of European Union preparatory legislative documents explicitly mentioning the movement. In addition, a sample of these documents was compared to similar papers before the movement to investigate whether it has influenced the formal discourse of the Union on gender-based violence and women rights. According to the results, the #MeToo movement has been used to go further and quicker on previous initiative already ongoing to fight against gender-based violence such as the Member States ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Even though prevention is at the heart of the European Union discourse in every document, it seems that after the #MeToo movement, there is a partial shift from exclusive prevention to more condemnation. However, the word perpetrator is almost absent compared to victim in all the documents analysed, even more in the ones mentioning the movement. Thus, we know what the European Union is urgently condemning but we do not know who. Moreover, progressive feminist discourses such as the rejection of patriarchal social order seem to have overtaken the arena of the European Parliament. Still, most of the perspective taken in the discourses and initiatives listed are symptomatologic treatment of the problem. Finally, the European Commission's texts differ from those of the European Parliament because of a significant economic cost-benefit approach to gender equality. This perspective could be described as a neoliberal discourse using feminist values of egalitarianism and empowerment for non-feminist purposes. This raises the question of gender equality for whom and especially for what?

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

CoR : Committee of the Regions

DG EMPL: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

DG JUST: Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers

EC: European Commission

EESC: European Economic and Social Committee

EIGE: European Institute for Gender Equality

EP: European Parliament

EU: European Union

FEMM: Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

MS: Member States

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organisations

LIBE: Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

SOC: Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship

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Introduction

The condition of women is nowadays a salient topic and extensively discussed on social media networks. This has taken the form of hashtags, such as #MeToo or #YesAllWomen. Even the recent diplomatic incident in which EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen was pushed aside on a couch during a visit to Turkey has had its own, #GiveHerASeat. Cyberactivism can raise previously unheard voices facilitating the opportunity for policy and model changes in our societies. Consequently, the permeability of public institutions to these essentially digital discourses could be decisive for the future of public institutions and our societies. It may also represent a new kind of organisation for feminist streams and relationship with politics. This prompts the under-researched question of the extent to which the mobilisation of contemporary feminist on Twitter are received, interpreted and addressed by lawmakers. Thus, this paper explores the European Union's discourse in response to the #MeToo movement. To this aim, a qualitative exploratory study with a critical discourse analysis was conducted after in-depth reading and manual coding of EU preparatory legislative documents explicitly mentioning the movement. A sample of these documents were compared to similar papers sample before the movement to investigate whether it has influenced the formal discourse of the Union on gender-based violence and women rights. To contextualise this discourse analysis, a literature review about women's movements in western democracies, gender mainstreaming in EU laws and the implication of social media activism in democratic decision-making is presented. Moreover, a section is dedicated to the #MeToo movement.

1. Theoretical and empirical background

1.1 Theoretical background

1.1.1 Women Movements and Politics in western developed democracies

Since the nineteenth century, the women's militant movement has been advocating for political, educational, reproductive rights as well as policies against discrimination and gender-based violence (Lovenduski, 2005, p.1). The first step for women's status improvement was to incorporate this perspective, in other words gendering the debate. Then, by framing it to improve the outcome for women, it became what can be considered as a feminist approach (Lovenduski, 2005, p.8). It should be clarified that defining 'feminism' within rigid limits would be insufficient. Such a definition would be questionable and reductive, given the numerous and, sometimes, contradictory currents of feminist thought. Within this same reasoning, it is wrong to reduce the feminist discussion to the discussion on gender gap. As feminist scholars argue, "feminism is beyond gender gap" (Bell et al., 2018). Furthermore, the definition of *Gender* is pertinent to feminist discussion. *Gender* is a sociological concept that refers to the attitudes, behaviours, norms, and roles that a culture associates with an individual's sex. In other words, they are the meanings attached to being female or male (Wharton, 2009). Lazar (2007), drawing on Connell (1987) and Flax (1987), gives a concrete application of what gender implies in social practices. According to the latter, gender provides a community with which individuals identify and structures their practice. It also constitutes a social relationship based on specific and asymmetrical meanings of man and woman that are partially integrated with all other social relationships and activities (Lazar, 2007, p.145).

Gender mainstreaming is the implementation of a gender filter among various issues (Walby, 2011). The feminist approaches aim to critique existing gender arrangements, but often goes further than the gender equality angle (Flax, 1987, p.623; Walby, 2011, p.4). Gender mainstream encourages intersecting projects such as the crossing between feminism and environmentalism (Walby, 2011). As will be explained later, the gender mainstreaming of the EU primarily entails into the concept of "Gender Equality" (Masselot, 2007, p.154). This

gender-equality centric perspective creates disagreements about the priorities provided through feminist engagement in institutions (Walby, 2011, p.9).

In her book, Nancy Fraser (2013) depicts second-wave feminism, in the 1960s after women's suffrage as the "movement for women's liberation" with three chronological subparts. First, in western developed democracies, it embodied a rejection of gender injustice hidden by democratic imagery, secondly, a shift to social recognition and equality followed by the third era of in-depth gendered insight into social justice and rejection of male-dominated capitalism (Fraser, 2013). This second wave advocated for abortion rights and sexual freedom, as well as fighting gender-based violence (Peroni & Rodak, 2020, p.4).

According to Lovenduski (2005), later in the 1990s, many authors showed that post-industrial western democracies did not have gender perspective in their governance, predominantly because of the lack of women's representation in parliament. This period has also been described as a third postmodern wave of feminism with more emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism (Harnois, 2008). More recently, feminist scholars have claimed that a new worldwide feminist movement has been on the rise since 2016, with reviving roots of socialist feminism, rejecting patriarchy and pointing to capitalism at its source, and with the inclusion of the concept of intersectionality (Aruzza et al., 2019; Crenshaw, 2017; Peroni & Rodak, 2020). Some authors have denoted that this constitutes the fourth wave of feminism that is particularly distinguished by its employment of cyberactivist tools (Munro, 2013; Shiva & Nosrat Kharazmi, 2019). Its dominant online mobilisation would make the fourth wave more intersectional and transnational (Peroni and Rodak, 2020). Intersectionality refers to interrelated regimes of discrimination based on race, class or gender at the expense of groups of individuals (Crenshaw, 1989). Peroni and Rodak (2020) support that several aspects of the second wave are found in this contemporary global women's mobilisation, including gender-based violence, abortion, sisterhood and self-determination. These authors also defend that *Hashtag Feminism* explores the relationship to the state, the law and citizens' rights. However, this typology of waves is challenged in the light of the porosity and disagreements over their distinctions (Harnois, 2008).

Taylor (1989) has described feminist activism as a social movement in abeyance suggesting that there are not enough opportunities to establish their engagement in routine structures. Abeyance social movement persists in "[…] non receptive political environments […]" and

stands for a latent ideological source of contestation and change (Taylor, 1989, p.762). As in this paper, Lovenduski (2005) has asked to which extent women's movement takes part in decision-making. To this aim, she explores substantive representation, meaning the willingness of the representant on behalf of certain groups of women interests in the policy process.

1.1.2 Relation between social media activism and democratic decision-making

Social media are online social networks connecting through creating and exchanging content in Web 2.0 Internet-based applications (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Van Dijck and Poell (2013) have theorized social media's logic by analysing the dynamics between digital platforms, mass media, and social institutions. This logic refers to processes that built communication channels and share information (Van Dijck and Poell, 2013, p.5). The research of these two scholars maps the relationship between users, media platforms, and institutions (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013). In contrast to the clear and focused influence of traditional media (newspapers, broadcasters...), social networks such as Twitter and Facebook have considerable potential for 'unrestrained' social transformation (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013). Consequently, actors in all fields, including policymakers, cannot afford to disregard this potential channel of the change encompassed by social networks (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013, p.11).

There are many debates on the potential democratic contribution of our new millennium's digital innovations (Loader & Mercea, 2011, p.758). One of the impacts of social media on democracy is its capacity to disrupt traditional political practices and institutions (Loader & Mercea, 2011). However, governments' response is not clearly determined and sufficiently studied (Loader & Mercea, 2011, p. 762). In their studies, Blasio and Sorice (2019) advocate for a bridge between digital activism literature and e-democracy research. E-democracy entails three potential dimensions: a managerial, consultative, or participatory use of the internet as a governance tool (Reddick, 2011). Managerial e-government represents the web as top-down communicative tools while consultative and participatory models are interactive bi-directional communicative tools (Reddick, 2011). Some argue that these communication technologies should be used as a public space for transparent democratic dialogue between an organisation and civil society rather than influencing and spreading ideologies (Kent, 2013). The claim for exploring how contemporary governments incorporate the World Wide Web into their policy processes is not surprising because of the rise of citizens' political participation (Blasio and Sorice, 2019). Feminist movements are not an exception. As with many other social movement

discussions, also feminists occur extensively on social networks. Schuster (2013) has shown that young women engage via social media. Her case study from New Zealand demonstrates that feminist activism is made accessible, cost-effective, and flexible through Facebook and Twitter tools. They are still accessible to a limited audience and represent a world that is different from other feminist movements of previous generations. Besides, Schuster's (2013) New Zealand case has some generalisation limitations since its high socio-economic and equity standard allow for a lower digital divide.

Valenzuela (2013) explained that social media could be seen as a field of political activity through the sharing of information, expression of opinions, and activism. Indeed, these digital platforms' function as a tool to facilitate direct political action has been proved (Valenzuela, 2013). Through a theorisation of hashtag uses, Bonilla and Rosa (2015) have demonstrated how hashtag activism can forge a common political timeframe. By activism, it can be understood a process of pressure on institutions to challenge policies or practices that are evaluated as problematic (Smith, 2010).

Bonilla and Rosa (2015) have described the hashtag (#) as a powerful indexing tool that allows rapid ordering of information on a specific issue and supplies the intentional meaning of a statement through a word (p.5). This instrument can be found on multiple social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Inevitably, reducing the broad, complex, and multidimensional aspect of a social movement to one word has a distorting effect (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015, p.6). Indeed, how can we grasp all the ideas that lie behind one hashtag shared millions of times? However, it is possible to consider a widely used hashtag as an opportunity for discussion and social action on a given issue without claiming fixed and stable boundaries for it (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015, p.7). In their ethnographic analysis of this "hashtag activism" against police brutality and racial injustices in the United States, the authors argue that this digital protest represents a vital instrument for contesting the long history of violence being silenced in the dominant society. It increases the salience of a case and elevates it into a broader, public social process (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015, p.12). One can easily applicate the same arguments to the case of #MeToo, which originated from an individual initiative and story, then diffused worldwide to break the silence around (sexual) violence against women.

1.2 Empirical background

1.2.1 EU legislative processes

The EU legislative order has three layers. The first one includes Treaties and general legal principles, such as the Treaty on the European Union's Function (TFEU). The second is its legislative acts, established by the EP. The last one entails the secondary non-legislative acts (delegated acts and implementing acts). Finally, the EU bodies can publish recommendations and opinions. Although these lasts do not have any binding power, they may influence the Union law and diverse initiatives (European Parliament, 2020a).

An essential part of the EU legislation is ordained by the EU Commission's (EC) secondary legislation such as delegated, implementing acts (Voermans et al., 2014, p.8). In these legislative processes, citizen voices and opinions can be considered, but they do not have a direct potential binding effect (Voermans et al., 2014, p.8). Consequently, the EC has a considerable power in terms of legislative initiatives and political dominant frames (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2000, p.439). That makes this actor particularly relevant to this study. The EC has several general directorates (DGs) and services. The Structural Funds, Employment and Social Affairs and Development are the most active DGs in the field of gender-equality (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2000).

Nevertheless, the 'ordinary legislative procedure' (article 294 TFEU) gives the EP and the European Council the power to amend, reject or adopt legislative acts in most policy fields since the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 (Voermans et al., 2014, p.9). The EP and Council can confer bare legislative acts, which are the delegated acts or implementing acts. Delegated acts are regulation or directive, resulting in non-legislative acts or amend the principle that the EC has the power to adopt independently (article 290 TFEU). In implementing acts, the EC delivers binding (conditions) for EU laws application (article 291 TFEU).

1.2.2 Gender equality in the EU governance

The EU has been considered a promoter of Gender Equality starting by its Directives on equal treatment in employment (Barnard 2000). To speak out and act concerning gender equality, the

European Economic Community first had to be consistent with its willingness to take part in social issues alongside economic ones. The article 119 of the Treaty of Rome signed in 1957, requires the Member States (MS) to respect equal pay for both women and men. This article represents a major step towards the recognition of equality between men and women as a social objective inseparable from full economic development and is a precursor to the first gender equality policies (Hoskyns, 1996). Since its creation following the Rome treaty, the EC has been one of the central units dealing with the promotion of equality in through many European directives (Walby, 2004, p.15). According to Rees (1998), a shift from equal treatment EU's approach to positive-action measures, such as quotas, has taken place in the 1980s. In addition, Pollack and Hafner-Burton have highlighted three EU initiatives in the 1990s that were crucial to the pursuit of gender equality (2000, p.433). The first one was from the EC that has launched multiple programmes investigating guidelines to improve women representation, among other areas. It has also created a European network in Women Rights issues (Mazey, 1995). Another conspicuous step forward for the women rights is the framework of EU is the Treaty on the European Union, also named the Maastricht Treaty, which has opened a new path for EU policy against women's violence in 1992 (Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000, p.434). According to most of the authors, new framing related to equal opportunities appeared within EU policy in the middle of 1990 after being introduced during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (Mazey, 1998; Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000). The conference results gave further impulsion to integrate gender-mainstream in the EU development policies (Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2011, p.446). Gender-mainstream consists of an integrated gender perspective in all EU policies (Rees, 1998, Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000). It was followed by women's appointment to important positions in the EU and implementing an EC group on equal opportunities. These equal opportunities rhetoric has taken further root through Articles 2 and 3 of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 (Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000, p. 437). In October 1997, the EC submitted a Proposal for Guidelines for Member States' Employment Policies with a strong focus on equal opportunities for women and men partially adopted by the Council of Ministers (Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000, p.443). Also, Pollack and Hafner-Burton (2000) pointed to a persistent lack of attention and resources in terms of expertise and funds within the EU to make rooms for the gender equality struggle. After several national official's suggestions and EU parliament request, the EC has proposed the constitution of a European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) approved by the European Council in 2004 (Masselot, 2007, p. 167). This Institute's purpose was to collect and diffuse knowledge with recommendation in the field (Masselot, 2007, p.167). This European agency provides

«evidence-based » advice. In 2013, it has developed an Index to monitor MS evolution in this area (EIGE, 2017, p.1).

Today gender Equality is part of the global sustainable development concept (UN Assembly General, 2015). Indeed, the concept of equal opportunities is integrated into sustainable development, constituting the backbone of many political programmes and goals in national and international public institutions. The EU is no exception (Baker et al., 1997). Next to that, Gender equality rights have been recognised as a fundamental right by the European Court of Justice and EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (Masselot, 2007). Notwithstanding these new steps forward, the EU legal basis still did not cover the areas of education, media, and domestic violence. Some authors argue that the neo-liberal model of the EU was not inclined to take part in social policies that could have had an impact on the equality between women and men (Walby, 2004, p.7). Article 2 of the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam has been interpreted as a step backwards in the EU's commitments in this area because this was framed as a goal and not as a higher-order value (European Convention, 2003). More broadly, according to Walby, political discourses on equal rights and human rights among the EU have paved the way for feminist policies. Pollack and Hafner-Burton (2000) conclude that the gradual introduction of the gender perspective in European policies has transformed the discourses, procedures and actors involved. Most of the scholars agree on the potential of an integrated gender perspective in all EU policies (Rees, 1998; Pollack and Hafner-Burton, 2000). More recently, an economised gender equality discourses have been observed. Elomäki (2018) refers to the "Economisation" of gender equality knowledge in the EU. In other words, advocacy for gender equality has been backed by economic arguments outlining the macroeconomic benefits of gender equality. According to the author, that is the neo-liberalisation of gender equality discourses and knowledge. Vida (2020) argues that the EU Framework Programme for Research and Development, Horizon 2020, from 2014 to 2016, stood for a strategical shift from gender equality to economic objectives in the EU gender equality agenda. This constitutes a severe obstacle to gender mainstreaming as a simple tool for positive political action (Vida, 2020). Ahrens (2018) has explored most of the EU's soft-law policy programs in the field. The author argues that a *delegalisation* and *depoliticisation* of policy programs has occurred.

Finally, the inclusion of some women's rights movements in the EU governance has been slightly observed since the 1990s. Consultation with civil society was formally established in the functioning of the EU by the Agreement on Social Policy of the Maastricht Treaty

(Masselot, 2007, p165). As a result, the EU has developed a relationship with "social partners", meaning European workers and employers organisations, and civil society through Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The EC has financed the EU-wide European Women's Lobby (EWL) in 1990, regrouping the European network of women's associations (European Women's Lobby, 2015). Moreover, a participatory process has been implemented in the gender equality field. In 2003, the EC implemented a digital survey to question MS, NGOs, women associations, and citizens on equal treatment legislative potential improvement (Masselot, 2007, p. 165). According to Hoskyns (1997) and Mazey in 1998, there was already a feminist European transnational network in the 90s'. Although the creation of these feminist European transnational network was encouraged by the EU, it severely lacked resources, organisation, and unity (Mazey, 1998, p.143). The links between the local feminist movement, the national and the EU levels are overly complex (Walby, 2004). In that sense, one could imagine that shaping the EU policies and directives on women's rights is a possible mighty mean for feminist networks.

1.2.3 EU laws against Gender-based Violence

In 2014, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) released the first survey on violence against women in the EU. Because of the heterogeneity of definition and legal framework among membersstates in this field, data collection is a challenge while it is essential to shed light on the issue and develop appropriate policies (Goodey, 2017). According to Goodey, significant improvements in data collection are also needed. It is not surprising that there is no European legislation dealing directly with violence against women. Indeed, to be able to implement laws or directives on the issue, the EU needs to rely on solid evidence and reliable monitoring. Therefore, the European Parliament (EP) and the EU Council ordered collecting data on violence against women in a resolution in 2009. Also, Goodey (2017) points out the neglect of the EU to treat such violence as a cultural symptom.

In 2011, the Council of Europe had developed the Istanbul Convention. It is the first pan-European legal framework for preventing violence against women, which it defines as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination (Simonovic, 2014). It also defines gender-based violence against women as "violence that is directed against women because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately." (Simonovic, 2014, p.602). De Vido also noted that the Convention starts by underlining that "violence against women is a manifestation

of historically unequal power relations between women and men" that comes from "structural" origins and led to "domination over, and discrimination against, women by men" (De Vido, 2016, p.75). Since 2014, EU accession to the Istanbul Convention is underway. Widely supported by the Parliament, the EC must establish a legal framework that has to be accepted by the EU Council while some countries are against its ratification (European Parliament, n.d.). Nevertheless, on 11 of May 2017, the Council of the EU has decided to sign the convention on the behalf of the EU (Council of the European Union, 2017).

In terms of act with force of law, in 2006 the EU issued the Gender Equality Directive, which covers sexual harassment in workplace as this is where the EU's legal mandate is most evident and developed (Goodey, 2017). In 2012/29/EU the directive on the minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, recognising women victims of 'gender-based violence' as a crime was an additional step (Goodey, 2017). This judicial recognition echoed with judicial historical changes at domestical level such as when the lawyer Gisèle Halimi in 1980 led to rape defined as a criminal act instead of a tort in France.

To summarise, the scope of EU policy responses can be too broad, focusing only on the workplace environment (Latcheva, 2017). In addition, it is fundamental to consider that these actions are limited by project funding to combat violence against women and girls (Goodey, 2017). Finally, regulations on online harassment would seem to be absent and necessary (Latcheva, 2017).

1.2.4 The background and scope of the #MeToo movement

Social networks have created a space where women have spoken out against various forms of sexual violence (Shiva & Nosrat Kharazmi, 2019). Mendes et al. (2018) have shown that feminist activism via Twitter can generate a sense of community and solidarity in speaking out against rape culture. Despite the fierce opposition that participants may face, these platforms are still accessible and considered safer than offline venues for engagement, particularly for young women (Mendes et al., 2018).

Tarana Burke made the first appearance of the #MeToo hashtag on Twitter in 2006. However, the explosion of #MeToo used 12 million times in the first 24 hours dates to the 24th of October 2017 when the actress Alyssa Milano used it to evoke Harvey Weinstein's sexual harassment

accusations (Mendes et al., 2018). Milano's hashtag was initially intended to be a call to collective action to bear witness to the scale of sexual violence (Mendes et al., 2018). The #MeToo mobilisation is not the first feminist digital movement. There has been important activism behind others hashtag such as #bringbackourgirls, #yesallwomen, #BeenRapedNeverReported, and #NotOkay, (Mendes et al., 2018; Banet-Weiser et al., 2020, p.15) or also #NiUnaMenos. The #MeToo movement has taken roots in the United States and was imported into Western Europe countries in quick succession. In some of these countries, the hashtag has its national version. For instance, "Yotambien" has been developed in Spain and "Balancetonporc" in France. However, there is insufficient academic literature covering the spread and the impact of the movement in Europe. A report from the Foundation for European Progressive Studies explored the content and language of more than 2 million tweets with #MeToo and its local translation (Botti et al., 2019, p.31). Following the analysis of their results France, Germany, and Spain had high digital mobilisation while it was less critical in Italy (Botti et al., 2019, p.31).
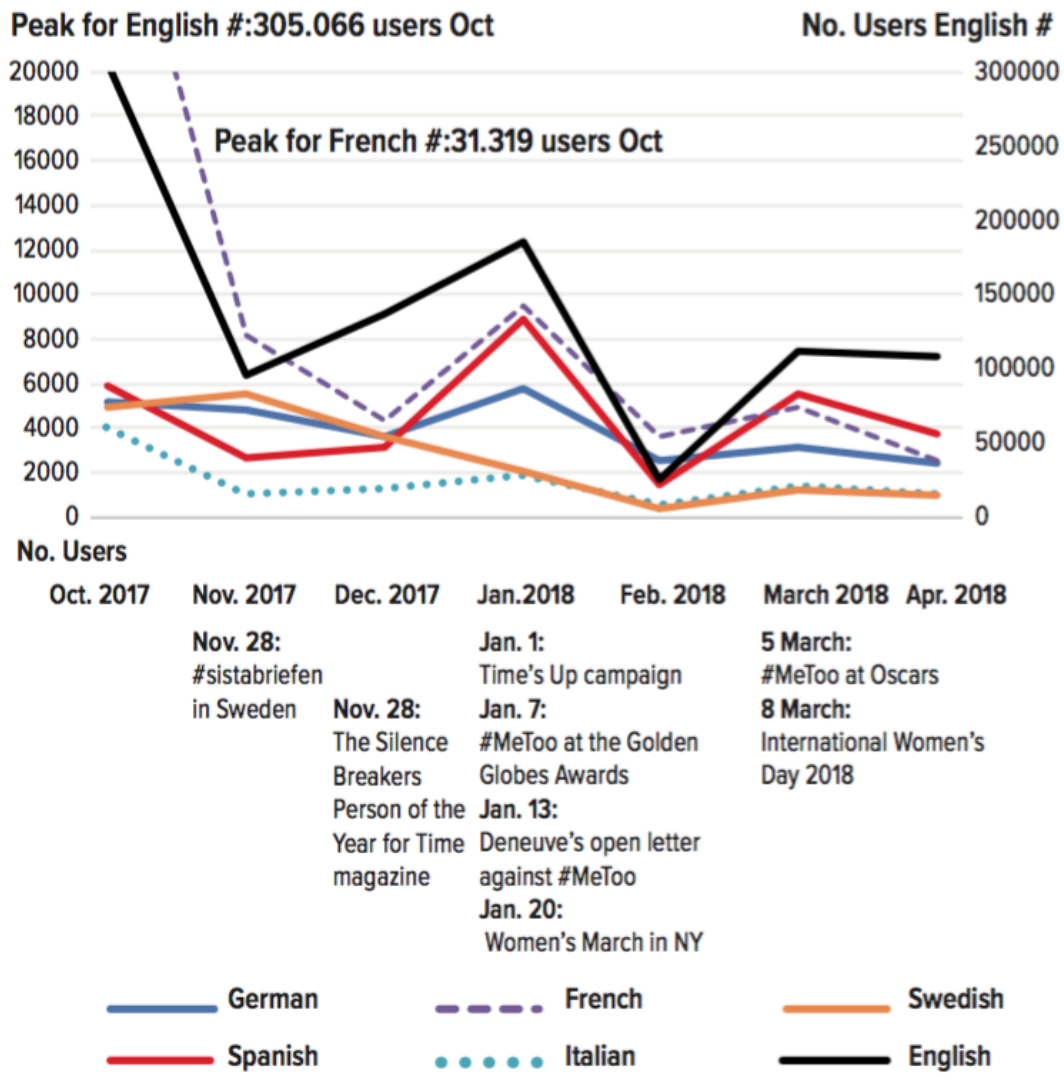
Figure 1: Evolution of interest in #MeToo by language, October 2017-April 2018 (Botti et al., 2019, p.31)

Regarding another research established by the UN Secretary-General's initiative on big data and artificial intelligence for development, humanitarian action, and peace, there have been more than one million #MeToo hashtag impressions on Twitter between 2017 and 2019 (Purna, 2020, p.3). Next to that, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Italy have faced more than one hundred thousand impressions in the same period (Purna, 2020, p.3).

ECA: Economic Commission for Africa
ECE: Economic Commission for Europe
ESCWA: Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
ESCAP: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ECLAC: Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean

> 1.000.000

USA
Spain

India
Japan

Argentina

> 100.000

United Kingdom
Canada
France
Germany
Italy
Sweden
Netherlands

South Korea
Australia
Indonesia
Thailand
Pakistan

Mexico
Brazil
Chile
Peru
Colombia
Venezuela

Nigeria
South Africa

> 10.000

Finland
Republic of Ireland
Belgium
Turkey
Switzerland
Russia
Norway
Denmark
Austria
Portugal
Republic of Serbia
Poland
Greece
Israel

Philippines
Malaysia
New Zealand
Hong Kong
Vietnam
Singapore
Iran
Nepal
China
Bangladesh

Kenya
Egypt
Uganda
Ghana

United Arab Emirates
Egypt
Saudi Arabia
Iran
Jordan

Figure 2: #MeToo Twitter impressions by country and UN regional commission, 2017-2019
(Sen, 2020, p.252)

It did not require much time for #MeToo to become more than an individual whistle-blower. Indeed, the omnipresent character of sexual harassment highlighted by the #MeToo movement has brought the need to transform social norms, laws, and practices sharply into the spotlight (Weldon, 2019, p. 133). The demonstration of the vast number of victims of sexual violence and the fact that they have been silenced or marginalised until now fully incorporates the #MeToo movement into the framework of contemporary feminist activism (Xiong & Boatwright, 2019, p.11).

Xiong and Boatwright (2019) have studied the narratives within the virtual networks of the #MeToo movement. According to them, some social movement such as the #MeToo one has been able to organise through social media in "a bottom-up mechanism of information dissemination" (2019, p.13). They have showed that feminist organisations have used the hashtag to encourage mobilisation, highlight the nuances of social injustices, and organise

events (2019, p.18). More recently, Li et al. (2021) have also explored tweets' content using the #MeToo. More than half were encouraging actions such as voting, protesting poor women's representation in governments, or advocating for legislative changes (Li et al., 2021, p.9). To conclude, it is interesting to note that based on the research conducted, the literature on the #MeToo movement does exist, however it is not yet extensive.

Based on state of the art and this empirical background on #MeToo, this research examines whether some of the characteristics and concepts actively associated with the #MeToo movement can be found in some official EU documents. This is to see if the EU addresses violence against women, sexual violence and women's participation and representation in the society (Li et al., 2021). The research also observes which elements of contemporary feminist activism, such as the rejection of patriarchy, capitalism, and the concept of intersectionality, are reflected in the EU discourse, associated with the #MeToo movement (Xiong & Boatwright, 2019; Aruzza et al., 2019; Crenshaw, 2017; Peroni & Rodak, 2020). Finally, given the origin of the digital movement and the potential of bottom-up dissemination of information demonstrated, the study will observe whether the EU institutions are inspired and inclined to use digital tools as democratic tools for consultation and inclusion of civil society.

2. Research Design

This research explores the impact of this digital women's movement on the EU discourse. The research design is based on a single case study, namely the #MeToo movement. Single case studies can be used with descriptive and theory-generating or theory-testing purposes (Toshkov, 2016, p.294). This article consists of an in-depth analysis of the EU discourse around the #MeToo movement and to what extent the movement has influenced this discourse. Given the limited literature on this topic, our research is mainly exploratory (Toshkov, 2016, p.285). The research address two questions: what is the main discourse of the EU surrounding the #MeToo Movement? How the #MeToo movement has influenced the EU discourse? The research is therefore divided logically into two stages. The first part consists of an in-depth analysis of the collected texts that are part of the EU legislative processes and mentioning "MeToo". The second is a comparative analysis between a sample of the previous documents and a sample of similar documents prior to the movement. In the following section the methodological framework, based on a constructivist perspective, the case selection and the methods will be presented.

2.1 Constructivism and discourse analysis

The constructivism denotes that the institutions and norms are "socially constructed" (Hurd, 2008, p.2). More specifically, social constructivism examines the constitution of knowledge and understandings of the world jointly produced by individuals (Amineh & Asl, 2015, p.13). The core feature of social constructivism is the belief in language as the most crucial pathway through which humans construct reality (Amineh & Asl, 2015, p.13; Leeds-Hurwit, 2015, p.14). Constructivists attempt to explain historical and contemporary instances with the meanings individuals ascribe to them. Experts and the knowledge they bring to the political table have a specific power in these narratives within an epistemic community (Haas, 1992). These epistemic communities are "networks of knowledge-based experts" that have normative beliefs, causal beliefs, proper validity conception, problem-solving practices and methods (Haas, 1992). Furthermore, there are power relations within a "discursive economy",highlighting those certain discourses become a priority and take an essential place in this economy (Campbell, 1992). According to Dryzek, discourse is:

"[…] a shared set of assumptions and capabilities embedded in language enables its adherents to assemble bits of sensory information that come their way into coherent wholes […]" (1999, p.34).

In line with the approach outlined below, the study is drawn on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by simultaneously investigating the relationship between discursive practice and social practice. CDA might show the links between discourse practices and the social structure of the EU and the potential developments that refer to it (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2012, P.82). Lazar (2007) identifies a feminist CDA and defines it as an examination of discursive practices that maintain, question or challenge the pre-established social order or ideology of gender (p.150). As all CDA, this analysis perspective is applied to investigate discourses and highlight discursive modes that are more favoured than others (Lazar, 2007, p.144). One dimension of feminist CDA is to question 'gender relationality': to study the discursive co-construction that establish the meaning of being a woman or a man in society. This approach focuses not only on women but also on men and the relations between these two identities in the social structure (Lazar, 2007, p.150).

According to Lazar, the feminist perspective focuses on the power structure that promotes a patriarchal social order to the detriment of women as a social group (2007, p. 145). It induces hostile social practices that exclude and harm women, sometimes through a pervasive and seemingly innocuous discourse (Lazar, 2007, p.148). In this case, the term patriarchal refers to a culture in which men exercise structural control that can be observed through economic, judicial and political institutions. This power structure is embedded in a form of ideology that induces a protective attitude towards women or the importance of women's role as mothers (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This structure is called gender ideology and is described as hegemonic because it induces hidden domination (Lazar, 2007, p. 147). Also, Lazar draws on the work of Foucault (1977) to suggest that this system of power is so embedded in the social structure that it becomes self-regulating (2007, p.148). Lazar states that dismantling this system is a difficult path. Indeed, the author questions discourses that could be described as 'feminist', highlighting the potential pitfalls of reinforcing the structure (2007, p.147). It is also argued that institutions can use feminist values of egalitarianism and empowerment for non-feminist purposes or to integrate progressive discourses to enhance their image (Lazar, 2007, p.153). This neo-liberal 'post-feminist' discourse deserves necessary caution, according to the author (2007, p.154). It would stop the feminist objective at equality indicators such as women's participation in the

labour market (2007, p.154). Moreover, these classical liberal discourses surrounding freedom and equality often imply a perspective of sameness between men and women. However, asking a woman to be equal to men in an ideological frame created primarily by men is problematic (2007, p. 153). This idea is reflected in the opening lines of Arruzza, Fraser and Bhattacharya's Manifesto in *Feminism for the 99 Percent*:

> "Facebook COO [Chief Operating Officer] Sheryl Sandberg told the world that "we would be a lot better off if half of all countries and companies were run by women and half of all homes were run by men […] They want a world where the task of managing exploitation in the workplace and oppression in the social whole is shared equally by ruling-class men and women. This is a remarkable vision of equal opportunity domination: one that asks ordinary people, in the name of feminism, to be grateful that it is a woman, not a man, who busts their union, orders a drone to kill their parent, or locks their child in a cage at the border […]" (2019, pp.1-2).

The text analysis can highlight features of the discourses and fuels a constructivist interpretation (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2012, p.83). Consequently, the CDA of the European gender mainstream informs our research question. It explores whether the EU's official discursive practice around the mention of the #MeToo movement, maintains the trends highlighted in the theoretical and empirical literature or whether it contributes to changes? It also explores the potential ideological, political and social effects of these narratives for the EU (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2012, p.87).

2.2 Case selection and justification

These last years, there have been multiple forms of feminist digital activism translated into hashtags with a broad scope. As described before, the #MeToo case has substantive relevance according to its broad scope worldwide and among some EU countries. For more than a decade, researchers have been investigating how digital activism can lead to a social movement that goes beyond social media and brings about social and political change, as witnessed during the Arab Spring. However, the relationship between traditional institutions and these digital movements is not sufficiently examined, and the EU, as well as the feminist movements on social networks, is not immune to this. Also, "MeToo" is a keyword that exclusively refers to

the movement. This aspect makes our research much more operationally feasible. Finally, its worldwide spreading through two simple English words formed into a hashtag has made it the perfect case study for the intergovernmental and multilingual Union. This study considers that although #MeToo has national translations such as #Balancetonporc, if the movement were to be discussed at an international level such as at the European one, the term "MeToo" would be used to refer to the movement.

Besides, the EU is an interesting case study regarding its democratic criticism while it is a lawmaker for twenty-seven countries. Due to its architecture of multi-level governance, direct accountability to the people is difficult to implement and enforce (Papadopoulos, 2010). As a result, the EU faces weaknesses in democratic legitimacy (Russack, 2019, Voermans et al., 2014; Clerck-Sachsse & Kaczyński, 2009). Some authors have argued that the EP is not an effective instrument of direct democracy (Russack, 2019; Lord & Bellamy, 2016). Considering this phenomenon, it seems relevant to study the relationship between a large social movement taking root on the web and within European institutions.

2.3 Method of data collection

With respect to the two parts of the research dealing with the analysis of the EU discourse regarding the #MeToo movement and the potential influence of the latter upon the discourse on the main topics related to it, two steps with two methods are implemented. The first part consists of an in-depth open coding analysis of texts from the EU legislative process mentioning "MeToo" and similar texts before the movement. The second part is a comparative analysis between a sample of the documents mentioning "MeToo" and the sample before the movement.

There is no evident differentiation between relevant documents for quantitative and qualitative approaches (Corbetta, 2011, p.297). The material on which the analysis relies has been extracted from the EUR-lex Database. This EU official database covers all the legislative and public documents of the Union, from opinion report to legal acts. The *Official Journal of the European Union* is the main source of content for the EUR-Lex website. Consequently, data of this research are institutional documents. Corbetta defines these as documents "produced by institutions or single individuals within the context of their institutional roles" (2011, p.307). It is part of the expression of the culture and could be an insightful material for social analysis

(Corbetta, 2011, p.296). Although these documents are publicly available on EUR-Lex and can be considered as political communication, some are more publicised than others. Indeed, the EC Strategy on Gender Equality, classified as a "communication", is meant to be visible. On the other hand, the resolutions of parliament are more technical and could be considered internal communication.

EUR-Lex data base is largely used in academic research (Voermans et al., 2014, p.18; Mastenbroek, 2015). It includes the following types of documents: treaties, legislative acts, preparatory documents related to EU legislation, EU case law, international agreements. The documents extracted from the database are official publication involved in the EU legislative process. It could mean that their drafting is even more thoroughly manipulate than some press release or working documents. One could imagine that the words are weighed regarding the intent of being the roots of the new legislation. Consequently, it can be estimated that these documents are strong evidence of the EU perspectives on this subject. Throughout the collection of documents and their analysis, their context was carefully considered (Bowen, 2009). This includes their primary purpose, the type of act and its place in the legislative process, the authors, the target audience and their dates of production (different from that of publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*).

2.3.1 Collection of the documents mentioning "MeToo"

The collection method consisted of a systematic search of the document for the keyword "MeToo." The research has included results from October 2016, the beginning of the digital movement, until today. No EU institutions issuing the documents has been excluded. This decision has been made because any documents from the EU Commission, Parliament or Council mentioning "MeToo" could inform us on opinion, secondary legislation or legal initiatives linked with the movement. The result of the research has extracted twelve documents. All of them were categorised in EUR-Lex as preparatory documents. It consists of documents used to prepare EU legislation, produced during the various stages of the legislative and budgetary process. It includes Commission legislative proposals, Council common position, EP legislative and budgetary resolutions and initiatives, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) opinions and Committee of the Regions opinion (EUR-Lex).

After excluding two non-relevant documents from the ESC because three were identical and one from the EP because it was an extract from one of the documents already included, nine documents remained in this analysis. Six were from the EP, three from the EU Commission and one from the EESC. There were five resolutions, one opinion, one report, one proposal for a decision and one communication (see figure 5). As a result, the content analysed in the first stage was 53026 words, page numbers and 120 pages (see appendix 3).

Content date	Publication Date	Author	Type of Act	Subject	Receiver
26.10.2017	27.09.2018	EP	Resolution	Combating sexual harassment and abuse in the EU	EC, EP, EU Council
18.04.2018	03.10.2018	EP	Resolution	Implementation discharge of EU 2016 general budget	EP,
30.05.2018	09.03.2020	EP, LIBE, FEMM	Own-initiative resolution	Minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime	EC, MS, EU Council
04.06.2018	04.06.2018	EC, DG JUST	Report	2017 Annual Report on the Application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights	EP, EU Council, EESC, CoR
11.09.2018	23.12.2019	EP, FEMM	Own-initiative resolution	Measures to prevent and combat mobbing and sexual harassment at the workplace, in public spaces, and in political life in the EU	EC, EU Council
20.09.2018	15.05.2019	EESC, SOC	Own-initiative opinion	Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Gender equality issues' (own-initiative opinion)	Not mentioned
16.01.2019	27.11.2020	EP, LIBE	Own-initiative resolution	Resolution of 16 January 2019 on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union in 2017	EC, EU Council
22.01.2020	22.01.2020	EC, DG EMPL	Proposal for a decision	Proposal for a Council Decision authorising Member States to ratify, in the interest of the European Union, the Violence and Harassment Convention	EU Council
05.03.2020	05.03.2020	EC, DG JUST	Communi-cation	A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025	EP, EU Council, EESC, CoR

Figure 3: Date, author, subject and target audience of the EUR-lex's extracted documents mentioning "MeToo"

2.3.2 Collection and selection of pre- and post-MeToo samples

Following the analysis of the formal response of the EU to the #MeToo movement, a second part of the research has explored the influence of the movement on the EU discourse. To this end, a sample of documents on the same topics before the #MeToo movement, also extracted from EUR-Lex, were coded, analysed and compared to the documents mentioning #MeToo already coded. This qualitative comparison within our case study follows the Most Similar System Design (MMSD) approach. This consists of studying two materials that are mostly similar but whose potential explanatory variable (in this case the #MeToo movement) varies (Toshkov, 2016, p.260). Due to time limitation a sample of only three documents was selected for the two samples compared. The number of three was chosen with the objective to represent the three EU bodies observed in the first part of the research (EP, EC, EESC). Firstly, the main topics and associated keywords found in the first analysis of documents mentioning 'MeToo' were selected to be used in the process of document collection before the movement. These were "violence against women", "gender equality" and "sexual harassment". The same types of documents than the one mentioning "MeToo" were considered, meaning exclusively preparatory texts. Finally, the period selected was recent to be more sensible about the potential effect of the #MeToo movement. The new EP and EC mandate before the #MeToo movement came into force in July 2014 and was taken as the baseline. Consequently, the period selected for the data collection of the pre-MeToo movement was from July 1, 2014, until October 16, 2017, which is the date of the first significant rise of the hashtag. All these parameters have been selected in the advanced research of EUR-Lex filter.

The research shows twelve results including one document from the EESC, five from the EP and six from the EC. One paper from each actor has been selected regarding their similarity to the first sample main topics. Only one EP resolutions was explicitly on violence against women or gender equality in the EU, others were on liberty of expression in Egypt, EU development framework, fundamental rights and safety at work. Within the documents from the EC there was also only one document focusing on gender-based violence or gender equality in the EU, others were staff working document on Turkey progress report, application of the EU Charter of Fundamental rights, enlargement strategy and sustainable development. The final selection included an EP (2016) resolution on the EU Strategy for equality between women and men post 2015, an EC proposal for a council decision on signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and

domestic violence and finally one EESC (2016b) opinion Towards an ILO standard against gender-based violence at work. These three documents included 35 pages and 19547 words (see appendix 3).

To have two most similar samples, three of the documents mentioning "MeToo" were selected from the previous collection. The committees that participated to the drafting of the papers were considered. In the pre-MeToo sample the EP resolution selected was drafted by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) and the EC proposal was drafted by the Commission's Directorate- General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST). There were only one EESC document mentioning "MeToo". Consequently, the selection for the sample post-MeToo resulted with the EP resolution on the implementation of Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, an EC communication on Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and an EESC opinion on "Gender equality issues". This sample was composed of 41 pages and 21411 words (see appendix 3).

Content date	Publication Date	Author	Type of Act	Subject	Receiver
16.09.2015	15.01.2016	EESC	Own-initiative opinion	Towards an ILO standard against gender-based violence at work	Not specified
09.06.2015	04.11.2016	EP, EMPL, FEMM	Resolution	The EU Strategy for equality between women and men post 2015	EC, MS, EU Council
04.03.2016	04.03.2016	EC, DG JUST	Proposal for a decision	Proposal for a Council decision on signing of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence	EU Council

Figure 4: Dates, authors, subjects and targets audience of the pre-MeToo sample

Content date		Author	Type of Act	Subject	Receiver*
30.05.2018	09.03.2020	EP, LIBE, FEMM	Own-initiative resolution	Minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime	EC, MS, EU Council
20.09.2018	15.05.2019	EESC	Own-initiative opinion	Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Gender equality issues' (own-initiative opinion)	Not specified
05.03.2020	05.03.2020	EC, DG JUST	Communi-cation	A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025	EP, EU Council, EESC, CoR

Figure 5: Dates, authors, subjects and target audience of the post-MeToo sample

2.3 Method of data analysis

2.3.1 The coding processes

All the content of the documents extracted from EUR-Lex has been analysed. Despite a focus on the narratives, the reference to legal or non-legal framework and initiative has been also observed. The qualitative approach to analysing a text is based on interpreting it in its overall sense, investigating its meanings and connecting them (Corbetta, 2011, p.297). The analysis will be proceeded by organising the contents into categories directed by the research question. This iterative process is known as a coding method. A qualitative inquiry code is a word or small phrase that accredits a summative. Saldaña named it "essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (2016, p.3). The coding method of this research is exploratory, which means that the in-depth reading has inductively pilot the coding. Indeed, the iterative process allows to progressively create themes that will guide the coding process in turn (William and Moser, 2019, p.49). The "line by line" coding chosen has helped to maximise coherence and provides through inductive and deductive reasoning, the essence of the material thematic (William and Moser, 2019, p.51). This textual categorisation enables the discovery of patterns such as frequency, associations or sequence, and may underline the causation of an outcome (Saldaña, 2016). The categorisation came from the organisation of data regarding certain characteristic shared. It has followed "classification by reasoning",

including implicit and intuitive senses, to determine which data are similar or seem related (Saldaña, 2016, p.9). The coding and categorisation method has helped compile data from the EU legislative documents to provide comprehensive observation of EU discussions surrounding the #MeToo movement and how the movement can trigger a change in terms of ideas through discourses and policies through political and legal documents (Saldaña, 2016). Analytic memos were systematically written throughout the entire coding process, reflecting on the emergent patterns progressively leading to these categories and themes (Saldana, 2016, p.42). The analysis and coding were done using a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software called Atlasti.

2.3.2 The qualitative comparative analysis

As explained above, in a second step, this study compares two samples of three documents each. The two samples can be considered similar because they have the same authors, same types of acts and same subjects. Their difference resides in the fact that one set of papers is before the #MeToo movement, the other was released after and mention "MeToo" in the text. A detailed comparison between small N has been popularly named by Charles Ragin (2009) as a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). Here QCA uses the code grid set up during the open coding of the nine documents mentioning "MeToo". This provides relative measures on each idea and discursive practice observed in the papers related to the movement to determine its influence on them. The impact of the movement cannot be completely isolated and act independently of other variables such as authorship, time and other diffuse influences such as the integration of women's status into human rights discourse (Toshkov, 2016, p.270; Masselot, 2007). Therefore, as many confounding or other explanatory variables as possible will be considered in the comparative analysis (Toshkov, 2016, p.280).

2.4 Validity and Reliability

Beach and Pedersen (2013) have described two types of validity in single-case studies, internal and external. Internal validity' implies the 'credibility' of a study (Morse, 2015, p.1213).

Internal validity implies the 'credibility' of a study (Morse, 2015, p.1213). Several strategies ensure validity in qualitative research, including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, thick and rich description, triangulation, or peer review (Morse, 2015, p.1214). In this study, a thorough and persistent review of the sources via multiple readings and coding (twice per document) strengthens the internal validity. This resulted in a data-rich description, which covered the range of ideas that emerged from the documents with a highly developed coding grid. The detailed description also contains quotations illustrating the codes, categories and the multiple patterns outlined. Finally, repeated peer review of the sources, method, and results can further be seen as elements that improve the study's internal validity.

Next to that, external validity in this qualitative study may rely on transferability or generalizability. Coding systems can be a tool for transferability (Morse, 2015, p.1217). However, the coding used can be considered unstructured as it was exploratory. This methodology requires the researcher to learn progressively on the subject throughout the study process. Consequently, coding decisions are not based on an existing, replicable model because it needs interpretation and the context of all the data. Thus, inter-rater reliability would maintain a descriptive coding system, inhibits interpretive coding, which is the essence of the research (Morse, 2015, p.1217)

2.5 Limitations

Ideally, this research ought to uncover all the influence of the #MeToo movement on institutional discourse within the EU. The mention of "MeToo" in the documents is already what could be called a "smoking gun", meaning sufficient evidence but not necessary (Beach and Pedersen, 2013). However, it is impossible to measure the impact of the movement exclusively, especially regarding the fact that Women Rights has been entailed into the Human Rights narrative, which has always more influence on the policy framing and initiative in the Western democracies (Keck & Sikking, 1999; Riss et al., 1999; Masselot, 2007). Even if the mentioning of "MeToo" is sufficient evidence of association, the tracing of potential discourse and policy causal mechanism remain incomplete, or the causal mechanism hypothesis will always have some uncertainty (Toshkov, 2016, p. 151).

It should be noted that qualitative research is constantly exposed to a certain degree of subjectivity (Ritchie et al., 1994, p.182). There is generally no division of labour between data collection and analysis. Indeed, the coding or categorisation of data is part of the analysis (Basit, T. 2003, p.144). The process of qualitative analysis using coding is, understandably, a research design that relies on the researcher's interpretation. Identifying an overarching theme and its related codes "requires careful attention to the thematic association and a subjective sense of the precise representation of the essence of a theme by a code" (William and Moser, 2019, p.49). As Saldaña has stated in his book, this is "an act of personal signature" (Saldana, 2016, p.39).

While triangulation between multiple data sources or methods may strengthen the validity of the results, the limitations of this research's material and temporal resources did not allow for this (Morse, 2015, p.1216). Although two methods are included in the study, they are used for two different questions and do not allow for the observations to be compared with other sources of information. The selection of the document is restricted to an official EU database, which only incorporates very formal communication. Thus, it does not cover the entire source of discourse coming from the EU about the #MeToo movement and related issues.

Finally, researchers are not robots (Saldaña, 2016, p.14). They can make a mistake and miss codes or patterns. Nevertheless, the two cycles of coding, the systematic reading, manual coding, and memos, produce a comprehensive qualitative investigation that can capture aspects that machines cannot offer.

3. Analysis

3.1 Codes, Categories and Themes

As a reminder, all the coding process was an iterative approach between a deep understanding of the documents and the research question. Consequently, each element has been coded because it has been assessed as content that, depending on its meaning, its relationship with other codes or its frequency, can potentially inform the research question. Every recorded quote connects to the EU's discourse on the #MeToo movement, violence and inequalities experienced by women. Whether defining the problem, the solution or the actors involved, all parts assessed as related to these topics and potentially relevant for capturing the discourse have been carefully analysed and dissected into codes. The systematic coding has shown some patterns such as frequencies and a relationship between some elements. As an illustration, the important repetition of the words *online*, *digital*, *new technologies* or the rareness of the word *perpetrator* are observations that are described and interpreted in the analysis below.

The coding's global technical features are specified in this part. This is followed by a systematic explanation of the codes, categories and themes. The methodology was following "line by line" manual coding (William and Moser, 2019, p.51). After first reading and determination of the codes, automatic research tool of *Atlasti* was used to ensure and facilitate the coding process. Indeed, some words with exclusive signification were coded through automatic coding tools of *Atlasti*, such as "rape", "Istanbul Convention", or "gender equality", and then double-check with the manual coding. Footnotes were not included in the coding because most were weblink or legislative titles and numbers. Some parts (sentences or paragraphs) which were treating from another subject or were not explicitly related to the #MeToo movement, "sexual violence" or "gender" ("gender equality", "gender-sensitive", "gender-based violence"…) were not included in the coding. As a concrete example in a resolution of the EP on *the Minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime* (European Parliament, 2020b), some concise part involving only specific recommendations on victims of terrorism were not included in the codes.

85 codes and 4997 quotations were present at the end of the first complete coding of the nine documents. The second phase of selective coding and axial coding was carried out

methodologically after the open coding, following the main ideas related to the research question that emerged from all the documents. Some categories and codes were merged, others were deleted due to their low occurrence. After this selective step, there were 60 codes and 4837 quotations. The further step was to implement categories. Consistent with the research design, categories and themes were done according to the sense of the codes and their relationships. More concretely, in view of the EU's active rejection of violent acts against women by verbs such as *condemns*, *prohibit* or by the qualification of a *crime* and a violation of *fundamental rights*, the codes are gathered in a category that will summarise the main message communicated through these words: *condemnation*. Associations in the discourse acknowledge a comprehensive relation between codes that help to define categories. In the example of *condemnation*, the link between the codes is well illustrated by this quote:

"Strongly condemns all forms of sexual violence and physical or psychological harassment and deplores the fact that these acts are too easily tolerated, whereas in fact they constitute a systemic violation of fundamental rights and a serious crime that must be punished as such" (European Parliament, 2018a, p.4).

As a result of these associations, the codes have been grouped into 18 thematic categories. The coding process's final stage was to align the main categories another time in 3 themes systematically. The choice of these themes was also the result of the comprehensive interrelation between the categories observed in the discourse. It results into three themes: Identities, Problem and Solution. Depending on ideas' multi-dimensionality in the discourse, the categories, or themes in which they are gathered have more sub-categories or codes. As a result, some themes have more categories than others, and the same applies to each level of coding. Not surprisingly, the Solution theme is the broadest in the formal legislative documents analysed. Also, there is inevitably some porosity between the categories and the themes. That is because framing the problem is already paving the way to solution options (Stone, 1997). The opposite is also true. Indeed, recommending protecting the victims is an implicit way of saying that this is not sufficiently the case and that this is part of the problem. The following table is a systematic description of the representative keywords that are behind the codes. However, it is possible that some synonym coded only one time are not listed in the table. The keywords presented below have been considered in all their different grammar version, verbs in several tenses, terms in the plural and singular: protect(ion,s,ing,ed), abus(e,es,ed,ive). These multiple versions were included depending on the context and the meaning.

Besides, some codes were more complex and based on a sentence, although the keywords described below were also found. This was particularly the case for the category *EU culture perspective*. These codes require a detailed description. Part or entire sentences were labelled as a *holistic approach* when mentioning the need for a more holistic perspective while when it was questioning the power order or the social structure at the origin of violence against women it was recorded as *hegemonic culture*. Every argument referring to economic benefit or cost related to gender equality issues were coded as *economisation* (Elomäki, 2020). *Intersectionality* coding was used when the intersections between discriminatory domains were discussed. It has occurred only with the words intersecting, intersectional, or intersectional. Finally, gender-mainstream coding was almost exclusively applied to the terms gender mainstream, gender perspective or gender sensitive.

REPRESENTATIVE WORDS	CODES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
victim	Victims	Victims	Identities
vulnerable, vulnerability	Vulnerable		
young, children	Youth		
perpetrator, offender	Perpetrators	Perpetrators	
women, female	Women	Women	
male, men, boys	Men	Men	
violence, violent	Violence	Gender-based violence	Problems
abuse	Abuse		
domestic violence	Domestic violence		
rape	Rape		
sexual harassment,	Sexual harassment		
harmful	Harmful		
psychological, physical	Health		
consent, unwanted	Non-consent		
online, cyber	Online		
persist, repeating	Persistence		
gender stereotype	Gender stereotypes	Gender-biased society	
discrimination	Discrimination		
male-dominated	Male-dominated		
sexist, misogyny	Sexism		
inequalities, unequal	Inequality		
representation, participation	Women under-representation		
work, labour, employment	Work world	Work environment	
impunity, justice	Judicial impunity	Impunity	
under-reported	Lack of report		

combat, fight, eliminate	Combat		
condemn, unacceptable	Condemn		
prohibit	Prohibited		
sanction, prosecute	Sanction	Condemnation	
criminal, crime	Crime		
core value	Core value		
Fundamental rights, Human rights	Fundamental rights		
awareness-raising	Awareness		
prevent	Prevention	Prevention	
training	Training		
education, school	Education		
definition	Definition		
monitor, data, survey	Monitoring	Knowledge	
study, research, analyse	Research		
campaigns, inform	Top-down communication		
consult, exchange, dialogue	Dialogue	Communication	Solutions
media, social network	Media		
gender equality	Gender equality	Equality	
equality, equal, equally	Equality		
support	Support		
protect	Protection		
fund, financial resources	Financial support		
empowering, empowerment	Women empowerment	Support	
support #MeToo	Support #MeToo		
essential, crucial, important	Importance		
call, urge (EU)	EU responsibility		
call, urge (MS)	MS responsibility	Actors and roles	
civil, NGO, social partners	Civil Society		
treaty, charter, directive	Legal background	Legal basis	
Istanbul Convention	Istanbul Convention		
holistic approach	Holistic approach		
economic, growth, cost	Economisation		
patriarchal, culture, structure	Hegemonic culture	EU cultural perspective	
gender-perspective, mainstream	Gender mainstream		
Intersectionality	Intersectionality		

Figure 6: codes, categories and themes description
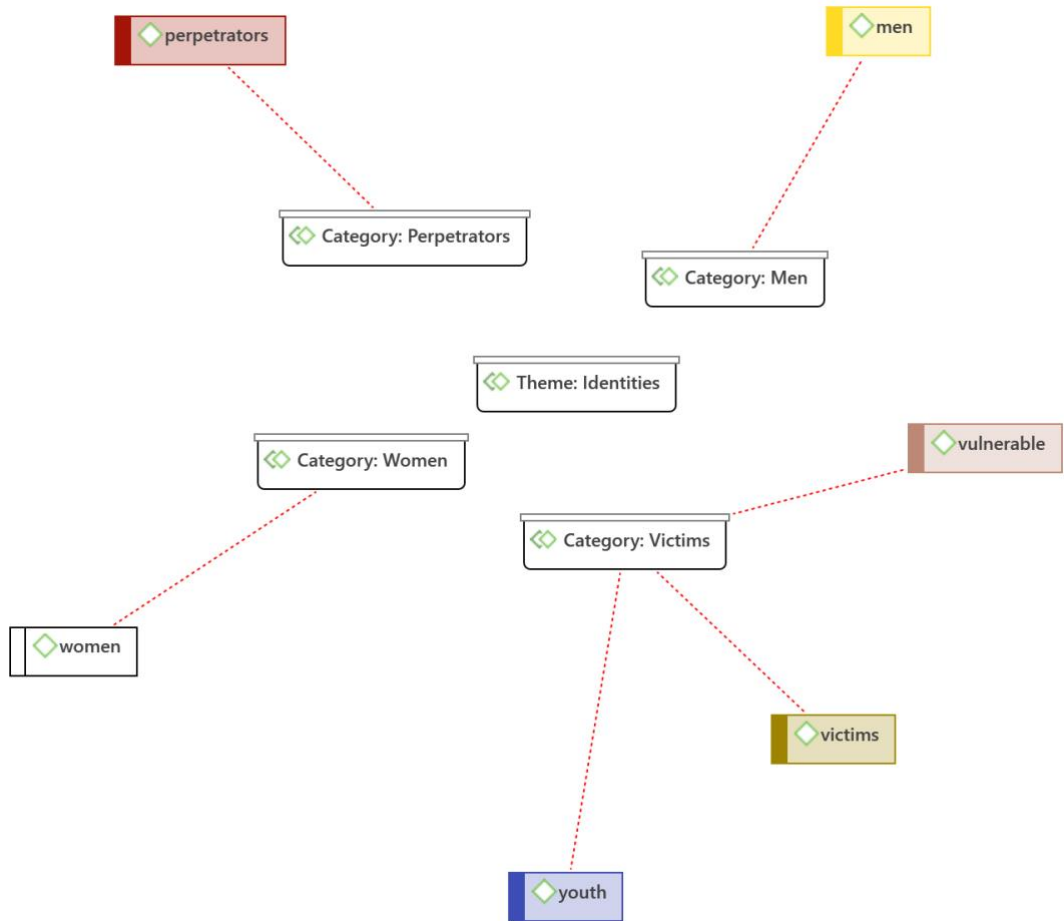
Figure7: codes and categories of the *Identities* theme
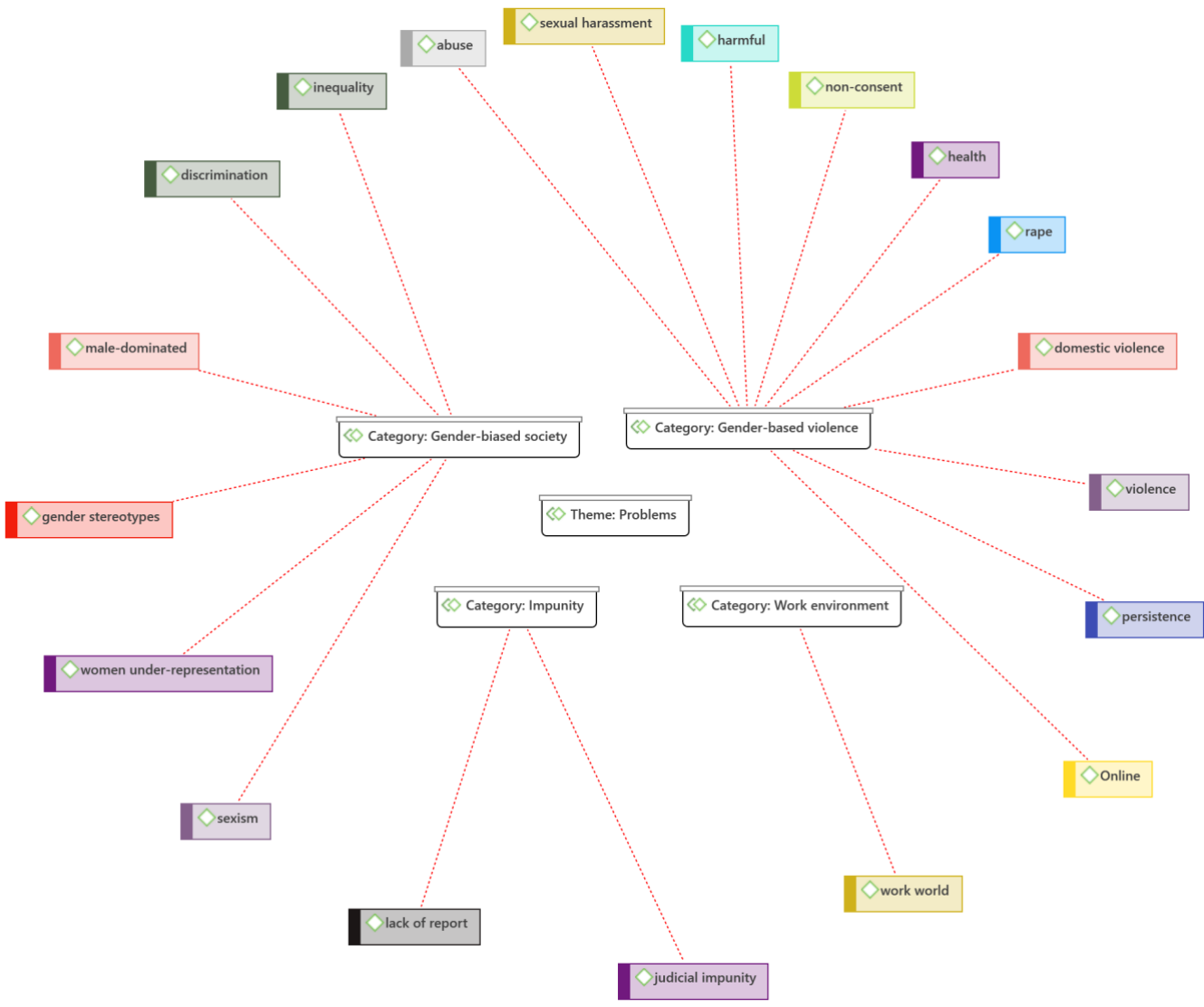
Figure 8: codes and categories of the *Problems* theme

Figure 9: Codes and categories of the Solutions theme

3.2 The context

Precious pieces of information on the context around the documents were collected. The aim of the documents, which is clearly stated in the titles, is already a first concrete way to summarise how the EU has formally answered the problem raised by the #MeToo movement. First, the EP has called the EC, the EU Council, the MS and itself to "combat sexual harassment

and abuse in the EU" (2018a). Then the EP has expressed to the EC through a resolution on the previous budget, the importance of the online deployment of the EU, referring to the fact that important debate is taking place online (2018b). The implementation of the central 2012 Directive establishing "minimum standards on the rights […] of victims of crime "has been re-evaluated by the EP with a gender-sensitive perspective in the entire resolution paper (2020b). The mention of "MeToo" in the 2017 Annual Report on the Application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Righ of the EC (2018) and the EP (2020c) resolution on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union in 2017 illustrate to which extent the EU considers that gender-based violence issue is entailed into the fundamental or Human right framework. In 2018, another resolution from the EP (2019) was produced on sexual harassment, focusing on prevention, which was very in line with the first resolution mentioning the movement. The EESC (2019) had also pointed out the #MeToo movement as part of the context when it expressed its opinion on its initiative on Gender equality issues. In addition, the EC (2020a) proposal for Council decision authorising the MS to ratify the 2019 Violence and Harassment Convention of the International Labour Organization (ILO) reinforces and evokes in advance how much the subject is dealt within the work context. Finally, one of the most insightful documents for the analyse is the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 of the EC (2020b). The #MeToo movement mention in this central document more than four years after the rise of the hashtag could be considered meaningful.

Next to that, some information showed that the #MeToo movement did not appear in an EU discourse and governance that was ignoring gender-based violence. Firstly, the Annual Report on the Application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EC (European Commission, 2018) was referring to an Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights named 'Women's rights under attack' which has been taking place on November 20-21, 2017, one month after the rise of "#MeToo". However, the chance that the topic has been chosen less than one month in advance seems unlikely. Also, on November 25, 2016, one year before the start of the movement, the EC has announced the launch of the campaign *A Year of focused Actions to combat violence against women* with a communication involving a hashtag: #SayNoStopVAW (European Commission, 2016a).

Secondly, one could ask why EP resolution on the implementation of the 2012/29/EU directive on "minimum standards on the rights […] of victims of crime" has appeared in 2018? The implementation of the directive for the victims' rights was supposed to be completed by

November 2015; the parliament has begun its inquiry on MS transposition on January 19, 2017, which is few months before the "#MeToo" explosion on Twitter. However, an interesting pattern emerged during the investigation of this resolution's context. The 2012/29/EU directive and the report on the MS implementation of the directive on which the EP relies for its final resolution does not have a predominant gender perspective. As an illustration, the Directive has the word gender 22 times in 17 pages. Its implementation report contains the same word only 37 times in 128 pages, while the final parliamentary resolution mentioned "gender" 72 times in 14 pages. This means that the EP focuses almost exclusively on victims of gender-based violence, whereas the Directive and the study report on which the EP resolution is based do not. Moreover, it cites the #MeToo movement. This evidence provides insights to reflect on how the #MeToo movement may have pushed the EP to have a strong gender perspective in its final resolution. This planed resolution might have been used as an opportunity to answer to all these testimonies that the EU is handling the issue by forcing the MS to consider the gender-based violence as a crime that should be handle accordingly.

Finally, it is noteworthy that EP has been the first EU body to mention in these formal papers the #MeToo movement. Indeed, the first paper is from October 26, 2017, only a few days after outbreak of "#MeToo" following Alyssa Milano's initiative (European Parliament, 2018a). This text appears in the context of reporting cases of sexual harassment among EP staff on social networks and in the media. This also reflects that the EU arena and its policymakers are by no means protected from this discriminatory violence throughout society. In this case, it also shows the permeability of the Parliament and its staff to online debate. The EP refers to the internal cases in a second resolution as well: "whereas sexism and the sexual and psychological harassment of women parliamentarians are real and widespread;" (European Parliament, 2019, p.5). This is crucial information that is part of our result.

3.3 Around the #MeToo movement

Figure 10: Word cloud of the documents mentioning "MeToo"

This section aims to analyse closely the discourse explicitly related to the #MeToo movement (see appendix 4). It was designated by the EP, EC and EESC as a movement or a campaign. Although most of the text reported it as a movement to highlight the importance of gender-based violence, the initial aim of the movement was framed in slightly diverse ways between documents:

"[…] to report cases of sexual harassment and violence against women […]" (European Parliament, 2018a, p.5);

"[…] response […] threats to women's rights […]" (European Commission, 2018, p.15);

"[…] denounced their perpetrator […]" (European Parliament, 2019, p.6);

"[…] raised awareness of the scale and intensity of the sexual harassment and sexual and gender-based violence […]" (European Parliament, 2020c, p.3);

The descriptions of the impact of the movement were also occasionally different depending on the author and the text:

"[…] highlighted that the justice system does not deliver adequate justice and protection […]" (European Parliament, 2020b, p.4);

"[…] which is contributing to redrawing the boundaries in relation to sexual harassment and acceptable behaviours […]" (European Parliament, 2019, p.6);

"[…] highlighted […] gender-based violence and harassment, are pervasive throughout the world […]" (European Commission, 2020a, p.2);

"[…] has demonstrated the extent of sexism and abuse that women and girls continue to face […]" (European Commission, 2020b, p.3).

The main ideas depicted by the EU were that the #MeToo movement was highlighting the importance of (sexual) violence against women, denunciating the inadequate judicial system and the need for support of the victims. In that sense, the EU has heard the pervasive violence denunciation and the call for changes in laws and practices. However, the movement is not precisely linked to a call for normative/legal changes in the EU documents, while Weldon had outlined this as part of the #MeToo's ambition (2019, p. 133).

The EP's documents explicitly express a welcoming attitude towards #MeToo and demonstrate strong support to all the women who have taken part in the movement or campaign:

"[…] Welcomes the new widespread public debate, including on social media, which is contributing to redrawing the boundaries in relation to sexual harassment and acceptable behaviours; welcomes, in particular, initiatives such as the MeToo movement and strongly supports all the women and girls who have participated in the campaign, including those who have denounced their perpetrators […]" (European Parliament, 2019, p.6).

In contrast, the papers from the EC and the EESC are more neutral since it is not possible to read in there a feeling of "welcome" or "support". However, these papers implicitly recognise the movement as the symptom of a real problem that deserves to be addressed:

"In the light of the recent increase in MeToo exposures, the Committee praises the European Ombudsman for recommending a stronger code of conduct in all EU institutions and believes that it also should be swiftly adapted and adopted by public

institutions in the Member States" (European Economic and Social Committee, 2019, p.3).

"As recently highlighted by the #metoo and related movements, violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence and harassment, are pervasive throughout the world. Prevention efforts need to be enhanced and victims protected" (European Commission, 2020a, p.2).

Finally, the position of the "MeToo" mentioned in the EC proposal to authorise the ratification of the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment (2019) is quite revealing. Indeed, it is cited in the first line of the 'context of the proposal'. This shows that the EC believes that the movement should motivate the potential ratification of this convention, which focuses on sexual harassment of women at work: "As recently highlighted by the #metoo and related movements, violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence and harassment, are pervasive throughout the world. Prevention efforts need to be enhanced and victims protected. […] To that aim, and in view of EU competence in the areas addressed by the Convention, it is necessary that any legal impediments at the EU level to the ratification of the Convention by EU Member States be removed." (European Commission, 2019, p.2).

3.4 Theme: Identities

Figure 11: Word cloud of *Identities* theme quotations from documents mentioning "MeToo"
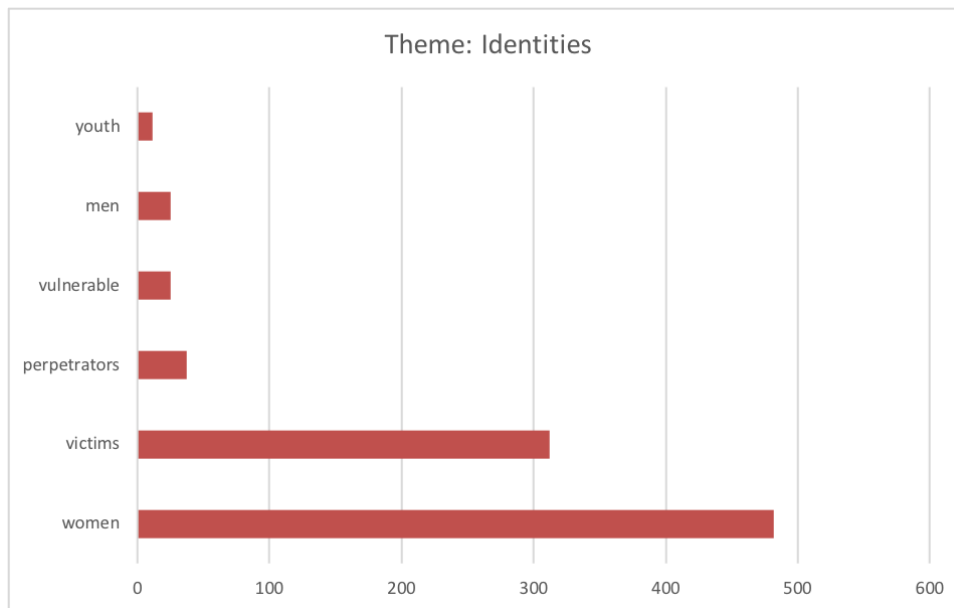
Figure 12: *Identities* codes occurrence of documents mentioning "MeToo"

3.4.1 Women and Victims

The theme of Identities covers the categories of social groups (*Women*, *Men*) or specific denominations (*Victims*, *Perpetrators*) that are the subjects of the discussion. The notion of *vulnerability* and *youth* is often used to describe the *victims*. *Victims*, *youth* and *vulnerable* is associated with the word *women*. The words *women* and *victims* are unsurprisingly the central subjects of the documents mentioning "MeToo", with 482 quotations for *women* and 312 for *victims*. However, the EESC's document differs with the term victim is mentioned only one time. The document is treating the gender equality goal among the EU very broadly. Still, it qualifies a group of *women* as *vulnerable* two times. The qualification as *vulnerable* for *women* or *victims* is present in 7 out of the 9 documents mentioning "MeToo". It is importantly mentioned in the EP resolution on the implementation of Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (European Parliament, 2020b). Although *vulnerable* is not quantitatively much used, its presence to designate women, often next to young children or migrants, underpin interesting discursive elements. Indeed, it seems to portray those women as a group, and not individuals, who are vulnerable by nature. This narrative can obscure how these individuals are exposed and victimised in the existing social system. In short, the EU rhetoric suggests that because women are vulnerable, they are victims, consequently the EU and the MS must support and protect

them. This discourse sounds paternalistic. This implies an authoritarian attitude with a stated benevolent purpose, making the group targeted, dependent and infantilised. This is particularly problematic because the systemic origin of the society that would make women victims and vulnerable is hardly addressed and has even less suggested solution, as detailed in the sections below.

The occurrence of the word *victim* is less observed in the pre-MeToo documents, while two out of three documents deal primarily with violence against women, as is the case for the post-MeToo sample. The word *victim* was found 50 times in the sample pre-MeToo and 253 in the post-MeToo one. A principal explanation of this difference is the document on the rights of the victims of crime (European Parliament, 2020b). Nevertheless, it informs on the willingness of the EP to focus on the *victims* after the #MeToo movement, more than it was observed in the previous sample. The quotations coded as *vulnerable* appear 5 times in the sample before the movement and 18 times in the one after. This difference potentially reflects that the EU's response to the movement has opened the door to the *victims'* recognition but, by focusing solely on them, ignores the cultural basis of the violence.

3.4.2 Men

Men are not entirely forgotten because they are mentioned a few times as an essential group to involve in the combat against gender-based violence or gender-biased society: "calls on the Member States to actively involve men in awareness-raising and prevention campaigns" (European Parliament, 2018a, p.5). Nevertheless, these appearances are anecdotic next to other ideas. Indeed, it has been counted only 25 times in the 120 pages.

This category is more recurrent in the documents selected after the movement (4 quotations in pre-MeToo sample versus 8 in post-MeToo sample). In both cases, *men* are still very weakly included in the issue. The EP resolution in 2015 focus on *men* in two sentences, for almost the first time in our dataset. The first one is residing in the following quotation: "and encouragement of men's participation and the introduction of paternity leave of at least 10 days and parental leave available to both parents but with strong incentives for fathers, such as non-transferable parental leave" (European Parliament, 2016, p.10). Another one was specifying the importance

of involving *men* (European Parliment, 2016, p.5). It is also emphasised in another EP resolution after the movement (European Parliment, 2018, p.5).

In conclusion, the nearly absent mention of *men* compared to *women* was observed in all the documents analysed. While CDA in feminist studies has shown the importance of the 'gender relationality' perspective to study the co-construction and relations between women and men, the EU discourse makes the men disappear from the picture (Lazar, 2007, p.150).

3.4.3 Perpetrator

The almost complete absence of the word *perpetrators* compared to the word *victims* is one of the most contrasted frequency observed. In the documents mentioning "MeToo" *victims* is quoted 312 times, while *perpetrators* only 37 times. This raises questions about the #MeToo movement and the feminist perspective in general. Even though the movement name begins with "Me" which may aim to raise awareness on the need to legitimise and support victims, it was also an essential way of pointing this violence and their culprit at the individual level and the structural level. The invisibility of the perpetrators in the discourse makes the origin of this violence indefinite or even non-existent. Ignoring this aspect of the origin of the problem was certainly not the aim of the social movement, which was also about incentivising denounces of the perpetrators and highlighting the structural pathology of the society (Weldon, 2017).

The naming of the *perpetrator* is also very poor in the sample before the #MeToo movement. Within the sample it occurred merely 8 times, including 6 in the EC proposal related to Istanbul Convention. Next to that, the EESC opinion on the ratification of ILO standards to fight against gender-based violence at work mention perpetrator only one time. However, for the first time in the data collected, a focus on the *perpetrator* is done in the perspective of forming a solution: "Measures need also to be put in place to provide support and treatment programmes for perpetrators" (European Commission, 2016b, p.4). The term treatment for the *perpetrator* is an interesting term because it was found for nothing else. It would have been interesting to find the use of the expression treatment regarding the system. Treatment for these individuals underlines the idea that gender-based violence can be a disease at the micro-level.

Figure13: Comparison of *Identities* categories occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo samples.

3.5 Theme: Problems

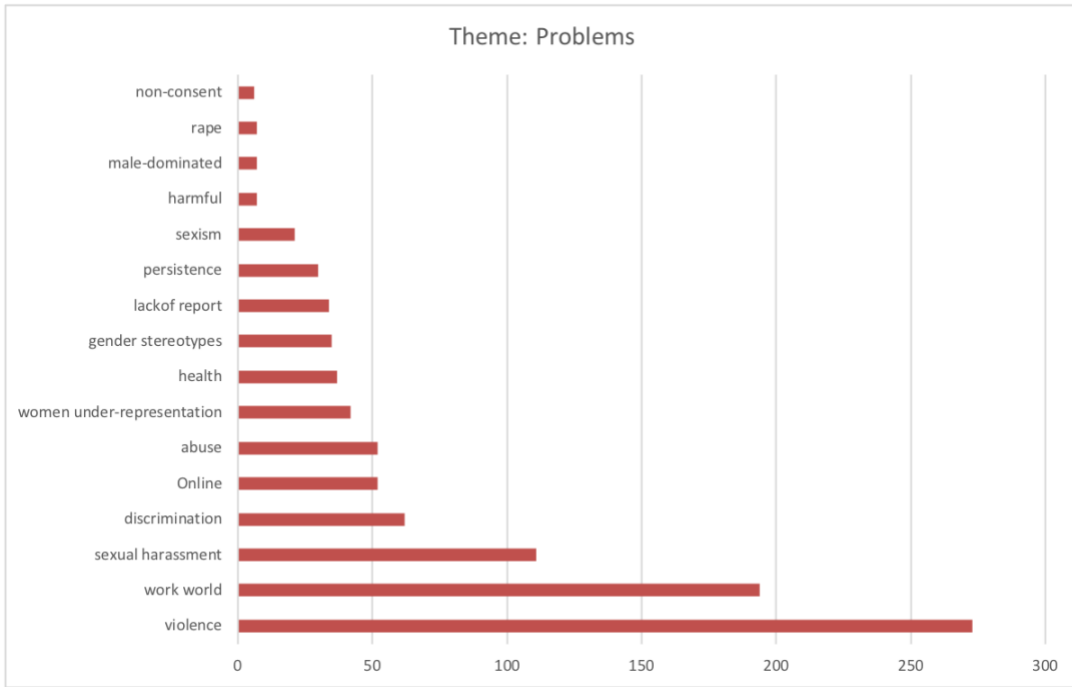Figure 12: Word cloud of *Problems* theme quotations from documents mentioning "MeToo"

Figure 14: *Problems* codes occurrence of documents mentioning "MeToo"
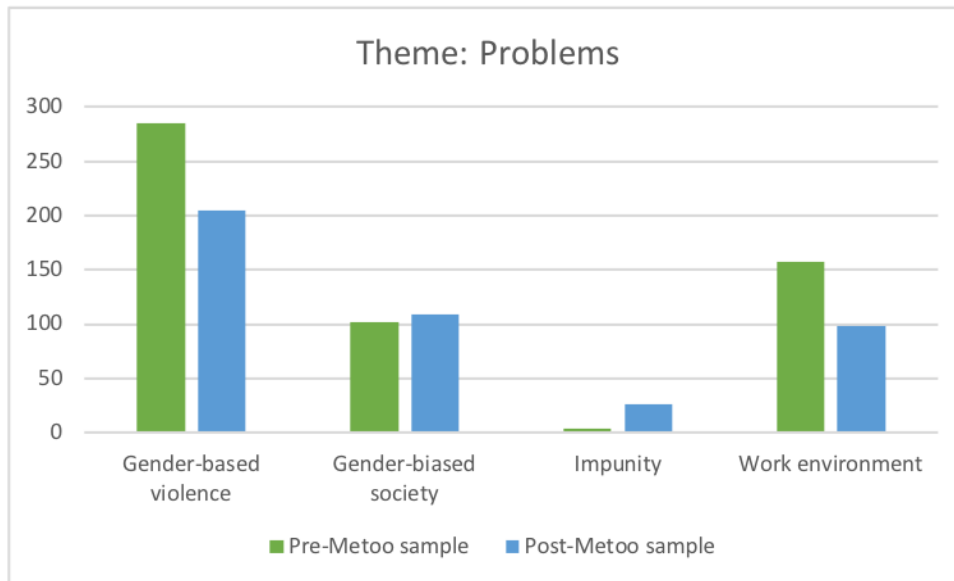

Figure 15: Comparison of *Problems* categories occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo

samples.

3.5.1 Gender-based violence

In the texts mentioning the movement, *gender-based violence* is mainly designated as *violence against women*, but it is also associated with sexual harassment, especially in the workplace. The violence against women is mainly qualified as *persistent*, important matter and *armful*. The word *abuse* is also observed a few times. The word *rape* appears only seven times in all the documents, which is interesting because the #MeToo movement was also launched by rape denunciation. It is also interesting to see that rape is mentioned sixteen times less than *sexual harassment*. At the same time, according to the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014), women experienced ten times less rape than *sexual harassment* (1/2 next to 1/20). The fact that *rape* is mentioned for a short amount of time is an interesting pattern because it does not discuss of one important part of the problem while it is also strongly related to the lack of report and judicial accessibility which is discussed in some EU papers and will be discussed below. On the same line, the notion of *consent* is almost not found, while it is a central aspect of this violence. The *health* implications of the issue are also specified in most of the document. It includes the physical and psychological consequences and the right to reproductive health care and access to abortion. Some documents were specifying the so-called 'honour-related violence' such as female "genital mutilation", forced abortion and forced sterilisation, early and forced marriage (European Parliament, 2018a; European Parliament, 2020b; European Commission, 2020b). Besides, cyber violence is also specified, and the documents admit a lack of regulation. According to them, the laws need to be redefined with new technologies. EC Strategy 2020-2025 is planning to implement "the Digital Services Act23 to clarify online platforms' responsibilities with regard to user-disseminated content" and the facilitation of "the development of a new framework for cooperation between internet platforms" (2020b, p.6). This supports the point made by Latcheva (2017) that the absence of regulation and the necessity for *online* harassment.

The EP, EC and EESC do not frame *gender-based violence* in the same way between the two samples pre- and post-MeToo. Before the #MeToo movement, the word *abuse* is observed only 6 times, while it is observed 25 times in the sample of papers selected mentioning "MeToo". The use of this word is a trend that may amplify these acts' cruelty or degree of violence. *Armful* is also more employed in the latest sample (5 times instead of 1 before). However, rape was cited 7 times before the movement, while it was not after. The same tendencies are observed for *sexual harassment* and *violence*, respectively recorded 21 and 182 times in the sample

before the movement and only 2 and 112 times in the sample after. This can be explained by the fact that two documents of the second sample are on gender equality broadly. In comparison, the earlier sample has two documents focusing on *gender-based violence*. These observations underline the fact that the movement was mentioned to discuss other, broader issues than sexual violence against women. Besides, the persistence of these acts of violence is less stressed in the sample before (8 versus 15). Ultimately, *online* violence is more addressed in the sample after the movement with 9 quotations in contrast with 6 in the other sample. Nevertheless, one mention of "cyberharassment, cyberstalking (2) and cyberbullying" is found (European Parliament, 2016, p.9).

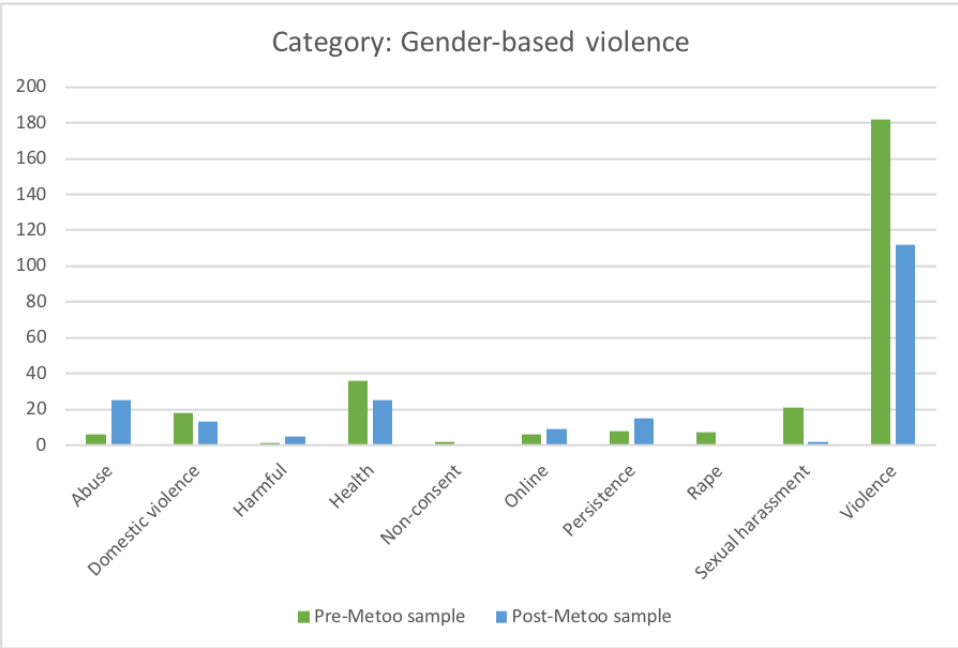Figure 16: Comparison of *Gender-based violence* codes occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo samples.

3.5.2 Gender-biased society

This category was composed of *Discrimination, Women under-representation, Gender stereotypes, Inequality, Sexism and Male-dominated.* The EP and the EC are mentioning at least one time in the texts some word designing some cultural symptoms such as *gender stereotypes*,

or *sexism*. The *women under-representation* is also a central notion in most of the documents mentioning the #MeToo movement. It refers to the lack of participation in decision-making, and the need for initiatives to counter it in political life and some professions (notably in the information technology area and more broadly at high positions in the hierarchy of companies). 42 quotations were coded with this label. The representation issue was present to describe the origin of the problem and its solution. The EC and the EESC are expressing their concern about gender-balanced in its own buildings as well:

> "[…] the EESC is an EU body that represents EU civil society and acts as the bridge between society and the EU institutions, it is regrettable that only 30 % of its members are women […]" (doc 6, p.6);

> "[…] The Commission aims to reach gender balance of 50% at all levels of its management by the end of 2024 […]" (doc 9, p. 15).

The EP also has pointed women unequal representation among the political parties and the directorate of the parliament (European Parliament, 2018b, 5, 7). In that sense, the EU assumes its responsibility and its lack of exemplarity on this aspect.

There were no revealing differences between the two samples except that the *gender stereotypes* were mentioned more after the movement (16 versus 25). According to Li et al. (2021), tweets' contents using the "#MeToo" encouraged actions such as voting and protesting poor *women's representation* in governments. This shows an alignment between the feminist discourse on *women's representation* included in the "#MeToo" related issues and the EU approach. However, the comparison of the samples before and after the movement does not show notable differences regarding *women representation.* Accordingly, the movement might not have strongly influenced the focus on *women representation* among the EU discourse.
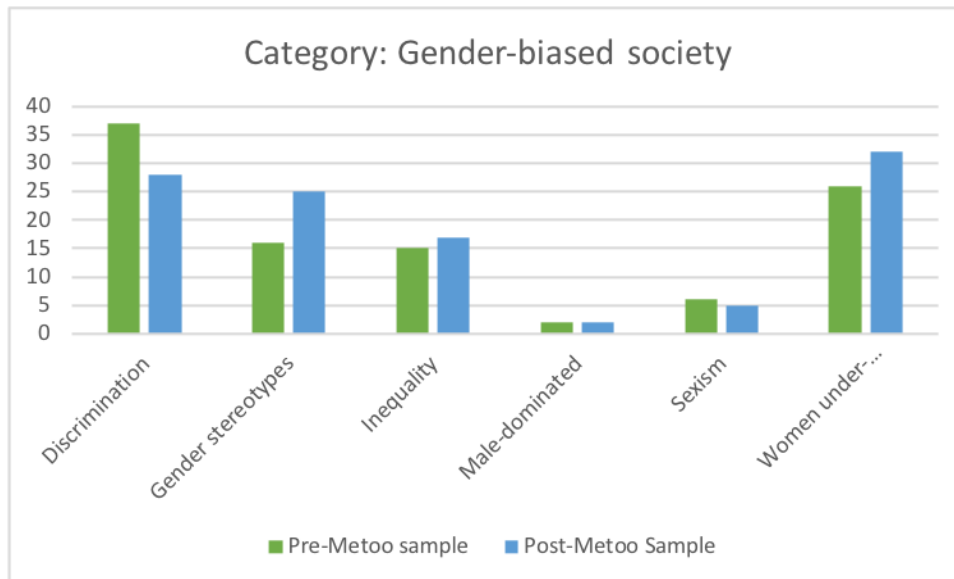
Figure 17: Comparison of *Gender-based society* codes occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo samples.

3.5.3 Work environment

The main scope of action is related to the workplace and employment policies field. The *work world* is mentioned 40 times just in the first document that comes some days after the explosion of hashtag #MeToo on Twitter. Notwithstanding the core focus on violence in the workplace, the discussion among the texts also addresses other issues. Next to that, the EESC opinion focuses a lot on the under-representation of women or men in specific job field. It focuses importantly on the barriers for women in the labour market: working part-time, not having enough social care to work. Interestingly, for the first time, there is a sentence focusing explicitly on men under-represented in some field such as educational and caring ones.

Besides, the EC proposal to ratify the 2019 Violence and Harassment Convention of the ILO reaffirms how the issue is constantly being addressed in the workplace for the EU (European Commission, 2020a). According to the nine collected documents mentioning the movement, gender-based violence happen considerably in this environment. This is consistent with what many researchers have pointed out about the EU's approach to legally addressing these issues only in the context of work (Barnard, 2000; Goodey, 2017; Latcheva, 2017).

The focus on the *work world* is more important in the pre-movement sample, given the 158 quotes extracted compared to 98 in the sample after. The EESC opinion calls for ILO standards to combat gender-based violence at work in the pre-movement sample. In contrast, none of the documents emphasises focuses the *work world* on the title after the #MeToo movement. This may explain the difference between the two samples.
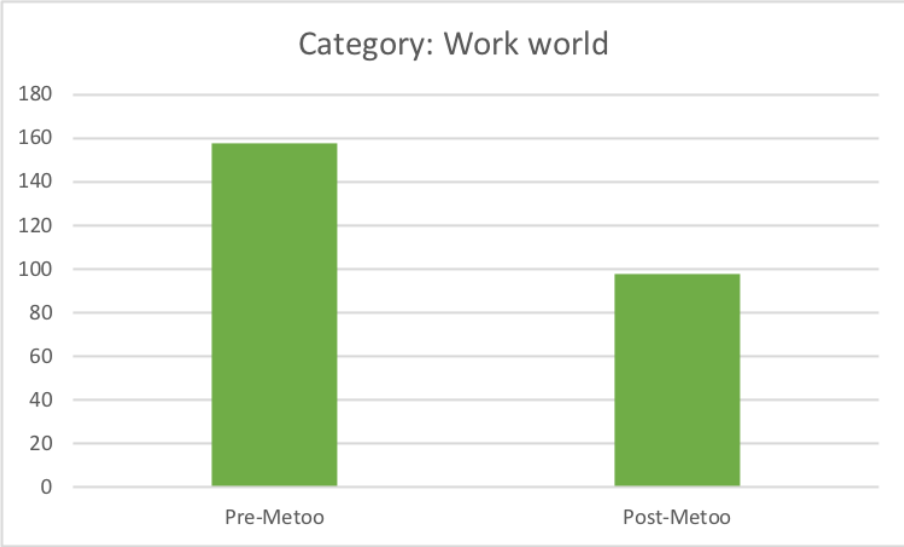
Figure 18: Comparison of *Work world* codes occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo samples.

3.5.4 Impunity

Judicial impunity is cautiously voiced. Only two documents from the EP address this issue in an extensive way. It was the resolution on combating sexual harassment and abuse in the EU and the implementation of Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (European Parliament, 2018a; European Parliament, 2020b). The EP considers the judicial system's failure as part of the explanation of the impunity of gender-based violence. The judicial procedure from the victims' information to the appropriate support and protection of the victims would explain the *lack of reports* and, consequently, the lack of prosecution and sanctions. To fight against this phenomenon, the

recommendations are vague. The emphasis is on the responsibility of the MS and their judicial systems, which is relevant regarding the fact that it calls for more implementation of EU directives. Mainly, the focus is on the need for victim's information to fight against lack of report. However, one might easily imagine the stalemate: how to reach and inform victims who do not report as such or do not even consider themselves as such? Next to that, the involvement of civil society to fight against *judicial impunity* is quite absent. However, it is noteworthy that one of the resolutions finally refers to integrating the perspectives of victims and civil society as a good practice for the MS. Also, the movement has apparently increased the attention on the *lack of report* and *impunity* which is one of the clearest differences between the samples. Reference to judicial impunity was counted 16 times after the #MeToo movement in contrast with 1 time in the sample before the movement. Same for the *lack of report*: 16 as compared to 3 favouring the sample after.

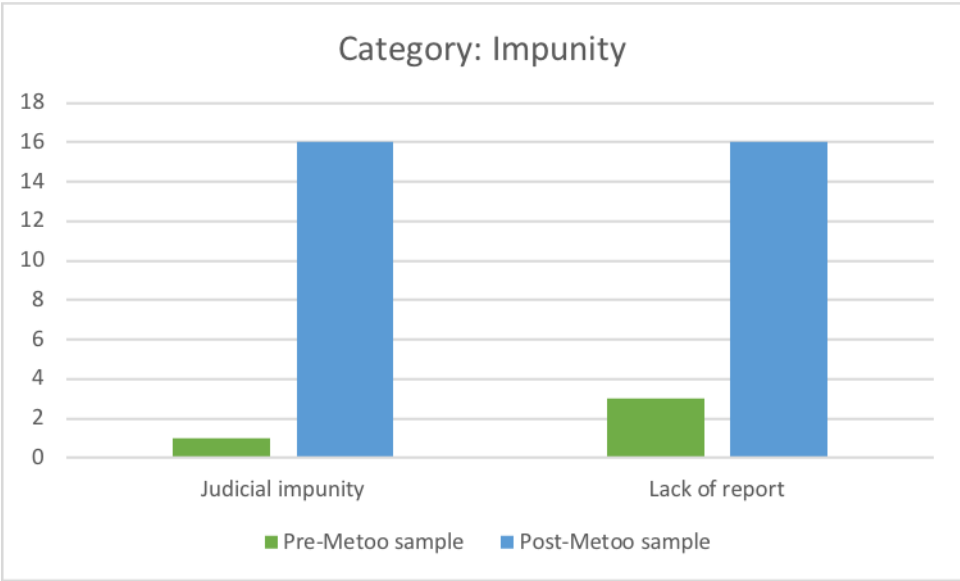Figure 19: Comparison of *Impunity* codes occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo samples.

3.6 Theme: Solutions

Figure 20: Word cloud of *Solutions* theme quotations from documents mentioning "MeToo"

Figure 21: *Solutions* codes occurrence of documents mentioning "MeToo"

3.6.1 Support

The *support* and *protection* of the victims are the main answer of the EU discourse to the #MeToo movement. Indeed, the need for more *support* is present in 8 documents, and the notion of protection is in 7 documents. The support is mainly for the victims, but occasionally also for the various associations which themselves fight against this violence and for women's rights. In the latter case, the support is always financial. The importance of supporting and protecting the victims was emphasised through terms such as *crucial* and *essential*. The codes show a connection between support and judicial impunity. Thus, the papers stress the importance of supporting victims and raising their awareness by informing them to fight against the lack of reports and impunity. The most important paper on support and protection is the EP resolution on the implementation of Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. In the same document, an intriguing argument is made:

> "[…] whereas if government entities and national institutions took effective and protective action to help victims, citizens would support and trust the institutions which would boost their reputation […]" (European Parliament, 2020b, p.4).

This is a very rational cost-benefit approach that tries to convince the Member States to help the victim because it may improve their reputation. This type of discourse may illustrate Lazar's criticism about the institutions that integrate feminist discourses to enhance their image more than having the real aim of social changes (2007, p.153).

In addition, financial support is emphasised. The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 suggested also mainly that funds and more investments in several areas would be part of the solution. The need for more financial support to the cause of the victims in general is also highlighted. Globally the strategy is to fund:

> "[…] Attention to gender mainstreaming and the provision of specific funds for gender equality measures should be present not only in programmes addressing employment and social inclusion issues or fundamental human rights […]" (European Economic and Social Committee, 2019, p.3);

"[…] The Commission will develop and finance measures to tackle abuse, violence […] such as capacity-building of professionals and awareness-raising campaigns on rights and access to justice […]" (European Commission, 2020b, p.5).

Besides, *women empowermen*t is a notion present in the most recent documents. It is one of the central ideas of the EC strategy (2020b). It employs the term empowerment about women in ten different sentences. The concept of *women empowerment* appears between one and three times in three EP resolutions, in the EC report on the fundamental right and the EESC opinion. Empowerment was described as something coming through some positions in the society or economic empowerment: "Empowering women in the labour market also means giving them the possibility to thrive as investors and entrepreneurs" (European Commission, 2020b, p.10). However, the EU institutions were not discussing on the *women empowerment* through education.

The idea of *protection* of women is very present in the sample before the movement while they are not denominated as victims. Protection has been noted 56 times before the #MeToo movement and 44 times in the sample after it. However, the code support appears 44 times before and 91 times after the movement. The call for more *financial support* remains approximately the same between the two samples. If we compare the two proposals of the EC to ratify the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention in 2020 and for the adoption of the Istanbul Convention in 2016, the first one does not have any quotation labelled with the code *importance* while the one of 2016 had 4. Nevertheless, the general pattern observed is still that the EC use a more neutral language than the EP or EESC. Lastly, women's empowerment was less prevalent in the EU discourse before 2017 (3 versus 11).
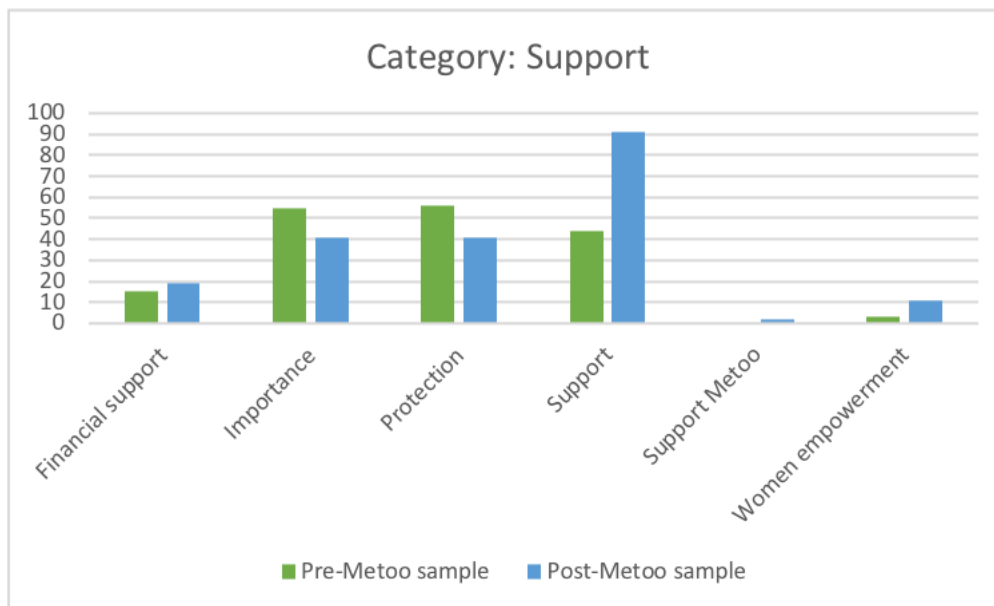
Figure 22: Comparison of *Support* codes occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo samples.

3.6.2 Equality

In the first paper of the collection, "gender equality" is mentioned 11 times, and equality alone is mentioned 45 times next to the references to violence counted 51 times while rape is stipulated only 3 times (European Parliament, 2018a). This shows that despite the particular focus on sexual harassment, the EP extend it to (Gender) Equality issues. Noticeably, some of the documents mentioning "MeToo" does not have a central focus on gender-based violence. The EC and EESC papers mention the most gender equality, which is not surprising regarding the fact that the central topic stated in the title is gender equality while others are on gender-based violence, harassment or fundamental rights. For example, EC mentioned gender equality as a concept entailing the pay and representation gap and violence against women (European Commission, 2018).

Gender Equality is an expression that has increasingly taken the lead for naming women's rights these last years. Not surprisingly, in the sample before the #MeToo movement, which is between 2014 and 2017, *gender equality* is mentioned approximately twice fewer times (54) than in the sample between 2016 and today (107). Similarly, to other organisations, the EU oscillates between the use of "equality between women and men" or "gender equality". For instance, some EC strategies were called "Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-

2015", "Strategy on gender equality (2001-2005)" or "A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025". Gender or women and men does not mean the same. Using the word gender recognises the concept of different gender socially constructed and could pave the way to discuss hegemonic social structures between different groups united by their gender identities. In contrast, the use of equality between women and men stays in a binary conception without being clear if it focuses only on the two groups of the different sex or on the gender conception of female and male, then excluding the other gender identities. Disregarding the intricacy regarding gender terminology, the main idea stays about *equality*. When this idea of equality is merged with the multidimensional cultural perspectives of the EU among the issue, the question on the equality for what and for who will be raised.
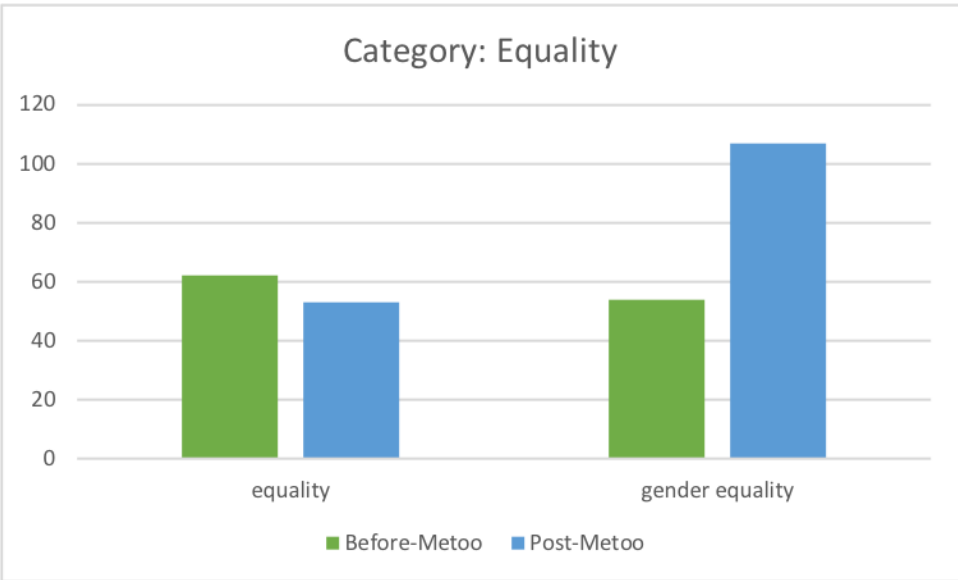
Figure 23: Comparison of *Equality* codes occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo samples.

3.6.3 Condemnation

The idea of *condemnation* was expressed for all kinds of violence related to the #MeToo movement (so-called gender-based violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, or violence against women). This notion comes out through concrete terms such as condemns or unacceptable. The use of the verb *combat* was highly present. In addition, the notion of *prohibition* or *sanction* was also included in some texts but was poor compared other codes

occurrence. Besides, the overall data do not show as much pure *condemnation* mentioned (condemns, prohibit, sanctions) in relation to *support* or protection of the victims, which is also consistent with the unbalanced mention of *victims* next to *perpetrators*. Regarding the third EP resolution reviewing the implementation of the MS of the Directive 2012/29/EU, the criminal aspects of gender-based violence are the central aspect addressed in the resolution of the EP. The resolution of the EP on these directives articulates that part of the solution offered by the EU is to consider this gender-based violence as a *crime.* The related code was observed 99 times in the documents mentioning "MeToo". This important aspect of the EU strategy against gender-based violence was already highlighted in recent literature (Goodey, 2017).

In addition, violence against women and incidences of discrimination are considered as a violation of *fundamental rights* as it is stipulated in the EP resolution:

> "[…] sexual harassment is a violation of human rights linked to patriarchal power structures that need to be reshaped as a matter of urgency […]" (European Parliament, 2019).

Masselot (2007) stated that rights related to gender equality had been recognised by the European Court of Justice and EU Charter of Fundamental Rights as a fundamental right (2000). This is found as an element of the answer to the #MeToo movement. As an illustration, the movement was mentioned in the EP resolution about *fundamental rights* in the European Union in 2017 and EC 2017 Annual Report on the Application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The concept of Human Rights was used as well within the EU discourse. In the same vein, women rights or gender equality was stated as part of the *core values* of the EU. It was quoted 10 times.

Globally the category *condemnation* shows more result in the sample of the three documents mentioning "MeToo" (118 versus 141). The difference is primarily explained by the code *crime* which has been recorder 28 times in the pre-MeToo sample in contrast with 88 times in the post-MeToo sample. Nevertheless, it underscores that calling gender-based violence a *crime* was a direct response to the #MeToo movement more than a response to gender-based violence at work or advocate for the Istanbul Convention's signing in 2015. Still, the criminalisation of violence against women was already part of the discourse. For instance, the EESC opinion drafted in 2015 speak about criminalisation: "In most countries, the fight against gender-based

violence focuses primarily on the criminalisation of perpetrators, usually by including sexual offences in the criminal code" (European Economic and social committee, 2016, p. 6). The qualification of violation of *fundamental rights* is more developed in the pre-movement sample in which it has been mentioned 26 times in contrast with 16 times in the post-movement sample. This is found in the EC proposal related to the Istanbul Convention: "Violence against women is a violation of their human rights and an extreme form of discrimination, entrenched in gender inequalities and contributing to maintaining and reinforcing them." (European Commission, 2016b, p.2).
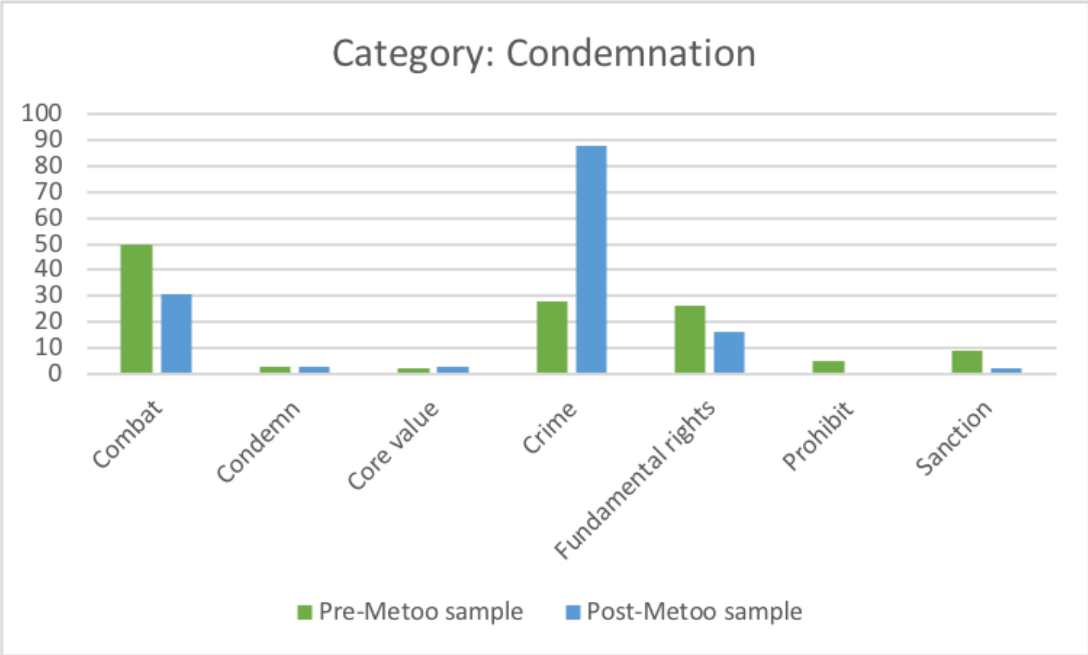
Figure 24: Comparison of *Condemnation* codes occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo samples.

3.6.4 Prevention

The first resolution of the EP mentioning "MeToo" is strongly asking for *prevention*, and for the rise of *awareness respectively* recorded 85 times and 45 times. Another EP resolution on measures to prevent and combat mobbing and sexual harassment at the workplace, public spaces, and political life in the EU (European Parliament, 2019) is also strongly calling for more *prevention* and financial resources for awareness-raising (European Parliament, 2019).

Additionally, the texts outline that the #MeToo movement has raised awareness on the extent of violence against women phenomenon. The need for *awareness* is specified in all papers. However, the way to prevent and the resources needed are not clearly defined among the documents. Exceptionally, in EP resolution on fundamental rights (2020c), the measures mentioned seem less abstract than in the previous resolutions. It mentions training of the police staff, education systems, access to sexual and reproductive health care (European Parliament, 2020c). Also, the EU does not ignore the centrality of youth and *education* as part of the solution. Not only must the youth be made aware, but they are also drivers of change: "the role of young women, in particular, has been remarkable in leading the push for change" (European Commission, 2020b, p.16). The words *awareness* and *education* were quoted 48 times, *training* 41 times.

The idea of *awareness-raising*, *education* and *training* is also highly emphasised in the two samples pre- and post-MeToo. Surprisingly the prevention quotation itself is more found in the sample before the #MeToo movement (41 in contrast with 25). Together with the fact that the category of *condemnation* is more present in the sample after the movement, it can be inferred that the EU discourse is shifting a bit to prevention to express that it is also the time for condemnation.
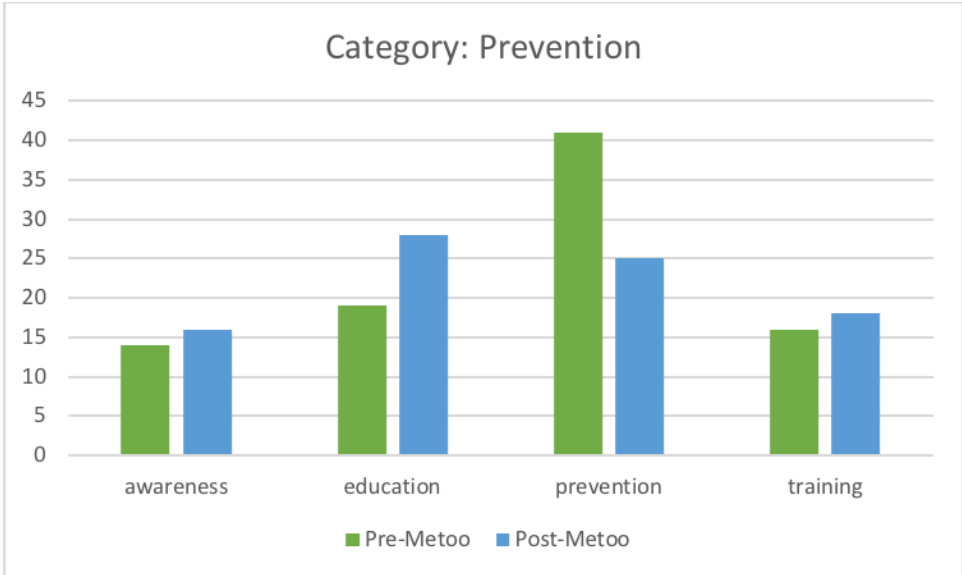

Figure 26: Comparison of *Prevention* codes occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo samples

3.6.5 Knowledge

The papers mentioning the movement underline the importance of *monitoring* which is counted 49 times. According to Goodey, significant improvements in data collection are also needed (2017). The 2014 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) survey and report on violence against women, mentioned in the empirical background of this study (see section 1.2.1), is cited in some of the EU documents. More recently, the EU Gender Equality Index implemented by the EIGE is also observed in the texts. Almost all the document addressed the idea of *monitoring* at least once. It is often enacted by calling for more survey, more independent reporting and most significantly through underlying the responsibility of the MS to collect data on this violence. Indeed, one could imagine that the EIGE reports depend on the data furnished by the MS. On the other hand, the aspect of *research* has been quoted only

The *definition* of violence and other aspects around the issue, such as "victims", is called for improvement. The EP asks for a redraft of the *definition* of sexual harassment in the light of social, technological developments and attitudinal evolution (European Parliament, 2019). As stated before, the EU sees the Istanbul Convention as an excellent opportunity to include a revised *definition*. Furthermore, it is pertinent to highlight that the EC strategy on Gender Equality 2020-2025 incorporates the Istanbul Convention definition of Gender-based violence (see section 1.2.1).

The *research* on the subject is more discussed in the sample pre-MeToo, with 13 quotations recorded against 4 in the sample after the movement: "calls on the Commission to provide financial support for gender-sensitive research programmes;" (European Parliament, 2016, p.14). The same tendency is observed with the request for *definition*, which appears 16 times in the pre-MeToo sample while only 5 times after. However, the demand for *monitoring* is prominent in both camps.
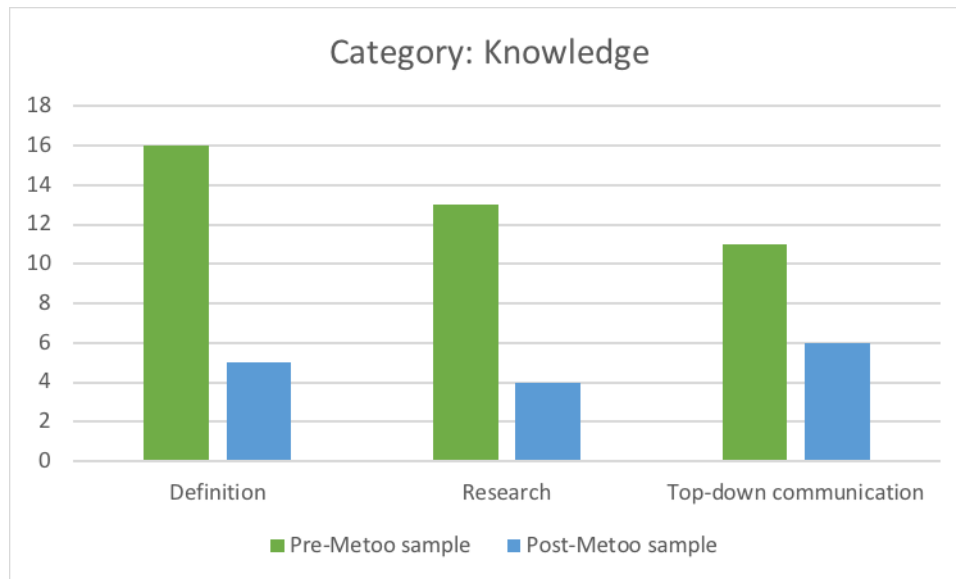
Figure 27: Comparison of *Knowledge* codes occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo samples.

3.6.6 Communication

In the EP (2018b) resolution on the EU 2016 budget, some specific elements on the communication challenges and opportunity are specified after mentioning the #MeToo movement. The EP (2018b) points to the importance of social *media* as a channel for the EU to listen, engage, inform and communicate with citizens. It elaborates on the online debates as an opportunity for the EU to get involved: "points out that online debate and media attention triggered by these events should contribute to further increasing outreach to citizens" (European Parliament, 2018b, p.7). In addition, it underlines the need to use new communication technologies and models and take advantage of the liaison offices' privileged geographical position close to citizens to further intensify activities at the local level, such as organising debates with MS and civil society to people and engage with them. Although these parts illustrate the predisposition to develop consultative or participatory web tools, most of the arguments in the nine documents mentioning "MeToo" are advocating for a top-down approach of information and awareness raising (Reddick, 2011). The EC tries to be involved in online activism through campaigns on social media such as the one launched in 2016 with a #SayNoStopVAW or "#WithHer" in 2020, designed to challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes, which perpetuate violence against women worldwide" (European Commission, 2020b). "#WithHer" seems to echo with the "#MeToo". The initiative remains a top-down

awareness-raising campaign while the #MeToo movement has been able to organise through social media in "a bottom-up mechanism of information dissemination" (Xiong and Boatwright, 2019, p.13).

No important differences have been observed between the two samples. This could be considered disappointing in view of the online movement which demonstrates the consultative potential of social media. The notion of information and awareness-raising stay the main communication mission of the EU and through media. A particular focus on "the role of the media in raising awareness, providing information and training: three things which are imperative in order to break the cycle of violence" (European Economic and social committee, 2016, p.7). Nevertheless, in the sample pre-MeToo, the responsibility of the Media in terms of dissemination of gender stereotypes and degrading images of women is particularly emphasised. Indeed, the EP discussed media in an integral part: "Knowledge, Education and the Media" (European Parliament, 2016, p.14): "whereas these role patterns are further reinforced especially by representations and the image of women transmitted by the media, the material available on the internet and advertising;" (European Parliament, 2016, p.6). In the same document, the media dimension is the responsibility of the Nation States and not the EU: "Calls on the Member States, and especially media regulators, to consider […] non-stereotyped image of women, in a way that is respectful of women's dignity, their diverse roles and their identity […]" (European Parliament, 2016, p.14).

3.6.7 Legal basis

The EU legal response to the extent of violence against women is firmly putting much hope with the ratification of the *Istanbul Convention*. It is cited 32 times in the nine documents. The EP present it as

> "a coherent European legal framework to prevent and combat violence against women and protect the victims" (European Parliament, 2020b, p.4).

It also presented the Convention as the new theoretical and legal background on gender-based violence and as it was the new referential for definition, good practices and State's obligations. The same observation is done in most of the document, including EESC one and EC ones. It has been described in the same way within the recent literature (Simonovic, 2014). Its

ratification by all the MS is one of the priorities in the EC EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. Today, the EU has signed the Convention, and now the MS need to ratify it. However, this ratification remains challenged by several countries. Despite this divergence, the EC is still pushing for achieving the Convention's objectives even if some MS continue to block its ratification. Six EU MS have not yet ratified the Istanbul Convention: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia.

The texts mentioning "MeToo" emphasised that there is already specific legal background regarding condemnation of violence against women. Notably the Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) Articles 8, 10, 19, 153 (1)(a) and (i) and Article 157 (3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Treaty of Lisbon) and in particular Articles 20, 21, 23 and 31. As already cited above, the Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 is a core legal EU basis for determining gender-based violence as a crime. Finally, the Directive 2006/54/EC is

> "[…] addressing the application of the principle of equal treatment and equal opportunities for men and women in employment and occupation, including provisions on the prohibition of harassment and sexual harassment […]" (European Commission, 2020a, p.4).

Nonetheless, the EP called for

> "[…] the Commission to present, as soon as possible, a European strategy for preventing and combating all forms of gender-based violence, including a legal act to support the Member States in the prevention and suppression of all forms of violence against women and girls and of gender-based violence […]" (European Commission, 2018, p.14).

This is in line with Li et al.'s observation on the link between the mention of "#MeToo" and advocacy for legislative changes in discourses on Twitter (2021, p.9). However, no significant differences were observed in this category regarding the pre- and post-MeToo samples comparison.

3.6.8 Actors and roles

The shoulder of responsibility is mainly framed through the targeted "calls" among the documents. Although the principal aim of most of these documents is for formal internal exchanges, such as to call on the EC to submit a proposal for a strategy against all forms of violence against women and girls and of gender-based violence (European Parliament, 2018a), the *MS responsibility* is more emphasized in the wording of the papers than the *EU responsibility* (118 versus 87 times). In its Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, the EC never mentions the EU's responsibility while indicating what the EU is already doing and will continue to do to support women's rights (2020b). As an illustration, the EC "calls the Member States to" while it "will continue to". It also positioned itself as a supporter of the action taken at the domestic level. Besides, it clearly stated that the responsibility is shared and that everyone is concerned: "Achieving gender equality in the European Union is a joint responsibility" (European Commission, 2020b, p.20). It specifies the EU typical repartition of responsibility found in all documents, which is that the EU is responsible for setting the standards through directives and the MS are responsible for implementing and respecting them. The EU is again responsible for monitoring the transposition and implementation:

> "The Commission will ensure that the Member States correctly transpose and implement this directive to enable men and women "(European Commission, 2020b, p.9).

Statements about the inclusion of civil society were carefully recorded and were not frequent. The first EP resolutions were more focused on the Member States' responsibility and their judicial systems. In addition, the victims are passive elements. Indeed, they are the object that needs support and empowerment, while the EU does not ask them to be active on so many aspects. All the focus is on how the EU or the Members states' legal and practical aspect furnished would help fight against the system. Finally, the EP mention the "good practices among Member States, integrating the perspectives of victims and civil society" (European Parliament, 2020b). Noticeably, the EC strategy for gender equality 2020-2025 aims to work with and consult civil society and social partners. The Commission states that it will launch a wide-ranging and inclusive consultation process with the public, the MS and the social partners.

Finally, a complete absence of the word feminism or feminist in any documents was noted. However, it could be assumed that organisations or movements that label themselves as

Feminist or part of the Feminist movement are indirectly mentioned a few times through terms such as women's organisations, women's proper movement, NGOs, or civil society organisations. In comparison, the #MeToo movement can be fully incorporated into the framework of contemporary feminist activism (Xiong & Boatwright, 2019, p.11). The fact that the #MeToo movement was not organised and thus defined through a specific group of individuals identifying themselves and the movement as formally feminist may fit it easily in the discourse of the EU, which seems to avoid the term feminist. This highlights that feminism and gender equality are not the same discourse and do not entail the same ideas in the context of the EU.

MS actions were mentioned more frequently in the sample after the movement (61 versus 18). On the opposite, EU responsibility was enhanced through EP calls to EC before the movement (70 as compared to 43). This could be explained by the focus on implementing the Crime Victims' Rights Directive and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in response to the #MeToo movement. In addition, the crucial role of the civil society is also more underlined in the sample before the movement, especially in the document of the EESC: "Women's associations and associations which protect rights or support migrants, to name but a few, are essential to help victims and complement the work of the social partners." (European Economic and social committee, 2016, p.6). The content around the civil society remains the same in the two sets of papers. It argues for the inclusion of civil society in the fight against gender-based violence and the support and protection of victims.
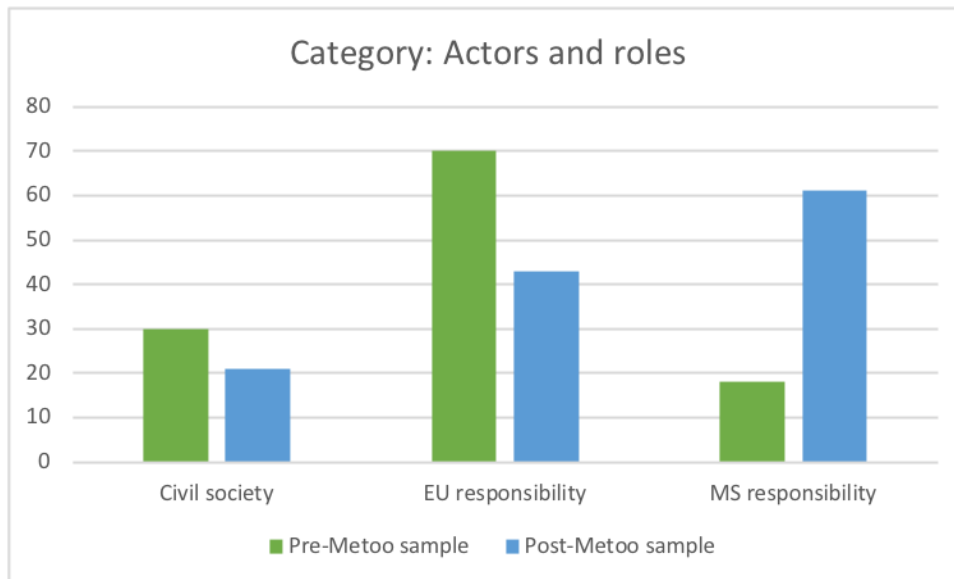
Figure 25: Comparison of *Actors and roles* codes occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo samples.

3.6.9 EU cultural perspective

The category mainly informs on whether contemporary feminist activism narrative advocating for social norms, laws and practices changes can be found in some official EU documents (Weldon, 2019, p. 133; Xiong & Boatwright, 2019). Furthermore, the rejection of patriarchal social order and the integration of intersectionality were also scrutinised in the EU discourse (Xiong & Boatwright, 2019; Aruzza et al., 2019; Crenshaw, 2017; Peroni & Rodak, 2020).

Gender mainstream is also emphasised in the documents mentioning "MeToo", sometimes named as "gender-sensitive" perspective. In addition, the institutions are timidly suggesting an integrated approach and pointing to the need for broad social patterns changes. Still, almost every paper call for a gender-sensitive integrated approach in the EU policymaking, such as Artificial Intelligence and Media policies (European Commission, 2020b). Next to that *intersectionality* was also incorporated into the documents mentioning "MeToo". It is mentioned three times in an EP resolution in 2019 and nine times in the EC Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 in 2020.

Some interesting statements involving critics of a power order at the origin of the problem were noticed despite their limited occurrence. The quotations categorised as *Hegemonic culture* were mainly implying a causal link between power structures (patriarchal) and violence against women, or a system that generates discrimination and violence against various "minorities". A "Culture of violence" was suggested two times as well: "Participants also considered the culture of violence in society and the links between violence against women and other forms of violence, including in the context of populist and extremist movements […]" (European Commission, 2018, p.16). Nevertheless, nearly all the sentences considering the cultural and structural pathologies were found exclusively in the two resolutions of the EP drafted with the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM):

> "[…] violation of human rights linked to patriarchal power structures that need to be reshaped as a matter of urgency […]" (European Parliament, 2019, p.6);
>
> "[…] parity lists at all levels play a key role in enabling the participation of women in politics and reshaping power structures that discriminate against women […]" (European Parliament, 2019, p.9);
>
> "[…] awareness-raising campaigns combating gender stereotypes and patriarchal power relations […]" (European Parliament, 2019, p.10);
>
> "[…] calls on all Member States, moreover, to work across sectors to identify and address the systemic factors that contribute to the repeat victimisation of people in vulnerable situations […]" (European Parliament, 2020b, p.11);
>
> "[…] collecting data on and analysing the culture of violence, misogyny and gender stereotypes, and their link with the incidence of hate crimes […]" (European Parliament, 2020b, p. 5).

Besides, some mentions of *holistic approach* were found in the documents mentioning "MeToo", without further clarification, leaving the idea very vague: "to acknowledge that these manifestations of VAW [violence against women] are inter-connected and that they have to be tackled through a holistic approach seeking both to cover the socio-cultural aspects that give rise to VAW and to enable specialised services to equip themselves with technological prevention and management tools;" (European Parliament, 2019, p.7). According to the comparison of the sample before and after the movement, an increase in the concept of *intersectionality* (2 versus 10) and *holistic* (1 versus 3) has been observed. To reiterate, *intersectionality* has been described in the literature as a concept present in contemporary

feminist discourse, including recent ones taking place on the internet (Xiong & Boatwright, 2019; Aruzza et al., 2019; Shiva & Nosrat Kharazmi, 2019).

Although the same quantity of quotations referencing hegemonic culture was counted in the samples pre-MeToo and post-MeToo, their contents were not the same. Before the movement, the reference of unequal power relations between women and men was the predominant expression: "it reflects unequal power relations between women and men and contributes to perpetuating inequalities at work" (European Economic and social committee, 2016, p.1). Next to that, the strongest mention of hegemonic culture in the sample before the movement referred to "mechanisms of domination and segregation of genders at work » (European Economic and social committee, 2016, p.7). On the contrary, stronger words such as patriarchal, ideologies or misogyny were observed in the document mentioning the movement (see quotations above). This was not observed in the sample before the movement, even in papers from the FEMM committee.

Moreover, many economic and cost-benefit arguments were found in the documents mentioning "MeToo". The first sentence of the EESC's opinion underlines how gender inequalities undermine economic growth (2019, p.1). One page out of seven is dedicated to the economy (European Economic and Social Committee, 2019, p.3). The economic aspect of the gender equality issues is integrated among all the documents. According to the EESC the Public opinion supports this view, as most Europeans think that gender equality is crucial for the economy (87 %) (2019, p.2). The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 suggested in its first arguments additionally emphasised that gender equality is "an essential condition for an innovative, competitive and thriving European economy" (European Commission, 2019, p.2). The solution argues for economic empowerment of women and implementing *gender mainstream* in economic governance.

This EC strategy and EESC opinion mentioning "Metoo" demonstrate a solid neo-liberal discourse and "*economisation*" of gender equality (Elomäki, 2018). According to the framing of the problem and solution, the aim is more to make sure that women make the economy work than questioning the origin of women condition or investigating what women want. These observations firmly support the arguments put forward by Elomäki (2018) and Vida (2020), referring to the "Economisation" or neo-liberalisation of gender equality knowledge and strategy in the EU.

Many cost-benefit arguments entailing neo-liberal arguments were found in all the selected documents before the movement as well. It results in 24 mentions of economic arguments in the sample before the movement while it was quoted 14 times in the after-MeToo sample. Below are some examples extracted before the movement:

"[…] Gender-based violence is thus also harmful for employers (loss of productivity, absenteeism, legal proceedings and bad publicity) […]" (European Economic and social committee, 2016, p.4);

"[…] improving safety at work and reducing employers' economic losses related to gender-based violence (absenteeism, loss of productivity, legal proceedings, bad publicity, etc.) […]" (European Economic and social committee, 2016, p.6);

"[…] make savings: domestic and workplace violence cost millions in healthcare, legal proceedings, lost pay and sickness pay […]" (European Economic and social committee, 2016, p.7);

"[…] points out that although part-time work, which is performed for the most part by women, can make it easier to reconcile family and working life, it is no less true that it also involves fewer career opportunities, lower pay and pensions, underutilisation of human capital and, consequently, lower economic growth and prosperity […]" (European Parliament, 2016, p.10)

Globally, before and after the #MeToo movement, the EU discourse remained between a neoliberal discourse explaining that gender equality is necessary for the economy and a humanist discourse stressing that any discrimination is a violation of fundamental rights. This neoliberal and universalist discourse does not go hand in hand, notably regarding women's rights (Lazar, 2007). This dichotomy is also reflected in the arguments that women must participate in the economy's growth to establish a new inclusive model. As an illustration, the EP has argued: "we need a new, socially sustainable model based on knowledge and innovation that incorporates the full range of women's talents in the productive fabric" (2016, p.4).
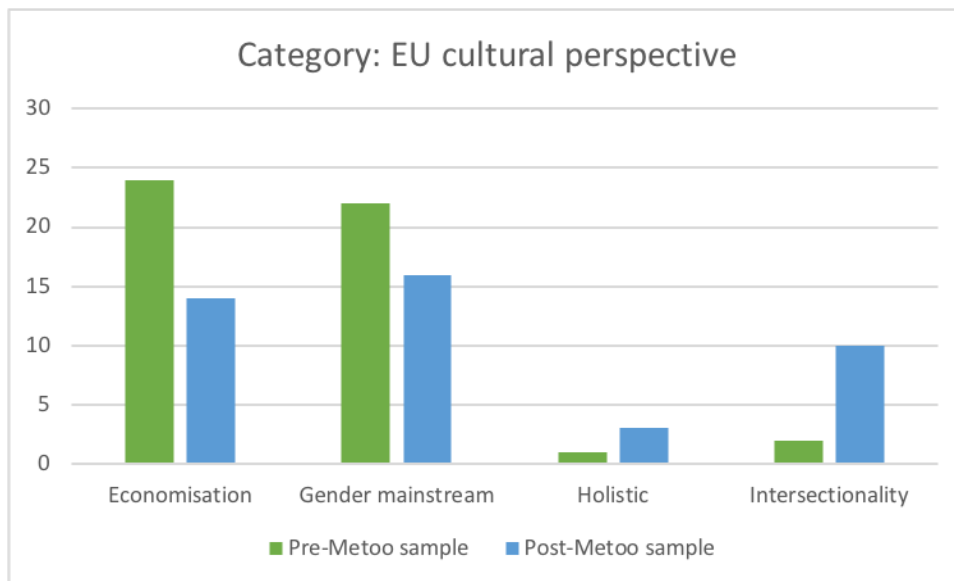
Figure 28: Comparison of *EU cultural perspective* codes occurrence between pre- and post-MeToo samples.

To conclude this central category for the CDA, contemporary feminist discourses related to the #MeToo movement, such as the exclusion and hostility experienced by women, the questioning of social norms and structure or the integration of the concept of intersectionality, can be perceived in the discourse of the EU, especially from the EP. According to the comparison with documents before the movement, it can be deduced that the decrease in purely economic arguments has given way to a rare use of terms denouncing a *hegemonic* power order and the need for social structural change. Nevertheless, this discourse mainly focuses on symptomatologic treatments by financing the protection of victims, economically empowering women and condemning violence faced by women. This discourse is in line with Elomäki (2018) argument showing the 'Economisation' of gender equality and what Lazar would depict as a neo-liberal discourse that does not align with feminists' goals (2007, p.153). This discourse from the EU still tends to ignore the structural origin of violence against women in its discourse and in the concrete solutions it suggests (Goodey, 2017). Ultimately, the significant increase of intersectionality quotations may reflect the permeability of the EU discourse to those of the new wave of cyber-feminists that strongly incorporate this notion (Aruzza et al., 2019; Shiva & Nosrat Kharazmi, 2019).

Figure 29: Word cloud of pre-MeToo (left) and post-MeToo documents samples (right)

Conclusion

According to this research, the #MeToo movement has been used to go further and quicker on previous initiative already ongoing to fight against gender-based violence in the EU. These initiatives included mainly the MS implementation of the directive 2012/29/EU on the rights of victims of crime and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention being one of the most important legal bases. However, few pressures or legislative measures were identified to combat the structural social origin of such violence and discrimination at EU and state level. Regarding the results, impunity is one of the main contrasting increases between documents before and after the #MeToo movement. On the contrary, the word perpetrator is almost absent compared to victim in all the documents analysed, even more in the documents mentioning "MeToo". Thus, one can deduce that the EU is urgently condemning this violence in a broad sense, but we do not know who. The same phenomenon has been observed with the diffuse responsibility between the EU and the MS. In addition, the EU discourses also calls for more support for the victims, more monitoring on gender-based violence and more awareness-raising. Even though prevention is at the heart of the EU discourse in every document, it seems that after the #MeToo movement, there is a partial shift from exclusive prevention to more condemnation. Moreover, progressive feminist discourses that can be linked to the #MeToo movement, such as the rejection of a patriarchal social order, social norms around the male/female gender or the integration of the concept of intersectionality, seem to have overtaken the arena of the EP, this demonstrates a substantial representation of women's rights movements. Aside from those rare comprehensive approaches, the whole perspective taken in the discourses and initiatives listed are a symptomatologic treatment of the problem. The EC texts has shown a different discourse which is highly consistent with the concerns expressed by various researchers. Indeed, the solution is almost only based on financing. The objectives behind the quantitative indicators are the products of egalitarian ideas that seek to produce a woman empowered who participates in the economic growth of an androgenic system. Furthermore, the EC's texts differ from the EP because it has a significant cost-benefit and economical approach to gender equality. The discourse of the EC could be described as a neoliberal discourse using feminist values of egalitarianism and empowerment for non-feminist purposes. Consequently, this raises the question of gender equality for whom? For women who are willing to try to be more like men? For all gender identities? And above all, gender equality for what? For the economy or for women fundamental rights? According to the analysis of this paper these questions illustrate

perfectly the ambiguity of the ambivalent discourse among EU institutions. Ultimately, this paper illustrates the EU rhetoric around women as a group insinuating that they are inherently vulnerable and victims who need to be supported, protected and empowered. Notwithstanding the fact that this discourse is paternalistic, the rhetoric could be taken in the opposite direction: to consider that women are vulnerable and must be supported, empowered or protected perpetuates a patriarchal structure that leaves them as victims. Furthermore, it is problematic because it ignores the systemic origin that would make women victims and vulnerable, and therefore does not propose a real solution to change them. For further research, it would be crucial to triangulate these analyses with other sources, such as the oral speeches of personalities from the European institutions on this subject. Moreover, it would be relevant to triangulate these results with another methodology to confirm or refute the trends highlighted. Finally, it would be valuable to analyse and compare larger samples to refine and reinforce the initial observations that emerge from this study.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Chronological (Content date) list of the documents analysed from EUR-Lex

European Economic and Social. (2016). Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Towards an ILO standard against gender-based violence at work' (own-initiative opinion). OJ C 13, 15.1.2016, p. 138–144. Retrieved June 04, 2021, from: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015IE1969&from=EN

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Appendix 2: Characteristics of the documents mentioning #MeToo: dates, types, authors

N°	Content date	Publication Date	Author	Type of documents	Type of Act
1	26.10.2017	27.09.2018	EP	Preparatory	Resolution
2	18.04.2018	03.10.2018	EP	Preparatory	Resolution
3	30.05.2018	09.03.2020	EP, LIBE, FEMM	Preparatory	Own-initiative resolution
4	04.06.2018	04.06.2018	EC, DG JUST	Preparatory	Report
5	11.09.2018	23.12.2019	EP, FEMM	Preparatory	Own-initiative resolution
6	20.09.2018	15.05.2019	EESC, SOC	Preparatory	Own-initiative opinion
7	16.01.2019	27.11.2020	EP, LIBE	Preparatory	Own-initiative resolution
8	22.01.2020	22.01.2020	EC, DG EMPL	Preparatory	Proposal for a decision
9	05.03.2020	05.03.2020	EC, DG JUST	Preparatory	Communication

Appendix 3: The number of words and pages of the documents.

N°	Number of pages	Number of words
1	8	3899
2	20	3885
3	14	8973
4	17	5385
5	11	6124
6	7	4147
7	13	8866
8	10	2456
9	20	8291
total	120	53026

Documents mentioning #MeToo

N°	Number of pages	Number of words
10	7	3685
11	16	10123
12	12	5739
total	35	19547

Sample Pre-MeToo

N°	Number of pages	Number of words
3	14	8973
6	7	4147
9	20	8291
total	41	21411

Sample Post-MeToo

Appendix 4: Sentences mentioning #MeToo extracted from the dataset

o *Welcomes initiatives such as the #MeToo movement that aim to report cases of sexual harassment and violence against women; strongly supports all the women and girls who have participated in the campaign, including those who denounced their perpetrators (European Parliament, 2018a, p.5).*

o *Is of the opinion that in reaction to the #metoo-campaign, the Parliament should achieve zero-tolerance towards violence in any form be it structural, sexual, physical or psychological; (European Parliament, 2018b, p.10)*

o *[...] the #MeToo campaign has highlighted that the justice system does not deliver adequate justice and protection to women and girls and that consequently, victims of gender-based violence do not receive the necessary support (European Parliament, 2020b, p.4)*

o *Participants discussed the risk of normalising misogyny in society and its impact on women's fundamental rights in all spheres of life. They underlined that, although threats to women's rights and to gender equality have been very visible in public discourse recently, so have responses (e.g. Women's Marches and the #metoo movement online) (European Commission, 2018, p.15)*

o *Welcomes the new widespread public debate, including on social media, which is contributing to redrawing the boundaries in relation to sexual harassment and acceptable behaviours; welcomes, in particular, initiatives such as the #MeToo movement and strongly supports all the women and girls who have participated in the campaign, including those who have denounced their perpetrators (European Parliament, 2019, p.6).*

o *In the light of the recent increase in #MeToo exposures, the Committee praises the European Ombudsman for recommending a stronger code of conduct in all EU institutions, and believes that it also should be swiftly adapted and adopted by public institutions in the Member States (European Economic and Social Committee, 2019, p.3).*

o *Whereas in 2017, the #MeToo movement raised awareness of the scale and intensity of the sexual harassment and sexual and gender-based violence that women face; whereas the #MeToo movement resulted in some positive momentum for gender equality, but cases of sexual harassment and sexual and gender-based violence are still widespread; whereas in recent years reports have pointed out a growing backlash against women's rights and gender equality in the EU (European Parliament, 2020c, p.3).*

o *CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL : As recently highlighted by the #metoo and related movements, violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence and harassment, are pervasive throughout the world. Prevention efforts need to be enhanced and victims protected (European Commission, 2020a, p.2).*

o *Gender-based violence and harassment continue at alarming levels. The #MeToo movement has demonstrated the extent of sexism and abuse that women and girls continue to face. At the same time, it has empowered women across the globe to now come forward with their experiences and bring cases to court (European Commission, 2020b, p.3).*