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## **Speaking for the 'right' women: radical-right populism and women's representation in the European Parliament**

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# Speaking for the ‘right’ women: radical-right populism and women's representation in the European Parliament

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## Abstract

This research investigates the convergence between feminism and radical-right populism in the field of women's representation in the European Union. Although previous research has explored how populist radical-right actors exploit feminist narratives to advance Islamophobic anti-immigration stances, little has been said about how feminist arguments contribute to radical-right populist attempts to represent women substantively. This is relevant because, through the representative process, populist radical-right parties construct specific views of women's identities, interests, and gender equality that are increasingly becoming part of the European political discourse. As the popularity of radical-right populist parties rises across Europe, so does their ability to use seemingly liberal narratives to leave the political fringes and enter the mainstream. Therefore, analysing the nature and the objectives of a potential convergence between feminism and radical-right populism is crucial to understanding which identities and interests would be advanced, marginalised, or erased if a populist radical-right form of feminism became dominant. This research aims to uncover 1) whether a populist radical-right form of feminism exists and what it may look like; 2) which goals populist radical-right parties pursue when they use feminist arguments to represent women; 3) which women are represented or excluded when populist radical-right parties adopt feminist arguments in their claims. To achieve this, the method of reflexive thematic analysis is applied to a sample of 82 representative claims for women advanced by populist radical-right members of the European Parliament during 26 plenary debates held between 2019 and 2023. This study concludes that populist radical-right feminism contributes to reinforcing an 'us' versus 'them' narrative, which depicts populist radical-right parties as the true champions of women's interests and 'real' gender equality. In doing so, populist radical-right feminism promotes an exclusionary understanding of women's identities and interests that contradicts the inclusive and intersectional efforts undertaken by the most recent waves of feminist activism. Therefore, future research on the relationship between feminism and radical-right populism may build on the present work to explore how we can challenge the spreading of such an exclusionary narrative and promote a more inclusive and intersectional approach to representation.

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## Introduction

Can feminism be right-wing? Popular views tend to associate feminism with left-wing progressive movements fighting for gender equality, women's emancipation and, more recently, also for LGBTQAI+ rights and access to sexual and reproductive health. However, the multifaceted and diverse nature of feminism makes it virtually impossible to confine it to an individual political stance. Recently, several gender and feminist scholars have been investigating the nature and implications of a potential convergence between feminism and right-wing ideologies (Fraser 2016; Celis & Childs 2018; Arfini et al. 2019; Schreiber 2018; Della Torre & Cooper 2022; Ylöstalo 2022). The present research focuses on the relationship between feminism and one particular form of right-wing ideology, namely radical-right populism. This study addresses the question: *how do populist radical-right parties adopt feminist arguments in their representative claims for women in the European Parliament's plenary debates between 2019 and 2023?*

Radical-right populism has been rising in power and popularity in Europe throughout the past decade, as it has been encountering increasing electoral success at both national and European levels (Mudde 2019). For this reason, a rich field of literature has flourished around the study of radical-right populism, especially regarding the role that gender equality and women's issues may play within its political agenda (**for example, see** Akkerman 2015). Much of the scholarship studying the impact of the far-right on gender equality has highlighted the threat that populist radical-right (PRR) parties represent to the transformation of the current gender relations (Ahrens et al. 2018). Indeed, the PRR parties' discourses that challenge progress in terms of gender equality have been analysed extensively at both national and European levels (Kantola & Lombardo 2021a; Lombardo et al. 2021). Additionally, PRR parties have often been described as *Männerparteien* because they seem to prioritise male interests over female ones. However, a growing body of literature shows that this depiction is inaccurate, as women are becoming increasingly active within PRR parties, which in turn are engaging more and more with women's interests and concerns (Erzeel & Rashkova 2017).

These considerations may lead one to wonder whether and to what extent PRR parties contribute to representing women's interests. Although there are several insightful studies on how right-wing conservative actors engage in women's substantive representation (Celis & Erzeel 2015; Celis & Childs 2018; O'Brien 2018), more research should focus on the role of radical-right populism in this field. There are three main reasons for this. First, PRR parties are becoming increasingly influential on the European political stage. Therefore, it is crucial to gain a deeper understanding of their approach to women's rights and gender equality. Secondly, studying the PRR approach to women's representation is relevant because the process of representation itself contributes to constructing and shaping the identities and interests of those represented through it (Saward 2010). Therefore, it is essential to understand which identities and interests are constructed, included, or excluded when PRR parties claim to speak on behalf of women. Finally, so far, the literature on the relationship between feminism and radical-right populism has been focusing primarily on how PRR parties co-opt feminism to legitimise xenophobic anti-immigration narratives (Akkerman 2015; Farris & Rottenberg

2017; Sprengholz 2021; Kamenou 2023). Considering the possibility that feminist arguments may be adopted by PRR parties to represent women substantively could add further nuance to the conversation on the convergence between feminism and radical-right populism.

Hence, this research combines the insights on the relationship between feminism and right-wing ideologies with those on women's representation by right-wing actors. Moreover, it embraces an intersectional understanding of women as a non-homogenous group whose identities and interests are shaped not only by their gender, but also by gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnicity, class, disability, and other many categories that compose women's experiences. The overarching objective of this study is to understand how PRR parties may use feminism as a tool to construct a specific picture of women's identities, interests, and gender equality more broadly. By looking at how PRR parties adopt feminist arguments in their claims, the present research does not state that such arguments represent feminism in general, nor does it hold that PRR parties are good representatives of all women. Instead, it aims to uncover: 1) whether a PRR form of feminism exists and what it may look like; 2) which goals PRR parties pursue when they use feminist arguments to represent women; 3) which women are represented or excluded when PRR parties adopt feminist arguments in their claims. To achieve this, the present work focuses on the case of the European Parliament's current legislature. Looking at this specific setting allows one to analyse how the main European PRR parties adopt feminist arguments in their claims for women. Additionally, it makes it possible to assess whether there are patterns suggesting the existence of a particular form of PRR feminism in Europe.

This thesis is structured as follows. The first chapter covers the main literature on the relationship between radical-right populism, feminism, and women's representation. This section also introduces in greater depth the case of the European Parliament on which this research focuses. The second chapter introduces the theoretical framework that guides this paper and defines its main key concepts. Therefore, it clarifies the use of the terms 'feminist arguments', 'women's interests', 'representative claims', and 'women's substantive representation'. The third chapter presents the research design and methodology. It explains why the European Parliament was selected as a case study for this research and describes how the dataset of PRR representative claims was sampled. Moreover, it discusses why the method of reflexive thematic analysis was selected for this study and how it was implemented. Chapter four covers the findings of the analysis carried out on the 82 PRR representative claims sampled for this research. It presents the categories of representative claims advanced by PRR parties and the types of feminist arguments identified within them. Moreover, it introduces four main themes that function as a bridge between each category of representative claims, the core messages they convey, and the feminist arguments they adopt. The fifth chapter discusses the key findings of this study by answering the three research objectives stated above in context with the existing literature. Hence, it defines the main features of PRR feminism, presents its goals, and discusses which identities are represented or excluded when PRR politicians use feminist arguments to speak on behalf of women.



This thesis finds that PRR feminism is adopted to pursue three main objectives. First, it supports an illiberal narrative presenting immigrants and Muslims as the main enemy of gender equality and women's rights. Secondly, it promotes an anti-gender-ideology narrative that constructs women exclusively in terms of heteronormativity. Finally, it is part of a broader Eurosceptic narrative that presents the EU as unable or unwilling to achieve real gender equality through its policies. Therefore, PRR feminism reinforces an 'us' versus 'them' narrative, which depicts PRR parties as the true champions of women's interests and 'real' gender equality. Additionally, PRR feminism reduces the women it represents to a limited set of identities, thus failing to acknowledge the many other factors that influence their experiences, challenges, and interests. Hence, PRR feminism seems contrary to the embracing of intersectionality and inclusivity that most recent forms of feminism have undertaken. Finally, this study concludes that more research is needed to explore further the complex relationship between feminism, radical-right populism, and women's representation at both national and European levels.

## Chapter 1: Literature Review

This chapter discusses the relevant literature on the relationship between feminism, radical-right populism, and women's representation. First, it presents the literature on the convergence between feminism, neoliberalism, and conservatism and the implication that this may have on how right-wing parties frame women's interests. Secondly, it refers to the literature that asks whether conservative politicians can substantially represent women's interests on the same ground as their left-wing feminist counterparts. Although the answer to this question seems affirmative, it becomes problematic when one considers the backlash against gender equality and women's rights performed by PRR parties. Nevertheless, a growing body of literature, explored in the third section of the chapter, shows that these parties are increasingly referencing feminism, gender equality, and women's rights to further their agendas. Most research analyses how PRR parties co-opt and exploit feminism to justify their illiberal and exclusionary stances. However, there are also hints suggesting the possibility that these parties may be contributing to the substantive representation of women's interests. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the importance of understanding the relationship between radical-right populism, feminism, and women's representation by presenting the case of the European Parliament.

### Neoliberalism, Conservatism and Feminism: Opposition and Convergence

Feminism is a complex and multi-faceted notion that hardly lends to a univocal definition and may therefore acquire different meanings according to the actors who adopt it. A definition of feminism followed by several scholars is the one advanced by bell hooks, according to whom "feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (hooks 2015; 1). This definition identifies the enemies of feminism, namely the issues that feminism should fight *against*: sexism, exploitation and oppression. However, it leaves open to interpretation the identity of the feminist subject, the individual that feminism should be acting *for*. Several strands of feminism, particularly those belonging to the so-called third and fourth waves of feminism, embrace the fluid nature of gender and sexual identities, thus overcoming the binary paradigm of gender equality as equality between two distinct sexes (Snyder 2008). Although the present work centres on the usage of feminist arguments for women's political representation, it is important to acknowledge that feminist work on representation encompasses a broader agenda on gender identities and sexual orientations.

Restricting the focus of this study on the representation of women through feminist lenses requires one to ponder what the category 'woman' stands for as a feminist subject and a bearer of specific interests. If one considers the metaphor of the waves often used to describe the feminist movement, it will be clear that different waves present diverse ways of understanding women and their interests. The first and second waves of feminism advance crucial claims in the realm of political, economic, and social rights, including access to suffrage, equal pay, and ownership over one's body and fate (Evans & Chamberlain 2015; 399). However,

they also disproportionately represent the demands and interests of white, middle-class, cis-gender, and heterosexual women.

Third-wave feminism challenges this stance by refuting a unitary vision of femininity and introducing the idea that class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and myriad other factors profoundly affect what 'being a woman' means and the challenges it entails (ibid.). Fourth-wave feminism is understood as a generational shift from the previous waves and features young activists' usage of social media to shape the feminist discourse. Like the digital space where it takes place, the borders of the fourth wave are unclear, as its issues range from body politics, sexual and reproductive rights, sexism, and LGBTQIA+ rights (Baer 2016). Therefore, the four waves show that the idea of 'women' is constantly challenged and reshaped, and that a rich variety of voices compose the feminist movement.

But what happens when feminism encounters right-wing ideologies? Is the coexistence between the two even possible and, if so, what are the consequences of such convergence on how we view women's identities and interests? Several authors have been investigating the relationship between feminism and right-wing ideologies to understand the convergence between feminism, neoliberalism, and conservatism (Fraser 2016; Celis & Childs 2018; Arfini et al. 2019; Schreiber 2018; Della Torre & Cooper 2022; Ylöstalo 2022). According to Ylöstalo, the convergence between feminism and neoliberalism gives rise to 'post-feminism', where the concern for gender inequality is accompanied by the failure to address the socioeconomic structures that produce that inequality (Ylöstalo 2022; 4). This notion is similar to the one of 'emancipatory complementarity' suggested by Arfini et al. in their study of right-wing feminism in Italy. In their claims to represent women's interests, right-wing politicians encourage women's empowerment and access to equal freedoms and opportunities. At the same time, they emphasise the need for work-life balance through which women can pursue a career while performing their natural role as mothers and caregivers (Arfini et al. 2019). The result is a model centred on stereotypical gender roles which selectively borrows elements from second-wave feminism without addressing the root causes of inequality (ibid.).

According to Fraser, neoliberalism exploits its alliance with feminism and progressive ideas of empowerment, non-discrimination, and emancipation to reinforce its capitalist socioeconomic structure (Fraser 2016). Neoliberalism preaches a form of women's emancipation based on the idea that women can and should strive to have it all. Happiness and empowerment come from finding the perfect equilibrium between pursuing an outstanding career and creating the perfect traditional family (Rottenberg 2014; 429). In doing so, neoliberalism combines feminism and liberal notions of individual rights and freedom to reinforce a traditional morality and a conservative view of women's role in society.

In fact, the convergence between feminism and conservatism is particularly interesting, as the two notions seemingly stand in direct opposition to each other. Conservatism asserts the division between the public and

private spheres, relegating women's role primarily to the latter (Celis & Childs 2018; 8). It thus reinforces gender roles for women and men based on traditional family values and the biological distinction between the sexes. Typical conservative views construct feminine and masculine roles, pertaining to the private and public sphere respectively, as beneficial to women and men because they correspond to the 'natural' differences between the sexes. On the contrary, feminism, particularly in its liberal connotation, calls for women's emancipation from the private sphere and full inclusion in the public one (Rottenberg 2014; 419). In doing so, it attempts to bring into the political arena the voices, needs, and concerns of those excluded from it.

Nevertheless, some conservative representatives have started to adopt what are seen as 'conservative feminist claims' through which they assert to speak on behalf of women. (Schreiber 2018; Ylöstalo 2022). Schreiber observes that, although most female conservative representatives reject the label of feminists, they strive to be seen as legitimate representatives of women's interests (Schreiber 2018; 69-71). Some of them, however, reclaim the notion of feminism by framing it in conservative terms. The convergence between feminism and conservatism, therefore, gives rise to the so-called 'choice feminism'. On the one hand, choice feminism promotes women's empowerment, agency, and freedom of choice. On the other, similarly to neoliberal feminism, it ignores the impact that unequal power structures and socially-imposed gender norms may have on women's choices (Ylöstalo 2022; 5).

## Unusual Suspects of Women's Representation

The discussion on neoliberal feminism and choice feminism centres on the idea that the convergence between right-wing ideologies and feminism is a threat to women and feminism itself. Neoliberalism and conservatism are accused of depriving the movement of one of its central features, namely the dismantling of unequal power structures that maintain women in a position of disadvantage. Yet, one may also argue that right-wing voices legitimately contribute to representing women's interests. Women are not a homogenous group, and therefore they may hold different and even diverging interests that are equally deserving of representation (Celis & Erzeel 2015). To understand women's political representation fully, it is not sufficient to consider left-wing feminist women as the sole representatives of women's interests (Celis et al. 2014; 151). For instance, in researching the "unusual suspects" of women's representation, Celis and Erzeel found that there are instances of actors from right-wing and even far-right-wing parties who actively advocate for women's interests across European national parliaments (Celis & Erzeel 2015). Although female feminist left-wing actors are found to be more likely to advance women's issues and interests, the study shows that also right-wing parties engage in the substantive representation<sup>1</sup> of women (ibid.). The question remains, however, whether their concern for women's equality and well-being is genuine, or whether their seemingly feminist claims are a tool to disguise an illiberal agenda that may be harmful to women themselves (ibid.; 59).

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of substantive representation was developed by Hannah Pitkin, who defines it as "acting in the interests of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (Pitkin 1967; 209).

To assess this, Celis and Childs developed a novel framework to evaluate how conservative claims contribute to the substantive representation of women's interests. To understand whether an actor is attempting to substantively represent women, they suggest considering five factors: the representative claim should be "(1) directly constructed as being of importance to women, (2) presented as only affecting women, (3) discussed in terms of gender difference, (4) spoken of in terms of gendered effects, and/or (5) framed in terms of equality between women and men" (Celis et al. 2014; 159). The strength of this approach is that it allows one to analyse how actors from all sides of the political spectrum may be contributing to the substantive representation of women's interests. This, in turn, permits a more comprehensive study of women's representation that encompasses right-wing feminist and non-feminist actors. It also seems to entail that even actors who belong to PRR parties may act, in principle, as substantive representatives of women's interests. However, this implication may appear problematic, since radical-right populism has been considered by many scholars as a major threat to gender equality and women's rights (Ahrens et al. 2018; Dancygier 2020; Lombardo et al. 2021).

## Feminism and Radical-Right Populism: Co-optation or Representation?

In the present research, the understanding of radical-right populism follows the definition provided by Mudde, according to whom PRR ideology is characterised by nativism, understood as a form of ethnonationalist xenophobia, authoritarianism, namely "the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely", and populism, grounded on the struggle between the 'corrupt elite' and the 'pure people' (Mudde 2007; 30-31). This definition is the one most used by scholars because it allows one to distinguish between parties that hold a distinct PRR ideology and those that sometimes adopt PRR strategies without them being a defining feature of their political ideas (Zulianello & Larsen 2021).

According to Dancygier, radical-right populism hinders the advancement of women's interests in three ways. First, radical-right parties limit women's substantive representation because their members and supporters are disproportionately male, and therefore they tend to represent the interests of male voters (Dancygier 2021; 58-59). Secondly, the radical right impedes women's social and economic advancement by supporting family policies that encourage a return to traditional gender roles where women are primarily seen as mothers and caregivers (ibid.; 59). Finally, radical-right parties hamper the achievement of women's descriptive representation<sup>2</sup> in elected offices by prioritising male candidates, particularly in leadership positions (ibid.; 60). Furthermore, Kantola and Lombardo analyse the challenges posed by PRR parties to the advancement of gender equality in the context of the European Parliament (EP). In their direct opposition to gender equality, PRR representatives adopt misogynistic and homophobic discourses, and minimise the importance of gender

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<sup>2</sup> Descriptive representation refers to whether the composition of an assembly of representatives mirrors the composition of the society (Pitkin 1967). As women correspond to roughly half of the population, they are descriptively represented if the assembly is composed by men and women in equal numbers.

equality issues by claiming that other problems should take priority (Kantola & Lombardo 2021a; 570-573). According to the authors, the ideology of PRR parties is patriarchal, illiberal, and overall “detrimental for the construction of equality and democracy in the EP” (ibid.; 577).

Despite the opposition to gender equality and the backlash on women’s rights, several studies have shown that women are increasingly playing a relevant role in PRR parties as activists, representatives, and leaders (Mudde 2007; Scrinzi 2014; Meret 2015; Kamenou 2023). Three of the main PRR parties in Europe, the French National Rally, the Italian Brothers of Italy, and the Norwegian Progress Party are currently led by women and have been for several years while achieving considerable electoral successes. Women also figure as founders of PRR parties, such as Pia Kjærsgaard and Susanne Riess-Passer, who founded and led the Danish People’s Party and the Freedom Party of Austria respectively. These examples show that the typical model of charismatic and strong leadership embraced by PRR parties is by no means a male prerogative (Meret 2015).

In a study of female leadership within the populist radical right, Meret shows how women at the forefront of PRR parties construct their gendered image of leaders by intertwining their public and private lives. They often overlap their work as politicians with their role as mothers, and they portray themselves as women who had to struggle and work harder than men to see their leadership recognised (ibid.). The explicit reference to their identity as women by PRR representatives is often an integral part of their discourse. One may look, for example, at the speech given by the Italian Prime Minister and leader of Brothers of Italy Giorgia Meloni ahead of the celebration of International Women’s Day:

“They often bet on my failure. And sometimes the idea went through my mind that maybe they were right. Because I am a woman? Probably yes. But the news, today, is that being underestimated is an advantage. They do not see us coming.”<sup>3</sup> (Meloni 2022)

Here, Meloni adopts the words of the feminist writer Levenstein, author of the book *They Didn't See Us Coming: The Hidden History of Feminism in the Nineties*. The employment of feminism to advance and legitimise radical-right populist views is far from uncommon among PRR parties. According to Kamenou, radical-right women selectively employ feminist elements and narratives to construct their agency within their parties. By doing so, they also advance a “versatile understandings of gender, gender equality and feminism which, to an extent, challenge the gender essentialist positions that their parties convey” (Kamenou 2023; 67). In this way, PRR female representatives may respond to the needs and concerns of women whose views diverge from those typically put forward by left-wing feminist actors (ibid.). Additionally, by referring to arguments taken from feminism, they can challenge and redefine the gender discourses of their parties. This occurs, for example, in their construction of “female political militancy”, where women claim for themselves

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<sup>3</sup> The speech was given by Giorgia Meloni on the 7th of March 2022 and was translated from Italian to English by the author. The integral version of the speech can be found here: <https://www.governo.it/it/articolo/camera-il-presidente-meloni-partecipa-alla-cerimonia-di-presentazione-del-nuovo>

the public role of political militants within parties that understand political militancy as inherently masculine (ibid.; 75).

The fact that radical-right women use elements of feminism to defy the traditional gender norms professed by their parties may lead one to think that they could genuinely contribute to advancing women's rights, gender equality, and the substantive representation of women's interests. However, most research stresses that the usage of feminism by PRR parties is highly problematic. PRR parties in Europe are increasingly engaging in what Moffit labels "liberal illiberalism" (Moffit 2017). This means that they tend to exploit liberal themes such as the protection of gender equality and sexual minorities to justify their illiberal narratives, particularly about immigration (ibid.). In a comparative study of Western European PRR parties' agendas, Akkerman shows that PRR parties are increasingly presenting themselves as champions of women's rights, but their stance towards these issues is inherently "Janus-faced" (Akkerman 2015; 56). This means that, concerning family policies, PRR parties advance strictly conservative views that reproduce gender norms and limit the scope of women's roles to the private sphere (ibid.; 44-47). By contrast, when it comes to the immigration and integration domain, PRR parties justify racist anti-Islam and anti-immigration arguments with ideas centred on the protection of gender equality and women's freedom (ibid.; 52-55).

The exploitation of feminist arguments to advance illiberal claims is evident in the discourses of PRR parties around Europe. In Germany, for instance, the party Alternative for Germany uses post-feminist discourses to reinforce an 'us' versus 'them' narrative where Islam is portrayed as a threat to women's freedom and emancipation (Sprengholz 2021). Additionally, representatives of the party claim that gender equality in Germany has already been achieved. They praise the work of first and second-wave feminism and, at the same time, they delegitimise the efforts of current women's rights movements (ibid.). Similarly, in Poland, the governing party Law and Justice combines strong anti-feminist stances with conservative feminist claims that advocate for conservative women's interests (Gwiazda 2021). On the one hand, their anti-feminist claims are grounded on the conviction that discrimination against women in the country has ended. Therefore, in their view, fighting for women's rights is no longer necessary (ibid.; 586). On the other hand, there are several party members who explicitly identify with right-wing feminism and advocate for women's right to equal pay, work-life balance, and freedom to pursue professional careers (ibid.; 587-588).

These examples show that there are at least two possible alternatives when PRR parties adopt feminism in their discourses. On the one hand, they may use feminist ideas of gender equality and women's rights to advance Islamophobic and discriminatory narratives. In this case, feminist arguments are being used by PRR parties not to represent women's interests, but to foster other political goals, such as discriminatory and restrictive anti-immigration policies. On the other hand, PRR parties may also use feminist arguments to represent women's interests substantively. This means that PRR representatives could rely on right-wing interpretations of feminism not to pursue other political goals, but to reflect the interests and preferences of the women who

vote for them (Celis & Childs 2020; 98). Although the former usage of feminist arguments by PRR parties has been largely explored, the latter is scarcely touched by the literature.

If one agrees that women are not a homogenous group, and may therefore hold different interests, and if one accepts that there are instances where PRR parties may substantively represent the interests of a certain set of women, what does this say about the relationship between feminism and radical-right populism? What are the consequences of PRR feminism entering the political discourse on gender equality and women's rights? What would be postponed, marginalised, or erased if a PRR strand of feminism became dominant? The present research addresses these questions by analysing how PRR parties engage with feminism when claiming to represent women in the setting of the European Parliament.

### The Case of the European Parliament

The EP's commitment to promoting women's rights and enhancing women's substantive representation is widely acknowledged. The institution plays a crucial role in setting the agenda on gender equality policies at the EU level (Ahrens & Rolandsen Agustín 2021; 115). Gender equality is very much an alive topic within the EP, as it is discussed weekly within the plenaries (Kantola & Lombardo 2021b; 591). It is also the central topic of one of the parliament's standing committees, the Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Rights (FEMM). This is the parliamentary body entrusted with the protection of women's rights, especially concerning the elimination of gender-based violence and discrimination, the advancement of equal opportunities in the labour market, and the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies (Ahrens 2016; 782). Feminist views tend to be predominant within the committee despite the presence of more conservative voices among its members (Rolandsen Agustín 2012; 32). However, the challenge of the radical right has also reached the FEMM Committee, and issues that had never been a matter of disagreement before, such as sexual and reproductive health rights, are now starting to be contested (ibid.; 33). Conservative ideas of what gender equality and women's rights mean are increasingly questioning popular feminist perspectives, not only in the FEMM Committee but also in the EP as a whole. With the rising presence of PRR parties filling the parliament's seats, the influence of radical-right populisms on these issues is likely to become a relevant factor in establishing the definition of women's interests within the EP.

According to most scholars, the 2019 European elections marked the victory of the populist radical right (Mudde 2019; Crum 2020). Whereas left-wing and non-radical-right populism lost the momentum they had in 2014, PRR parties witnessed a considerable increase. The Italian League, the German Alternative for Germany, the Spanish Vox, the Estonian Conservative People's Party, the Sweden Democrats, and Belgium's Flemish Interest all experienced some level of growth (Mudde 2019; 24). Additionally, the populist radical right further increased its strength when the Polish Law and Justice party and the Hungarian party Fidesz shifted from conservatism to a radical-right populism following the so-called migration crisis of 2015 (ibid.). The rising



popularity of radical-right populism highlights that these parties are solidifying their presence in the mainstream, and they are therefore enhancing their ability to set the European agenda (Ivănescu & Filimon 2022; 2). PRR parties are no longer the outsiders of European politics, and within the EP, mainstream groups are welcoming them among their ranks (ibid.; 5). To be acknowledged as respectable and legitimate actors among non-radical right-wing parties, PRR representatives may adopt seemingly moderate stances, while at the same time allowing for the “radicalisation of the mainstream” (Minkenberg 2013).

This is particularly relevant in relation to women’s rights and gender equality because PRR parties may address these issues in order to strive for their own political goals (Ahrens et al. 2021; 9). The European Conservative and Reformist (ECR) and Identity and Democracy (ID) are the parliamentary groups that gather the vast majority of PRR parties. Their stance towards women’s rights and gender equality is rather ambiguous, if not outright contradictory. On the one hand, they adopt strategic religious frames to oppose gender equality as a human rights issue. For instance, they justify their opposition to the right to abortion and LGBTQAI+ rights with the need to defend the traditional Christian values upon which Europe is built (ibid.; 8-11). On the other hand, they rely on right-wing interpretations of feminism to call for women’s empowerment and freedom, and they also actively engage in the work of the FEMM Committee (Gaweda et al. 2022).

However, whereas the opposition to women’s rights and gender equality by parties from ECR and ID has been extensively analysed (see, for example, Kantola & Lombardo 2021a), their use of feminist arguments to represent women’s interests is a topic that may deserve further investigation. The present research aims at discerning how PRR parties in the EP adopt feminist arguments and which goals they attempt to achieve through them. Do they exploit feminist arguments with the sole purpose of justifying discriminatory anti-immigration stances? Or do they also use them to substantively represent women? Furthermore, what could be the consequences of their usage of feminism in the overall women’s rights and gender equality discourse of the EP? Finding an answer to these questions is crucial to further uncover the complex and entangled relationship between radical-right populism, feminism, and women’s representation.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

The guiding question of this research is: *how do populist radical-right parties adopt feminist arguments in their representative claims for women in the European Parliament's plenary debates between 2019 and 2023?*

This section addresses the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings necessary to answer it. First, it is relevant to discuss what this research intends when referring to the notion of feminist arguments. This is important because not all expression of support to women's demands can be considered feminist (Delmar 1994; 9) and therefore not all representative claims for women include feminist arguments. However, as previously stated, feminism as a concept and as a movement is so multifaceted that an all-encompassing definition is impossible to achieve. Therefore, this paper chooses to follow Och's liberal understanding of feminist arguments as those that 1) refer explicitly to gender equality,<sup>4</sup> 2) address the problem of gender inequalities, 3) recognise the existence of sex-based discrimination and oppression, or 4) criticise traditional gender roles and division of labour (Och 2019; 358). This definition is suitable for the present study for two reasons. First, it is sufficiently broad and flexible to encompass claims on a wide variety of issues and advanced by different actors, including those who refuse to identify explicitly as feminists. Secondly, liberal feminist arguments are among the ones most likely adopted by PRR parties, as these are found to increasingly exploit liberal arguments to advance their political agendas (Moffit 2017).

However, mindful of the literature on the convergence between neoliberalism, conservatism, and feminism, this study considers as feminist arguments also those that include neoliberal and choice feminist stances. The features of neoliberal feminist arguments are, for instance, the focus on women's individual responsibility and agency for overcoming gender inequality, the promotion of family-work life balance as the means for women to achieve personal fulfillment, and the appreciation of the achievements of past women's movements (Rottenberg 2014). Choice feminist arguments, on the other hand, are grounded on the idea that women should be free to make decisions over their own lives, even if these entailed following conservative norms and traditions. Choice feminism, in fact, holds that there is "no 'standard feminist' action, but only individual choices based on what is best for that person and her life" (Thwaites 2017; 58).

Feminist arguments may appear in a wide variety of contexts, but this research is interested specifically in the role they may play in women's political representation. Therefore, to answer the research question, it is necessary to address the broader framework of the study of women's political representation. Feminist scholars have been engaging with concepts of representation since the end of the twentieth century (Lovenduski & Childs 2013; 491). Initially, the focus was placed on defining what women's interests are and whether more women in public offices would bring a more accurate representation of these interests (Sapiro 1981; Phillips

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that PRR parties typically define gender equality as equality between men and women. Therefore, claims that include a reference to the equality between men and women or existing inequalities between men and women are labelled as feminist. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that this does not reflect the stance of feminism in general, as third and fourth-wave feminism hold a much broader understanding of gender equality that overcomes the binary notions of men and women.

1998; Dodson 2001). Central to these works is Pitkin's definition of substantive representation as "acting in the interests of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (Pitkin 1967; 209). Following this definition, Sapiro argues that women, as a group, hold a distinct set of interests that need to be substantively represented (Sapiro 1981; 704) According to the author, these interests stem from women's biological and socioeconomic differences from men, which often place them in positions of disadvantage in the labour market and hinder their access to equal rights and positions of power in society (ibid.).

Nevertheless, Sapiro acknowledges that women are not a homogenous group, since their interests and experiences are also shaped by other factors such as race, age, and class (ibid.; 705). Therefore, she provides an as broad as possible conceptualisation of women's interests as "the expansion of rights, liberties, and opportunities for women where these have been denied or inhibited in comparison with those of men" (ibid.). It is clear that Sapiro's work places a certain emphasis on the biological and binary distinction between women and men, which third and fourth-wave feminism criticise for excluding the multiplicity of the existing gender identities. However, her definition of women's interests is relevant because it underscores that, despite the multiple identities that may characterise the category 'women', its members share a need to overcome the social and political exclusion that they have undergone historically because of their gender. Women can therefore be seen as a social group holding certain interests and deserving representation because their interests were for a long time excluded from the public and political scene.

However, Sapiro's approach also seems to entail that women's interests are objective and pre-given, which means that they can be known *a priori* by those who wish to represent them. This stance has been challenged by more recent studies of political representation. These describe representation as a constitutive process based on constant exchanges between representatives and represented through which interests are constructed (Cotta & Russo 2020; 10). Following this view of representation, today, both feminist and political theorists tend to discuss representation in terms of claim-making (Lovenduski & Childs 2013; 492). To do this, they often rely on the concept of representative claim developed by Saward. Representative claims are defined as political statements where a maker presents a subject as the legitimate representative of an object to a certain audience (Saward 2010; 36). This notion has been increasingly adopted by scholars to investigate who claims to act for women, how women's substantive representation is performed, which women are represented, and how gender relations are constructed through the representative process (Celis & Childs 2012; 215). Understanding political representation "as an active, multifaceted, and contingent process, driven by a broad swathe of actors with various views on group issues and interests" is crucial to investigate how different individuals and entities may participate in the representation of women's interests (Celis et al. 2014; 152).

Certainly, it is not sufficient to claim to act on behalf of women to substantively represent women's interests. According to Celis et al., substantive representative claims for women must meet at least one of the following criteria: they must be "(1) directly constructed as being of importance to women, (2) presented as only affecting

women, (3) discussed in terms of gender difference, (4) spoken of in terms of gendered effects, and/or (5) framed in terms of equality between women and men” (ibid.; 159).

However, it is important to note that substantive representative claims for women are not necessarily feminist. Celis and Childs, whose book *Feminist Democratic Representation* defines what women’s political representation should look like, present three principles of feminist representation. These are 1) inclusiveness, which looks at whether women’s interests are represented in their heterogeneity; 2) responsiveness, namely the extent to which representative claims reflect women’s interests in society; and 3) egalitarianism, which asks whether the voices of all women, including those that are under-privileged and marginalised, are included in the representative process (Celis & Childs 2020; 89). Therefore, even if a claim may adopt feminist arguments to represent women substantively, it is not necessarily an example of feminist representation. Since assessing the quality of women’s representation falls beyond the scope of this research, my work will focus on representative claims for women containing feminist arguments rather than feminist representative claims. The following sections explain in greater detail how the claims of interest for this study were sampled and analysed to answer the research question.

## Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter presents the key information on how the data for this project was sampled and analysed. The first section discusses the reasons behind the focus of the present study on the EP and explains the relevance of studying parliamentary debates to understand the relationship between feminism and radical-right populism. The second section describes the procedure followed in sampling the relevant data, namely the representative claims for women advanced by PRR parties during the EP's plenary debates. The third section delves into the method adopted to analyse the claims, namely thematic analysis, and presents the reasons behind this choice. Finally, the closing section of the chapter discusses some of the limitations that characterise the present study.

### Case Selection: The European Parliament

To research how PRR parties adopt feminist arguments in their discourses, the EP represents an interesting case study for three main reasons. First, as previously noted, the EP is often considered a key promoter of women's rights and gender equality (Van der Vleuten 2019; 35). Over the years, the expansion of the power and responsibilities of this institution allowed it to shift its attention beyond the focus on the role of women in the labour market and discuss women's interests concerning a variety of issues such as gender-based violence, migration, and education (ibid.; 47). However, the recent rise of PRR parties within the EP is deemed not only to threaten the feminist project<sup>5</sup> in Europe (Verloo & Paternotte 2018), but also to reshape the way feminism and women's interests are understood within the EU. For this reason, it is crucial to understand how the EP's approach to women's rights and interests may be changing due to the increasingly influential presence of PRR parties. Secondly, the multinational nature of the EP allows to compare the different ways in which PRR parties from Western, Eastern, and Northern Europe may use feminist arguments in their discourses. This gives the opportunity to assess whether a consistent radical-right populist portrayal of feminism, women's identities, and women's interests is arising in the EU. Finally, since research on the positions of PRR parties towards women's issues and gender equality at the supranational level is still relatively limited (Ahrens & Rolandsen Agustín 2019; 2), this area offers a fertile ground for enquiry and paves the way for further studies on the convergence between feminism and radical-right populism in the EU.

This thesis looks specifically at the plenary debates of the EP's 9th legislature from July 2019 until March 2023. Focusing on the current legislature is useful for two main reasons. First, considering previous legislatures would have required to include in the analysis the discourses of an influential former member of the European populist radical right, namely the UK Independence Party (UKIP). Between 2014 and 2019, UKIP was the leading party within the radical-right parliamentary group called Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy. Therefore, this research could not have ignored its contributions if it had focused on the 8th parliamentary

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<sup>5</sup> Verloo and Paternotte identify the "feminist project" as the practices within the European civil society that aim to bring about social change, without this being tied to a specific ideology or univocal form of feminism.

legislature. However, as the United Kingdom officially left the EU in 2020, UKIP's position is no more relevant to assess the overall PRR political discourse on women's interests at the EU level. Secondly, studying the current EP's legislature may provide insights into what the EP's approach to women's rights and gender equality could look like if PRR parties were to strengthen further their hold on the parliament's seats with next year's European elections of 2024.

Additionally, one may question the relevance of analysing claims advanced by PRR Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) during plenary debates. After all, it is widely known that PRR parties' main means of communication are public and social media, through which they mobilise their electorate (Heft et al.; 2023). However, claims advanced during parliamentary debates are equally relevant and deserving of academic scrutiny because "these statements are the discourse that MEPs would want to be heard by their audience, that is, EU citizens through the means of immediate broadcasting and publishing of minutes, and their colleagues in the plenary through simultaneous translation" (Zimmermann 2019; 54). Moreover, not only do plenary debates cover a wide variety of issues, but their official nature also presents the advantage of high quality, validity, and trustworthiness (Mackieson et al. 2019).

## Sampling

To sample the debates relevant to this study, I largely follow the approach adopted by Kantola and Lombardo, who study the strategies used by PRR parties to challenge gender equality during the EP's plenary debates (Kantola & Lombardo 2021a). I employ purposive sampling to identify the debates where MEPs would most likely discuss women's issues and interests. From the official website of the EP, I retrieved all the debates held during the 9<sup>th</sup> legislature that contained the keywords 'women' and 'gender' in their title. I also looked for titles that contained the word feminism and its declinations, but this research did not provide any results. Moreover, the debates that discussed the situation of women in countries outside of the EU were excluded from the sample. This is because the present research centres on how feminist arguments are used by PRR parties within representative claims, which are statements used by MEPs to advance the interests of the people they represent, namely European citizens. The sampling resulted in a total of 35 debates, covering issues ranging from sexual and reproductive health rights, gender equality in the workplace, violence against women, women's representation in decision-making processes, and others.<sup>6</sup>

To identify the PRR parties in the EP, I relied on the dataset created by Zulianello and Larsen, who classify populist parties from the whole political spectrum represented in the parliament from 1979 until 2019 (Zulianello & Larsen 2021). The authors refer to Mudde's definition of radical-right populism (Mudde 2007; 21-23), which reflects the one adopted in this paper. They also note that PRR parties are the predominant subgroup of right-wing populism in Europe, further highlighting their growing relevance in European politics

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<sup>6</sup> A complete list of the debates selected for this study can be found in the Appendix 1.

(Zulianello & Larsen 2021; 2). The dataset identifies eighteen PRR parties from sixteen countries in the current EP legislature, where they occupy 121 seats<sup>7</sup>. By relying on the information present on the EP’s official website, I added a piece of information that was absent from the original dataset, namely the political group to which each party is affiliated in the EP. All members of the ID group are classified as PRR parties, whereas only seven of the twenty parties composing the ECR group are considered as such. Moreover, three PRR parties, namely the Hungarian Fidesz and Jobbik and the Dutch Forum for Democracy, are not attached to any political group and are therefore marked as Non-Inscrits (NI).

Country	Party Name	Party Acronym	Party Group	Seats
Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	FPÖ	ID	3
Belgium	Vlaams Blok / Vlaams Belang	VB	ID	3
Bulgaria	VMRO – Bulgarsko Natsionalno Dvizhenie	IMRO	ECR	2
Czech Rep.	Svoboda a přímá demokracie Tomio Okamura	SPD	ID	2
Denmark	Dansk Folkeparti	DF	ID	1
Estonia	Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond	EKRE	ID	1
Finland	Perussuomalaiset	PS	ECR	2
France	Front National / Rassemblement National	RN	ID	19
Germany	Alternative für Deutschland	AfD	ID	9
Greece	Elliniki Lisi	EL	ECR	1
Hungary	Fidesz - Magyar Polgári Szövetség / Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt	Fidesz	NI	12
Hungary	Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom	Jobbik	NI	1
Italy	Fratelli d'Italia	FdI	ECR	8
Italy	Lega Lombarda / Lega Nord / Lega Salvini Premier	Lega	ID	25
Netherlands	Forum voor Democratie	FvD	NI	1
Poland	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość	PiS	ECR	24
Spain	Vox	Vox	ECR	4
Sweden	Sverigedemokraterna	SD	ECR	3
SUM				121

Table 1: Populist radical-right of the European Parliament 9th legislature

Source: Zulianello & Larsen 2021. Edited by: Beatrice Giovannoni

After having identified the parliamentary debates and the parties of interest, I looked for the claims I wished to analyse. These are representative claims where MEPs from PRR parties claim to represent women and use feminist arguments to do so. The claims have to respect two criteria. First, they must reflect Saward’s definition of representative claims, as presented in the theoretical framework. This means they must be political statements where MEPs present themselves, their party, or their political group as representatives of women and their interests to the audience of the EP and EU citizens who may listen to or read their speeches. Secondly, they must contain feminist arguments as they are defined in the theoretical framework. Hence, they should include at least one liberal feminist, neoliberal feminist, or choice feminist statement.

<sup>7</sup> The numbers were adjusted from the original dataset to reflect the current distribution of seats, which changed after the MEPs from the United Kingdom officially left the EP in 2020.

Having identified the claims relevant to this study, I divided them into three distinct categories. The first includes the claims that co-opt feminist arguments to advance illiberal stances. The second consists of claims that seem to use feminist arguments to represent women's interests substantively. The third incorporates ambiguous claims, which appear to share some characteristics with both the first and the second categories. The specific features of each category are discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

## Thematic Analysis

The method chosen to analyse the representative claims for women advanced by PRR parties is thematic analysis (TA). TA is a powerful method used to describe and interpret qualitative data by identifying recurring patterns and constructing themes (Kiger & Varpio 2020; 2). Researchers have already applied TA to study parliamentary debates and derive “patterns of meaning in the data” (Mackieson et al. 2019; 969). Identifying the relations between different themes is relevant to understand how feminism is used and understood by PRR parties not only to represent women, but also to shape what constitutes their identities and interests. Some of the questions that I attempt to answer through the analysis are the following:

- Are there distinguishing patterns in how MEPs use feminist arguments to advance women's interests? Patterns could be identified, for instance, based on the MEPs' gender, national party, or the political group they belong to.
- Is there a specific type of PRR feminism that prevails in the claims?
- Are there specific goals that PRR representatives pursue when they use feminist arguments in their representative claims?
- How is the category of 'women' constructed through representative claims? Is there a particular portrayal of women's identities and interests that emerges in PRR representative claims?

As TA consists of a family of methods rather than a univocal method (Braun & Clarke 2023; 1), this research follows the approach developed by Braun and Clarke, which is called 'reflexive thematic analysis' (Braun & Clarke 2019). Here, themes are understood as “patterns of meaning, underpinned by a central organising concept - a shared core idea” (Clarke & Braun 2017; 297). Reflexive TA pertains to the domain of Big Q non-positivist techniques, which embraces subjectivity as a resource of qualitative analysis and acknowledges the researcher's active role in developing themes through coding (Braun & Clarke 2019; 594, Braun & Clarke 2023; 2). Themes are not entities present in the data to be discovered by the researcher. Rather, they are produced by the encounter between the researcher, with their own subjectivity and theoretical assumptions, and the data (ibid.). Therefore, quality in reflexive TA can be achieved by transparently stating the choices made to conduct the research and the epistemological assumptions that guide the researcher (Finlay 2021; 106).



This thesis approaches reflexive TA as an iterative process. The first step of this research, namely the identification of representative claims containing feminist arguments, is primarily deductive, as it is driven by the definitions of feminism derived from the literature. Therefore, the identification of feminist arguments within the claims selected for this study is tied to previous definitions of what these arguments may look like. Similarly, the distinction of the representative claims into three categories is largely informed by the literature on liberal illiberalism and women's substantive representation. Therefore, it is rather deductive in nature. However, the second stage of the analysis, consisting of the detailed coding of the selected representative claims, follows a more inductive approach. The first round of coding remains close to the original text of the claims, capturing the nuances and uniqueness of each speech. This provides one with a detailed picture of all the issues, views, and ideas advanced in each claim beyond the feminist arguments initially identified. Followingly, the codes are merged into broader categories to allow for the identification of common features and patterns within the dataset. Finally, the themes are constructed to create a bridge between, on the one hand, the feminist arguments and the categories of claims identified through a deductive approach, and on the other hand, the categories of codes developed through an inductive in-vivo process.

Nevertheless, despite the introduction of this inductive element, my analytical approach primarily resembles theoretical and latent reflexive TA, as it is described by Braun and Clarke. Theoretical TA is driven by the researcher's specific analytic interest (Braun & Clarke 2006; 84), which, in this case, is the convergence of feminism and right-wing ideologies in the field of women's political representation. As this kind of TA is typically used to provide "a detailed analysis of some aspect of the data" (ibid.), it is well-suited for the present research, which draws from the literature on right-wing forms of feminism to understand how PRR representatives use feminist arguments. Additionally, the approach of latent TA focuses on developing themes at a latent or interpretative level. This means that I aim to read past the semantic features of the data to discuss their "underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations" (ibid.; 84). This is necessary because most MEPs from PRR parties would unlikely express their support for feminist causes openly, even if these were understood according to right-wing frames of feminism. The attitudinal support for certain strands of feminism, therefore, must be inferred by the usage of arguments such as the importance of defending equality between men and women or the acknowledgement of existing stereotypes and inequalities that place women at a disadvantage compared to men. For this reason, limiting the analysis to the semantic level of what MEPs state during plenary debates would prevent the identification of possible feminist notions and assumptions within their discourses. Inevitably, the process of interpreting certain arguments as feminist strictly depends on the definition of feminism used in this paper. This is why reflexivity and the active role of the researcher in interpreting the data and constructing the themes are taken into consideration at every step of the analysis.

## Limitations

This research presents limitations tied to the research design, the selected method, and the researcher's background. Understanding these limitations is crucial to ensure the transparency and, therefore, the quality of this study. First, limitations linked to the research design relate to the size of the sample and the nature of parliamentary debates. The selection of debates based exclusively on the keywords present in their titles certainly does not encompass all the discussions that contain statements on women's interests. The debates selected are those that explicitly centre on women and gender issues according to their titles. However, a larger sample may have been collected by searching for all debates which include words such as 'women', and 'gender', but also 'feminism' and its declinations in the whole text of the debates themselves. This would have been ideal for capturing further nuances in the usage of feminist arguments by PRR representatives. Indeed, these arguments may be adopted not only during debates that explicitly focus on women but also, for instance, during discussions on the EU budget or broader conversations on human rights standards. Discussions focused on women and gender are but a small portion of plenary debates that may provide a site for women's representation and feminist arguments. Hence, my choice of debates may limit the generalisability and the representativeness of the findings. However, the limited time and resources available to this research made it necessary to focus on a narrower sample to allow for an accurate analysis of a smaller dataset rather than a superficial study of a broader one.

Secondly, some limitations are linked to the TA method selected for this study. According to some, TA may not be seen as a rigorous method of analysis due to its inherent flexibility (Kiger & Varpio 2020; 8). This problem can be overcome by clearly stating the researcher's theoretical and epistemological assumptions and by carefully following the six steps for the analysis laid out by Braun and Clarke in their work on reflexive TA (Braun & Clarke 2006). However, a further issue linked to the use of TA is achieving the accuracy of interpretation despite the prominent role that the researcher's subjectivity plays in the analysis itself. Consequently, keeping rigorous track of each decision made throughout the analysis and acknowledging the researcher's active role in interpreting the data and constructing themes is essential. The researcher's assumptions and views of the world cannot be removed from the study, but they can be transparently stated. My personal views on women, feminism, and equality derive not only from my critical engagement with the literature, but also from my own identity and experiences as a white, able, cis-gender, middle-class, and well-educated woman. These factors, alongside my general disagreement with the views held by right-wing parties and the distaste for the xenophobic and homophobic narratives advanced by PRR politicians, will inevitably impair my ability to analyse their statements objectively. Nonetheless, this research also entails a genuine attempt to maintain an open mind towards views of feminism and women's representation that differ from my own.

Finally, there is a limitation to this study related to the fact that many MEPs use their native language to perform their speeches during the EP's plenaries. Despite my fluency in English and Italian and familiarity with German and French, I had to rely on translation devices available online to fully capture the meaning of several speeches. This may have impaired my ability to understand some features of the discourses, as online tools sometimes fail to distinguish nuances of meaning when they translate from one language to another. To partially tackle this issue, when in doubt, I used two different websites to translate the speeches and cross-referenced the resulting translations. Furthermore, I paid great attention to the different meanings and translations of the word 'gender', which in some languages may be equated to the notion of 'biological sex' rather than the broader spectrum of gender identities. By doing this, I hope to have minimised possible misinterpretation of meaning when translating representative claims from their original language into English.

## Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the results of the analysis carried out on the representative claims for women advanced by PRR MEPs during the plenary debates of the EP's 9<sup>th</sup> legislature. First, the chapter presents an overview of the claims that compose the dataset according to the MEPs who advance them. Secondly, it explains the distribution of representative claims into three distinct categories: illiberal claims, substantive representation claims, and ambiguous claims. This section also displays how the three typologies of claims are distributed according to the MEPs' national party, political group, and gender. The third part presents the four types of feminist arguments that have been identified in the representative claims, as well as their distribution across the dataset. Finally, the last section presents the four themes constructed following a thematic analysis of the representative claims. The themes link each category of representative claims to the feminist arguments they include. The overall aim is to provide a structured and detailed analysis of how MEPs from PRR parties use feminist arguments and the goals they pursue through them.

### Who Uses Feminist Arguments to Represent Women?

Out of the 35 plenary debates considered in this study, only 26 include claims advanced by PRR MEPs that adopt feminist arguments to represent women. I identified 82 representative claims for women which include feminist arguments and are advanced by PRR parties.<sup>8</sup> 28 MEPs are the authors of such claims, sixteen from the ID group, nine from the ECR group, and three from the Hungarian party Fidesz, which is not affiliated with any political group. The majority of MEPs from the ID group belong to the Italian PRR party Lega, followed by a small group of MEPs from the German Alternative for Germany (AfD), the French National Rally (RN), and one representative of the Danish People's Party (DF). The ECR group, on the other hand, is primarily represented by Polish MEPs from the Law and Justice party (PiS), followed by three additional MEPs, one from the Spanish PRR party Vox, one from the Sweden Democrats (SD), and one from the Italian Brothers of Italy (FdI).

Most MEPs who advance representative claims containing feminist arguments are women. Only seven male MEPs engage in the representation of women through feminist arguments, three belonging to AfD, 2 representing RN, one from DF, and one from Fidesz. This means all the representatives from Lega, PiS, Vox, SD, and FdI who adopt feminist arguments to represent women are female MEPs. It is also important to note that a greater number of MEPs representing a certain party or group does not necessarily indicate a greater number of representative claims advanced by that party or group. For instance, although ID presents nearly double the number of MEPs compared to ECR, the two groups advance almost the same number of

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<sup>8</sup> A list of all claims used in this study is available in the Appendix 2.

representative claims. This is thanks to the participation of the Polish MEPs from PiS, who are by far the ones producing the highest number of representative claims that contain feminist arguments.

Name	Gender	Party & Country	Political group	Substantive representation claims	Ambiguous claims	Illiberal claims	SUM
Baldassarre Simona	F	Lega - Italy	ID	0	2	0	2
Basso Alessandra	F	Lega - Italy	ID	1	0	0	1
Lizzi Elena	F	Lega - Italy	ID	2	0	0	2
Regimenti Luisa	F	Lega - Italy	ID	2	0	0	2
Sardone Silvia	F	Lega - Italy	ID	1	1	1	3
Tovaglieri Isabella	F	Lega - Italy	ID	5	0	1	6
Zambelli Stefania	F	Lega - Italy	ID	1	0	0	1
Anderson Christine	F	Afd - Germany	ID	1	4	1	6
Krah Maximilian	M	Afd - Germany	ID	1	0	0	1
Kuhs Joachim	M	Afd - Germany	ID	0	1	0	1
Reil Guido	M	Afd - Germany	ID	1	0	3	4
Androuët Mathilde	F	RN - France	ID	0	0	3	3
Bardella Jordan	M	RN - France	ID	0	0	1	1
Bruna Annika	F	RN - France	ID	1	4	1	6
Lebreton Gilles	M	RN - France	ID	1	0	1	2
Peter Kofod	M	DF - Denmark	ID	0	0	1	1
Kruk Elżbieta	F	PiS - Polands	ECR	1	0	0	1
Mazurek Beata	F	PiS - Polands	ECR	2	1	0	3
Możdżanowska Anđżelika Anna	F	PiS - Polands	ECR	8	0	0	8
Rafalska Elżbieta	F	PiS - Polands	ECR	3	0	0	3
Szydło Beata	F	PiS - Polands	ECR	1	0	0	1
Wiśniewska Jadwiga	F	PiS - Polands	ECR	11	1	0	12
de la Pisa Carrión Margarita	F	Vox - Spain	ECR	2	3	0	5
Stegrud Jessica	F	SD - Sweden	ECR	2	0	0	2
Gemma Chiara	F	Fdl - Italy	ECR	1	0	0	1
Bocskor Andrea	F	Fidesz - Hungary	NI	0	1	0	1
Kósa Ádám	M	Fidesz - Hungary	NI	0	1	0	1
Járóka Lívía	F	Fidesz - Hungary	NI	1	1	0	2
SUM				49	20	13	82

Table 2: Distribution of representative claims by MEP

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

## Representative Claims for Women: What Is in the Claim?

Representative claims for women containing feminist arguments can be divided into three categories. The first is what I call *illiberal claims*. These are understood following Moffit's conceptualisation of "liberal illiberalism" (Moffit 2017). According to this view, PRR parties often adopt liberal arguments to perform

“illiberal attacks on particular Others associated with ‘the elite’” (ibid.; 113). The targets of these attacks are typically immigrants and Muslim people, but they may also sometimes include other minority groups that are accused of endangering the national culture and identity. There are 13 illiberal claims, constituting 16% of the dataset. Three overarching stances characterise illiberal claims. First, they portray immigration and the presence of Muslim people in Europe as a threat to women. Immigrants are often accused of being the main source of violence against women, while Islam is described as severely repressing women's rights and freedom. Secondly, immigration and Islam are depicted as a foreign influence that threatens European values and identity. Finally, MEPs who advance illiberal claims tend to accuse the EU and its institutions of ignoring the threat that immigration and the spreading of Islam represent for Europe and for women.

The second category comprises 49 representative claims, which are labelled as *substantive representation claims* because they meet at least one of the criteria for women's substantive representation developed by Celis et al. as described in the theoretical framework<sup>9</sup>. This typology is the most frequent in the dataset, as it includes 60% of the statements gathered. The vast majority of substantive representation claims centre on women's economic inequalities and the disadvantages they face in the labour market. Substantive representation claims can be further distinguished into two distinct sub-categories. The first includes *typical substantive representation claims*. These are 38 claims that link feminist arguments and women's substantive representation to further political stances. The latter concern, for example, negative views of the current EU gender equality policies, the achievements of governments led by PRR parties in ensuring equality between men and women, and conservative ideas of women's role in society as mothers and caregivers. The second sub-category involves what I labelled as *atypical substantive representation claims*. These are 11 claims that contain exclusively feminist arguments and are therefore deprived of the ideas that characterise the other representative claims advanced by PRR MEPs. For instance, they do not hold negative views of the EU and its institutions, and they do not reinforce traditional gender roles and norms.

The final category consists of *ambiguous claims*. These are 20 claims which constitute the remaining 24% of the dataset. They are constructed similarly to substantive representation claims, meaning they meet at least one of the substantive representation criteria cited above. Ambiguous claims share with substantive representation claims the focus on the importance of achieving equality between men and women, particularly in the labour market. However, just as illiberal claims contain attacks against immigrants and Muslim people, ambiguous claims tend to use feminist arguments in conjunction with homophobic and transphobic narratives. These often appear as an outright rejection of the so-called 'gender ideology'. The reference to gender ideology is indeed a rhetorical device often used by right-wing parties to refute and delegitimise the demands of the LGBTQAI+ community for recognition and equal rights (Corredor 2019; 616). Nevertheless, rather than expressing direct attacks against people who do not conform to heteronormativity, ambiguous claims dilute their anti-gender

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<sup>9</sup> Substantive representation claims are “(1) directly constructed as being of importance to women, (2) presented as only affecting women, (3) discussed in terms of gender difference, (4) spoken of in terms of gendered effects, and/or (5) framed in terms of equality between women and men” (Celis et al. 2014; 159).

stances with a proclaimed intent to represent women. This allows ambiguous claims to partially resemble substantive representation claims. PRR MEPs achieve such ambiguity by constructing these claims as important for women or by framing them in terms of gender equality, which differentiates them from illiberal claims.

The distribution of the three different categories of representative claims is quite diverse among parties and political groups within the EP. The parties that advance the greatest number of illiberal claims are RN and AfD, and they also produce the greatest number of ambiguous claims. On the other hand, MEPs from Lega and PiS are the authors of most substantive representation claims.

Party	Typical substantive representation claims	Ambiguous claims	Illiberal claims	SUM
SD	2	0	0	2
DF	0	0	1	1
Fdl	1	0	0	1
Lega	12	3	2	17
Vox	2	3	0	5
PiS	26	2	0	28
Fidesz	1	3	0	4
RN	2	4	6	12
AfD	3	5	4	12
SUM	49	20	13	82

Table 3: Distribution of representative claims by national party

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

It is interesting to consider that, whereas all MEPs who represent Lega and PiS are women, AfD and RN are the parties with the greatest number of male MEPs among those who use feminist arguments in their claims. Indeed, by looking at the distribution of representative claims according to the MEPs' gender, one will notice that female MEPs are much more likely than male ones to adopt feminist arguments in claims that substantively represent women. Whilst almost all substantive representation and ambiguous claims are advanced by female MEPs, illiberal claims are nearly equally distributed between men and women. This means that, whereas the adoption of feminist arguments by a male MEP is more likely to give rise to illiberal claims, female MEPs most often use such arguments to represent women substantively. However, the results also show that, at times, female MEPs are equally capable of co-opting feminist arguments for illiberal or ambiguous purposes.

Gender	Substantive representation claims	Ambiguous claims	Illiberal claims	SUM
Male	3	2	6	11
Female	46	18	7	71
SUM	49	20	13	82

Table 4: Distribution of representative claims by MEP's gender

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

Additionally, the differences in the distribution of representative claims are quite sharp also when they are analysed from the perspective of political groups. Although ECR and ID advance a similar number of representative claims, more than half of substantive representative claims are put forward by members of ECR, whilst all illiberal claims are formulated by MEPs from ID. Non-Inscrits MEPs, all members of Fidesz, most often use feminist arguments to support ambiguous claims, although they also produce one substantive representation claim. Contrarily to illiberal and substantive representation claims, in fact, ambiguous claims are quite evenly distributed among the three different political groups.

Political group	Substantive representation claims	Ambiguous claims	Illiberal claims	SUM
ID	17	12	13	42
ECR	31	5	0	36
NI	1	3	0	4
SUM	49	20	13	82

Table 5: Distribution of representative claims by political group

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

## Shades of Feminism(s): Feminist Arguments and Representative Claims for Women

This study has identified a total of 247 instances of feminist arguments in the claims for women advanced by PRR MEPs. They are divided into three categories according to the definition of feminist arguments provided in the theoretical framework. 79% of the arguments identified belong to the category of liberal feminism, 13% are neoliberal feminist arguments, and 7% resemble choice feminist stances. The remaining 1% consists of two arguments that do not belong to any of the three typologies just mentioned, but which represent an interesting case to consider. These are what I call ‘self-proclaimed feminism’ arguments, which occur when an MEP explicitly reclaim for themselves the notion of feminism. Each type of feminist argument is further described in the following sections. The claims selected for the present study must contain at least one instance of feminist argument. However, most claims incorporate more than one argument, and there are instances where arguments belonging to different categories coexist in the same claim. This allows one to gain a more nuanced understanding of the kind of feminism(s) that characterise the PRR narrative on women and gender equality.

### Liberal Feminist Arguments

Liberal feminist arguments are divided into four main categories, which reflect the criteria for identifying such arguments as described in the theoretical framework. The first category, which includes 35% of liberal feminist arguments, concerns stances that acknowledge the importance of guaranteeing and promoting gender equality – or equality between men and women since, in PRR speeches, the two are usually the same. Although a few claims address the need to achieve gender equality in all areas, PRR MEPs prioritise equality in the labour



market. For instance, they are committed to closing the gender pay gap, promoting greater opportunities for women to access the labour market, and favouring women's participation in STEM careers.

The second category, composing 29% of liberal feminist arguments, consists of statements that recognise existing gender inequalities as a crucial problem persisting in European society. Once again, PRR MEPs primarily focus on inequalities in the labour market in the form of wage gap, sex-based discrimination in the labour market, and the fact that female workers are disproportionately affected by economic crises. This issue is also linked to the problem of women's risk of poverty, which represents a major concern for several PRR MEPs.

The third typology of arguments includes those that refer to sex-based discrimination and oppression, corresponding to 34% of all liberal feminist arguments. One of the most frequently used arguments belonging to this category is the problem of violence against women. However, the fact that an argument discusses violence against women is not sufficient to make it feminist. Therefore, references to violence against women are marked as feminist only if violence is understood as a form of structural discrimination, or if it is mentioned alongside other types of discrimination and inequalities that affect women. Additional forms of sex-based discrimination and oppression often mentioned by PRR MEPs are genital mutilation, forced marriage, and human trafficking, which disproportionately affect women.

The final category, constituting the remaining 2% of liberal feminist arguments, includes those that challenge gender roles and division of labour. These arguments can be found in only three claims and, in each of them, gendered division of labour is acknowledged as one of the main causes of the gender pay gap.

More than half of liberal feminist arguments are contained in substantive representation claims. This type of claim is characterised primarily by arguments related to the importance of continuing to promote gender equality in Europe. On the other hand, illiberal claims typically present arguments pertaining to the typology of sex-based discrimination and oppression. Specifically, the problem of violence against women, as well as the issues of genital mutilation and forced marriage, are frequently associated with illiberal stances. Also ambiguous claims are often supported by liberal feminist arguments, especially the ones highlighting the importance of gender inequality and the problem of sex-based discrimination and oppression.

Compared to the other types of feminist arguments, liberal arguments are by far the ones most frequently adopted by MEPs from PRR parties, as they are present in 90% of the representative claims considered in this study. Indeed, each party makes extensive use of liberal feminist arguments, despite some distinctions. All parties, with the exception of DF, devote great attention to the importance of promoting gender equality and the need to tackle existing inequalities. Sex-based discrimination is largely addressed by PiS, Lega, RN, AfD, Vox, and DF, while it is ignored by SD, FdI, and Fidesz. On the other hand, the problem of gender roles and

gendered division of labour is touched upon only by MEPs from PiS and AfD. Moreover, MEPs from the ID group are more likely than ECR members to discuss issues related to sex-based discrimination and oppression, whilst the latter tend to focus more extensively on problems related to existing gender inequalities.

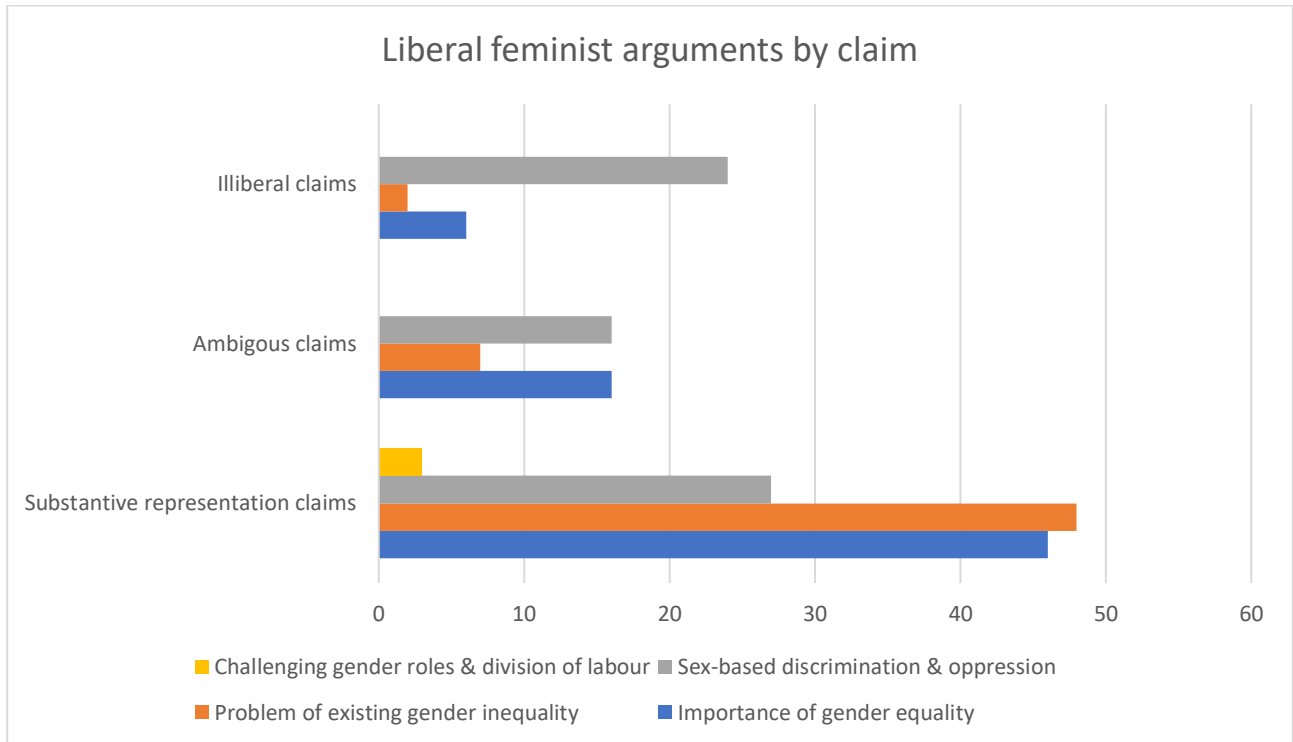


Figure 1: Number of liberal feminist arguments according to the type of claim

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

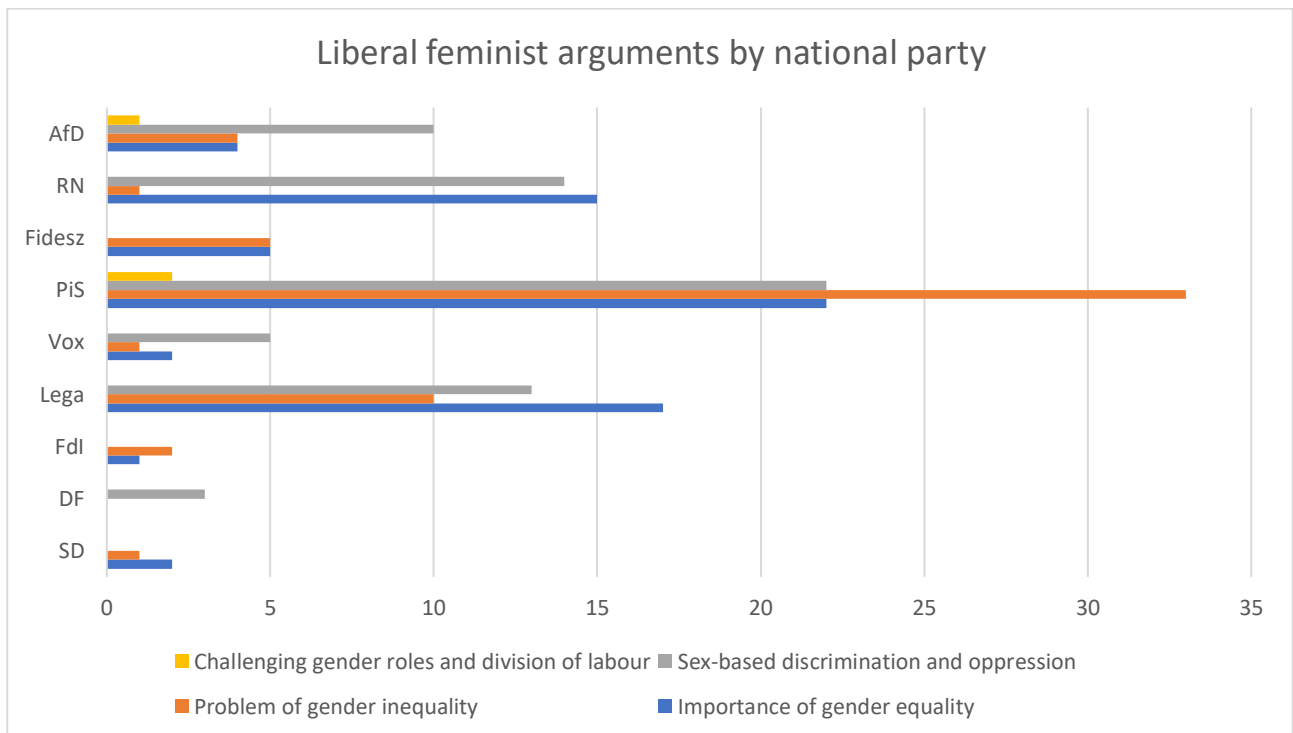


Figure 2: Number of liberal feminist arguments by national party

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

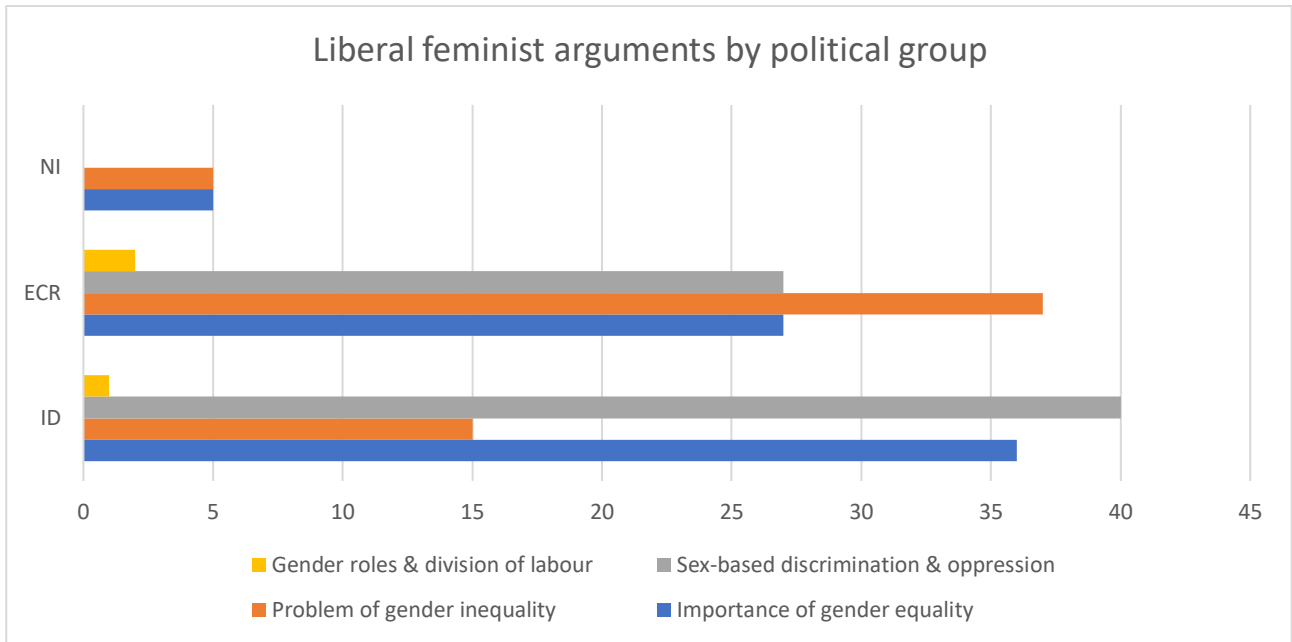


Figure 3: Number of liberal feminist argument by political group

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

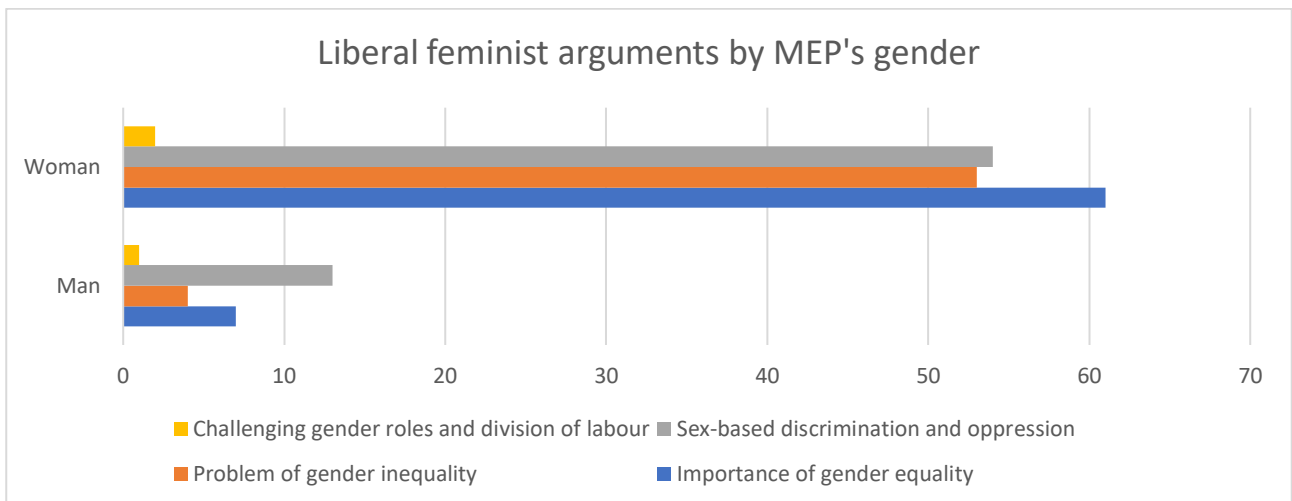


Figure 4: Number of liberal feminist arguments by MEP's gender

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

## Neoliberal Feminist Arguments

Neoliberal feminist arguments are the second most frequently used by PRR MEPs, as they are present in 29% of total claims in the dataset. 37% of neoliberal arguments refer to the importance of achieving a greater work-life balance for women. The possibility of reconciling a successful career with traditional gender roles as mothers and caregivers is typically portrayed as a solution to the problem of inequalities in the labour market. Moreover, 25% associate greater equality in employment and women's inclusion in the labour market with economic growth and prosperity. Here, one may notice how neoliberal feminism is able to tie together the importance of creating a gender-equal society with the capitalist need to seek endless growth and maximise profit. Less frequent but equally relevant neoliberal feminist arguments are those that associate the

achievement of gender equality with women's individual responsibility. For instance, 16% of neoliberal feminist arguments focus on promoting the value of women's individual merit and competencies. Additionally, 6% of these arguments praise women's entrepreneurship in overcoming the challenges they face, particularly in the labour market. Another 6% of neoliberal arguments advocate for the achievement of equal labour market competition between men and women. Finally, two claims include a reference to the important role played by past women's movements, which contributed to creating today's gender-equal society. By referring to past feminist struggles, PRR MEPs present their political stances as a continuation of those movements.

Nearly all neoliberal feminist arguments are used in substantive representation claims, while only three of them are present in three distinct ambiguous claims. On the contrary, no illiberal claim includes this type of argument. The parties that most often undertake neoliberal feminist stances are PiS and Lega, followed by Vox and AfD, whilst SD and RN use these arguments only once. PiS focuses primarily on women's need for work-life balance, often combining it with conservative views of women's role in the family, similarly to Vox, RN, and AfD. On the other hand, Lega's arguments centre on the need to promote gender equality to achieve economic growth and the recognition of women's individual merit and competencies. Additionally, AfD and SD's neoliberal arguments refer to the achievements of past women's movements which have made Europe a place where women can enjoy equal rights and opportunities. Therefore, neoliberal feminist arguments are rather evenly distributed between the groups of ID and ECR. It is also interesting to note that there is only one instance where a male MEP advances a neoliberal feminist argument, whereas the rest is put forward by women.

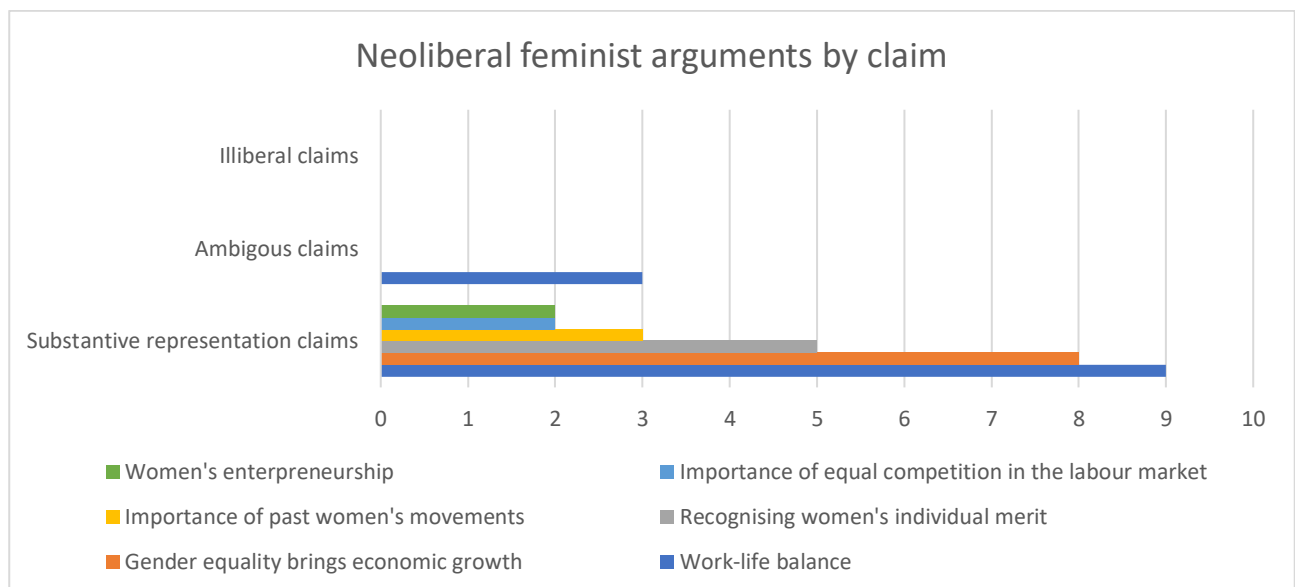


Figure 5: Number of neoliberal feminist arguments according to the type of claim

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

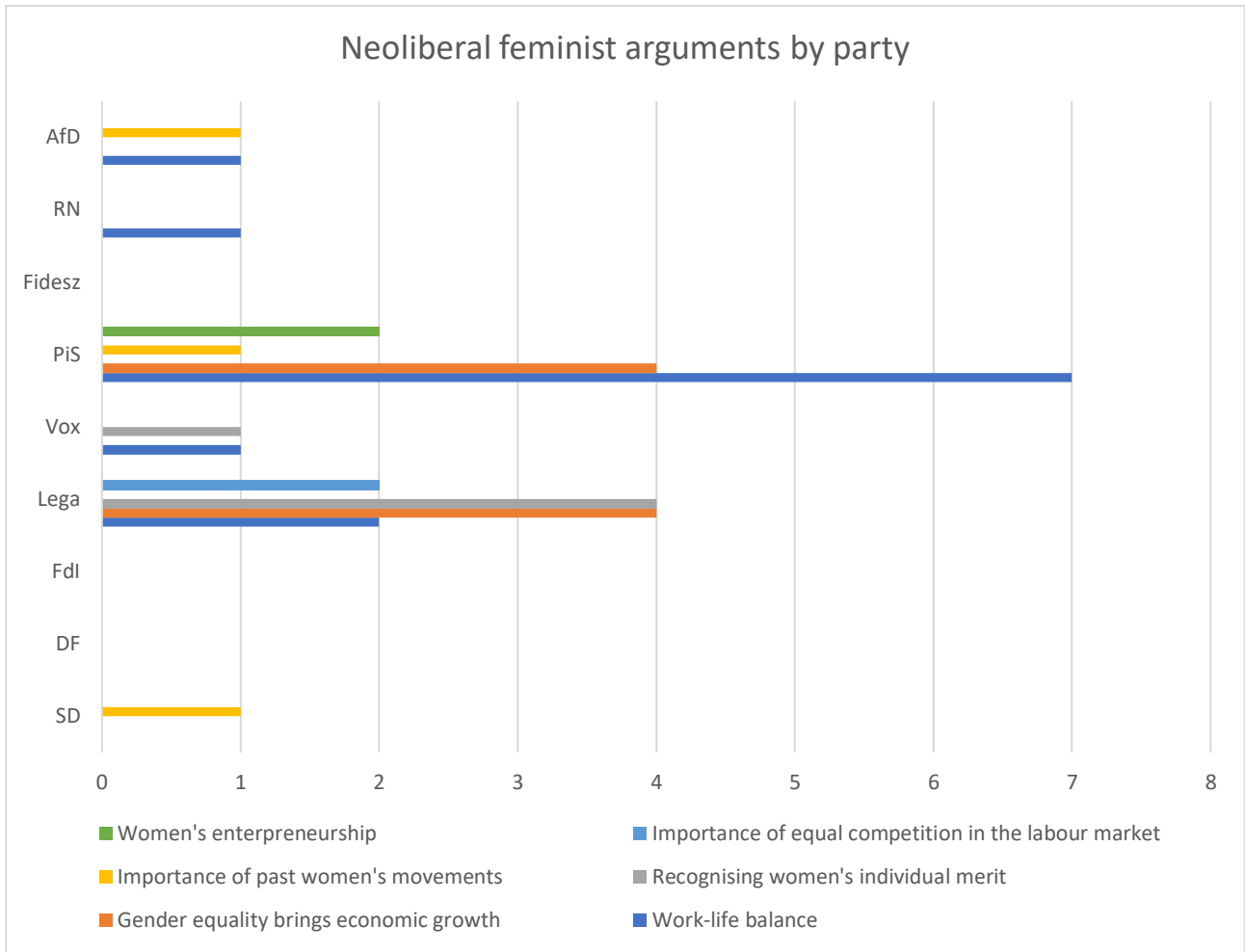


Figure 6: Number of neoliberal feminist arguments by national party

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

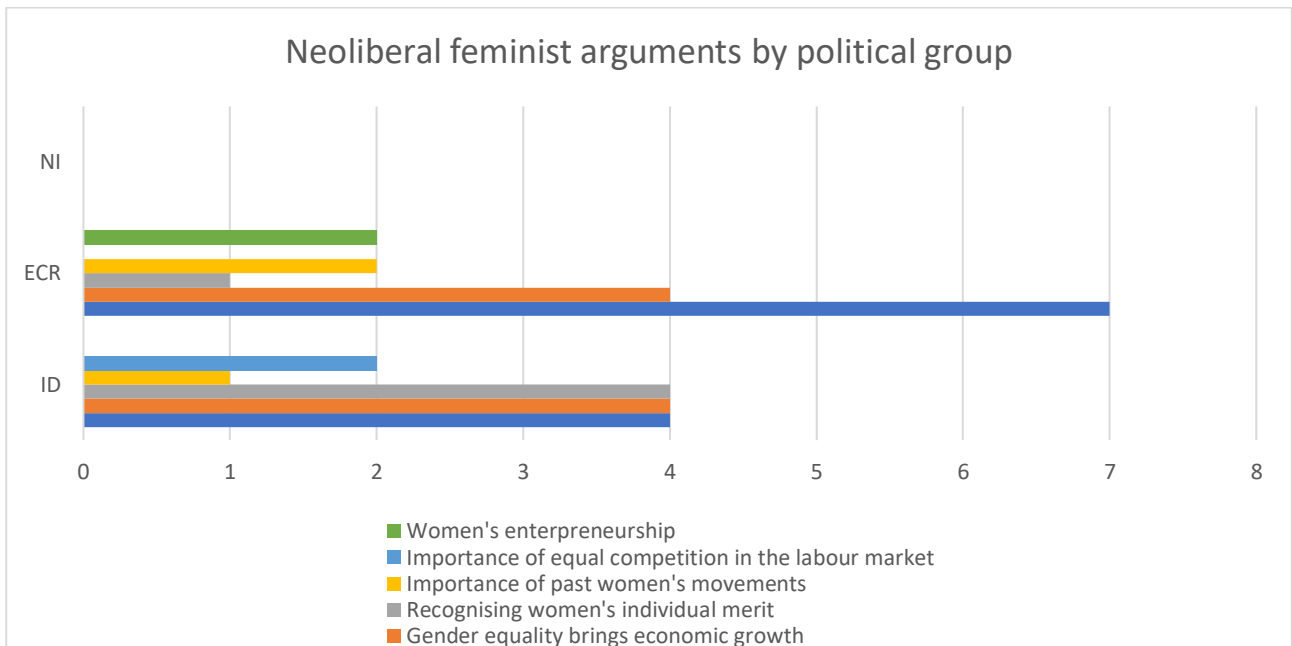


Figure 7: Number of neoliberal feminist arguments by political group

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

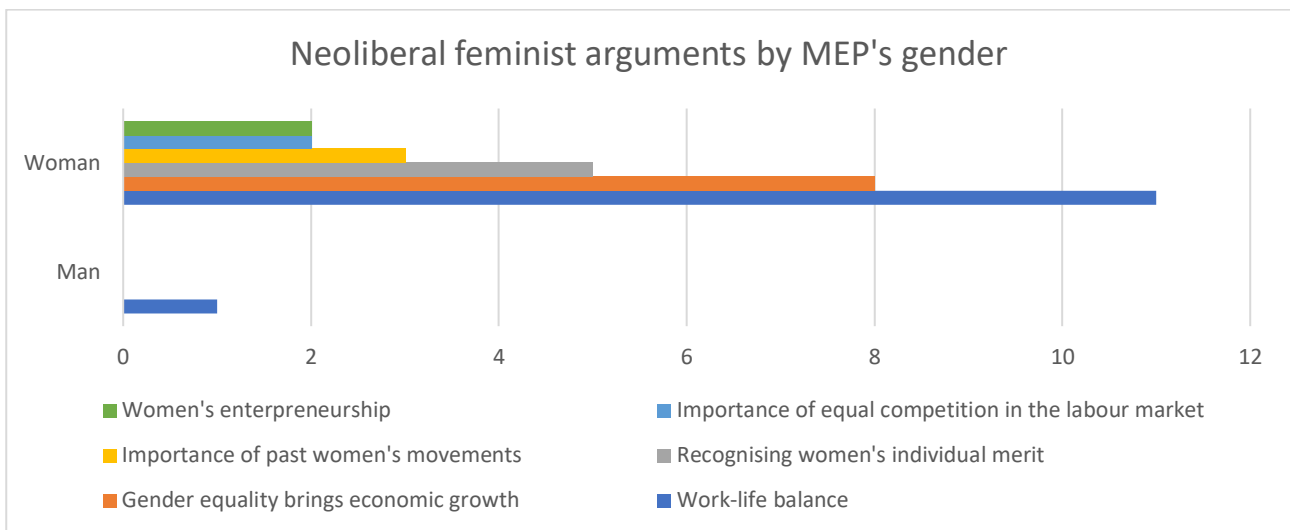


Figure 8: Number of neoliberal feminist arguments by MEP's gender

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

### Choice Feminist Arguments

Compared to the previous types of feminist arguments, choice feminist arguments are the least frequently adopted by PRR MEPs, as they are present in 16% of the representative claims in the dataset. Nevertheless, they represent an additional facet of PRR feminism, and therefore they deserve further investigation. Choice feminist arguments support women's freedom of choice over their own lives. 61% of such arguments defend women's right to choose between caring for their family, pursuing a career, or deciding how to balance the two. This stance is often associated with the idea that certain gender equality policies violate women's freedom of choice by depriving them of agency and ignoring their needs and preferences. For instance, 11% of choice feminist arguments claim that women have a right not to act like men, and another 11% states that they should not be discriminated against if they forgo a career to care for their families. Additionally, 17% of these arguments use feminism to justify inequalities in the labour market because, according to some PRR MEPs, these differences are caused by decisions that women make freely regarding their careers.

Most choice feminist arguments are included in ambiguous claims, and about a third of ambiguous claims present this type of argument. On the contrary, a small number of substantive representation claims and only one illiberal claim share choice feminist stances. The parties that adopt choice feminist arguments most frequently are RN and AfD, followed by Lega, Vox, PiS, and SD. All of these parties pay particular attention to women's freedom of choice over their lives and career paths, although RN and AfD further engage with the additional nuances of choice feminist arguments described above. By contrast, DF, FdI, and Fidesz never make use of such arguments. Consequently, most choice feminist arguments come from the ID group, while ECR engagement with choice feminism remains limited. Like neoliberal feminist arguments, most of choice feminist stances are undertaken by women, as only one claim advanced by a male MEP includes one such argument.

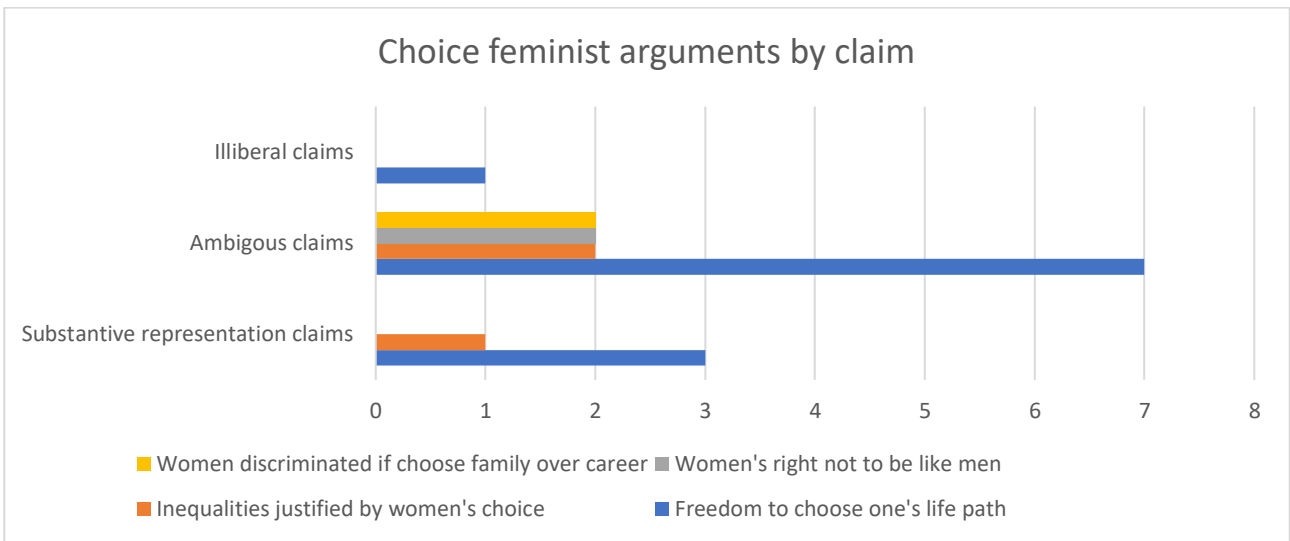


Figure 9: Number of choice feminist arguments according to the type of claim

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

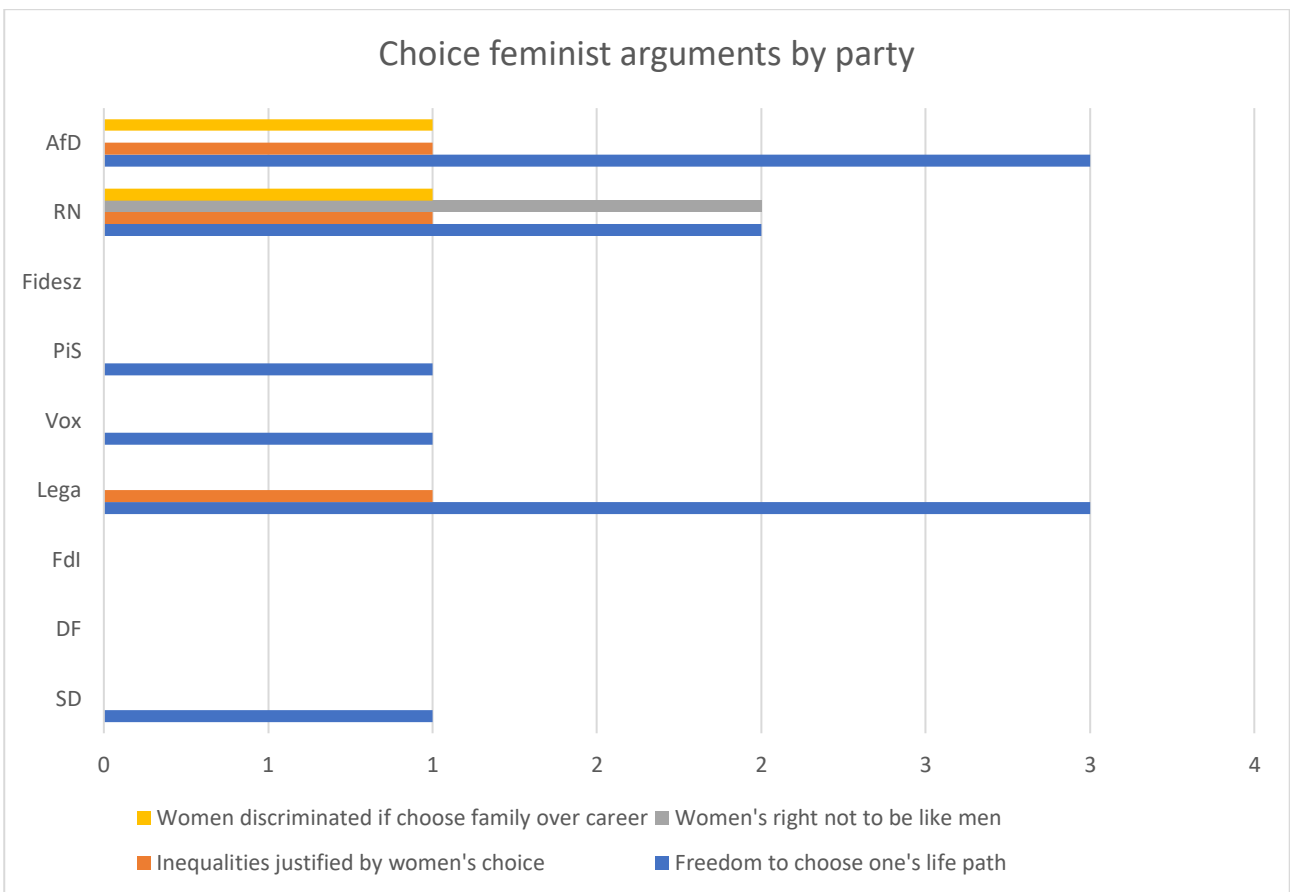


Figure 10: Number of choice feminist arguments by national party

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

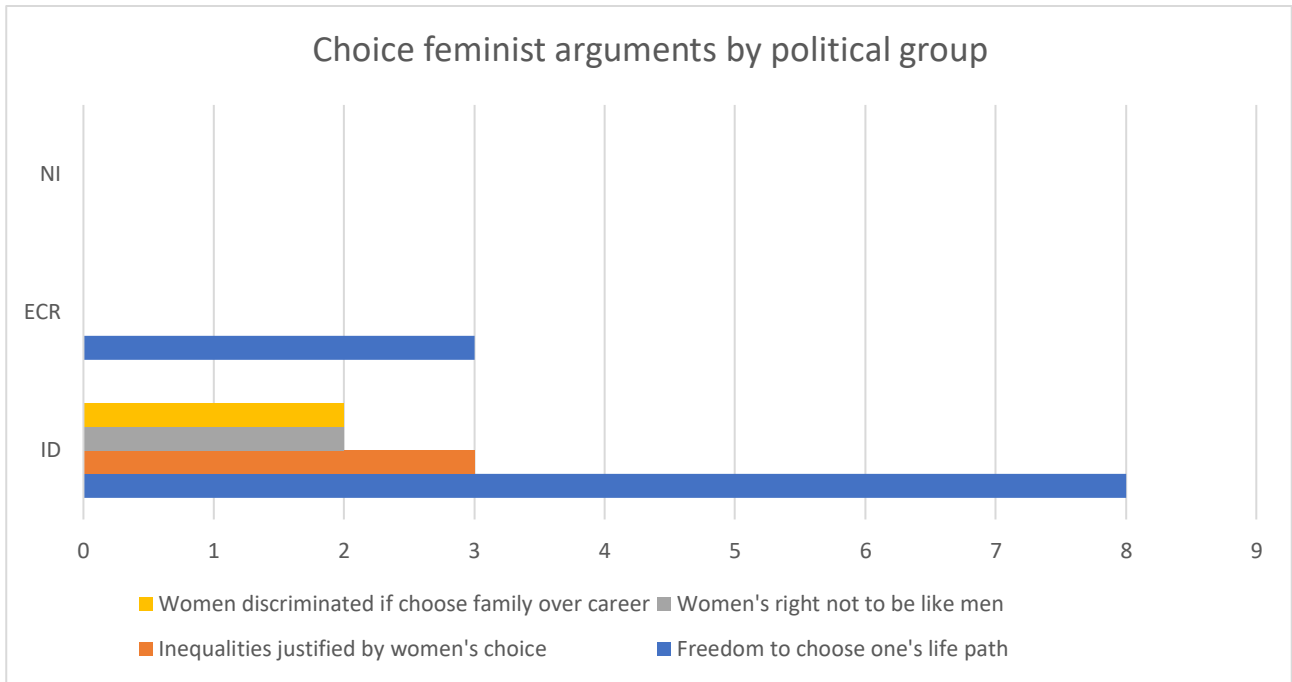


Figure 11: Number of choice feminist arguments by political group

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

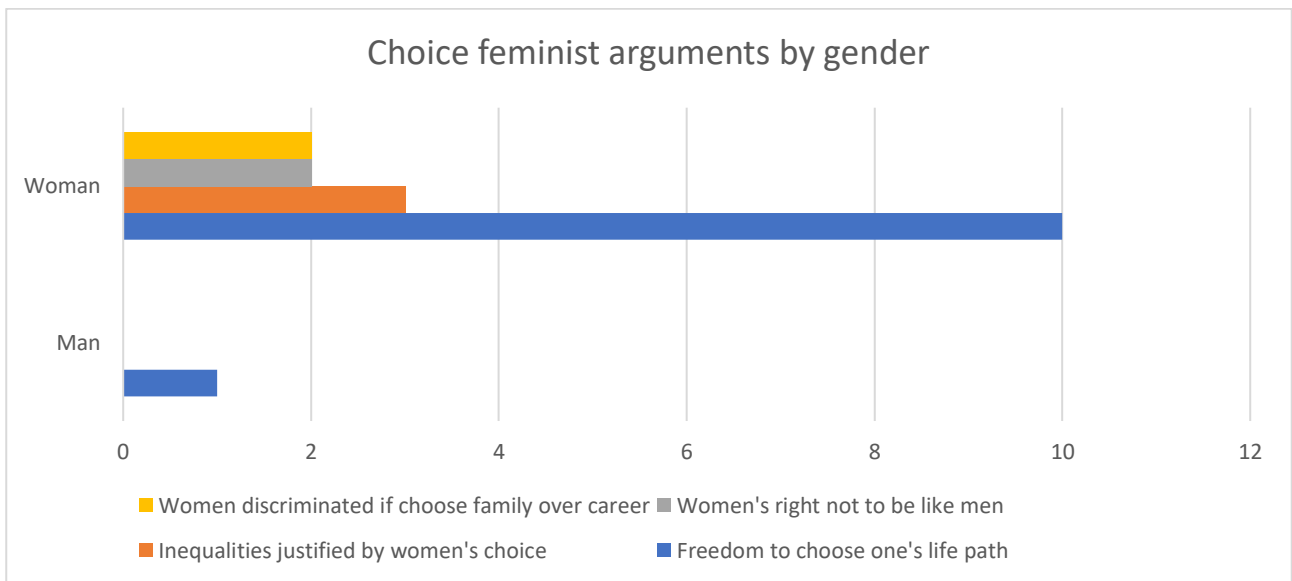


Figure 12: Number of choice feminist arguments by MEP's gender

Source: MAXQDA. Author: Beatrice Giovannoni

### Self-Proclaimed Feminism

There is an additional type of feminist argument that is worth discerning from the three categories described above, namely that of self-proclaimed feminism. This is present in two representative claims, both advanced by the French MEP from RN Mathilde Androuët. What makes these claims particularly interesting is that they are the only ones where a PRR MEP explicitly reclaims feminism by reshaping it under a PRR frame. In both claims, Androuët harshly criticises current feminist activism for failing to protect women and uphold their real interests. Feminists are accused of "[marching] alongside Islamists", supporting the rights of transgender



people, and promoting surrogacy, which the MEP describes as practices that harm women and violate their rights. Androuët claims to uphold “real feminism”, which is being corrupted and destroyed by other forms of intersectional feminist activism. She counterposes her stance to that of the MEPs she is speaking to, who fail to act as feminists because they care about women only inasmuch as they can bring additional votes. The two statements that contain self-proclaimed feminist arguments are both classified as illiberal claims. They both portray immigrants and Muslims as perpetrators of violence against women and as a threat to women’s rights. Additionally, one of the claims advances explicitly transphobic stances, which deny the existence of gender identity as separate from biological sex and delegitimise the rights of transgender people. Self-proclaimed feminist arguments, although infrequent in the dataset, are interesting because they display an explicit attempt to adjust and co-opt the notion of feminism to suit PRR anti-immigration and anti-LGBTQAI+ stances. Central to this attempt is the rejection of intersectionality, according to which the feminist struggle for equality embraces diversity and the multiplicity of identities. Instead, self-proclaimed PRR feminism represents women according exclusively to their biological sex and constructs their priorities around racist anti-immigration ideas that are characteristic of PRR parties.

## Themes

### *Constructing Themes*

By analysing the three categories of representative claims, this study identifies four main themes that aim at explaining how PRR MEPs adopt feminist arguments to represent women. The themes were identified by re-iteratively reading and coding the different claims to identify the arguments and features that characterise the three categories of representative claims. Therefore, themes are constructed as a bridge that connects feminist arguments to the core political stances undertaken by each category of claims. This means that it may not be the case that each representative claim incorporates the whole theme associated with it. Rather, the four themes attempt to create a cohesive narrative of what each category of claims conveys as a whole. By doing so, they seek to make sense of the variety of issues, views, and ideas that compose the different representative claims. Each theme has five components: 1) the feminist arguments that characterise the theme, 2) a central claim that the theme conveys, 3) a specific portrayal of women as the object of representation, 4) a certain view of the EU and/or the EP, which are the audience of the representative act, and 5) a depiction of PRR parties as the makers of women’s representation. The first theme discusses the link between feminist arguments and illiberal claims. The second one explains how feminist arguments are used within ambiguous claims. The third and fourth themes both discuss substantive representation claims. The third is associated with the sub-category of typical substantive representation claims, whereas the fourth one centres on atypical substantive representation claims.

### *A Clash of Civilisations: Protecting Women from 'Violent Migrants'*

The theme of a clash between two opposing civilisations underscores the message conveyed by illiberal claims. Therefore, it characterises the narrative of the ID group, and particularly that of its members FN, AfD, Lega and DF. The key feminist argument that characterises this theme is that of existing forms of sex-based discrimination. Specifically, violence against women is acknowledged as a form of structural discrimination that is both a cause and a consequence of the persisting inequalities between men and women. PRR MEPs recognise that violence against women may take multiple forms. They consider not only domestic and sexual forms of violence, but also psychological violence and harassment as ways in which women are oppressed and discriminated against. Additional forms of women's oppression include genital mutilation and forced marriage, which deprive women of their dignity and freedom. One MEP from RN considers the concern of violence against women as "inseparable from our model of civilisation based on equality between men and women" (Androuët 25/11/2019). The 'European model of civilisation', grounded on the values of equality and non-discrimination (Lebreton 23/06/2021), is set in contrast with the misogyny and toxic masculinity that, according to several PRR MEPs, characterise Middle Eastern and North African cultures.

*"A culture of misogyny is spreading across Europe. Men, or men's groups as they are called in Germany, measure their toxic masculinity [...] by the cruelty with which they earn respect and restore their honour. [...] This culture has lost nothing in Europe. Islam does not belong to Europe!"* (Anderson 25/11/2019)

Illiberal representative claims describe the presence of immigrants as the main source of harm and violent behaviours against women in European countries. Islam is depicted as unable to subscribe to the principles of gender equality and women's rights. Consequently, it is portrayed as threatening the fundamental values of the European civilisation. Whereas Europe is considered a developed region, violence against women is said to persist in the continent due to the presence of "culturally backward environments" where women are oppressed and deprived of their freedom (Tovaglieri 25/11/2019). To support these stances, some MEPs present data and concrete examples of violence against women where the perpetrators are always people with a migratory background. These statements reinforce the belief that Europe would have been free from most forms of violence against women if it had not experienced the phenomenon of mass immigration that began in 2015 with the so-called migration crisis.

When discussing violence against women, illiberal claims clearly distinguish between male immigrants as the enactors of the violence and migrant women as their primary victims. This allows to mask the underlying racism of the claims with the idea that PRR parties care for the rights and safety of all women without distinction of race, ethnicity, or nationality. However, this discourse further creates an image of women as a category that needs protection from the violence and discrimination perpetrated by male foreigners. Indeed, while Islam and Muslim people are defined as the most dangerous enemy of Europe and women, the latter are both labelled as victims. Women are victims not only because they suffer the material consequences of

violence, but also because they must live under the constant threat of incurring in such violence. This, in turn, prevents them from fully enjoying the freedom and the equal rights that the European civilisation model is supposed to guarantee to them. Europe, on the other hand, is a victim of the attacks that foreign cultures perform against its fundamental values of freedom and equality. This is the reason why, according to an MEP from Lega, fighting violence against women means "fighting a battle for civilisation" (Tovagliari 25/11/2019). It is within this framework that PRR parties are able to surge as the defenders of women, as well as of European values and identity.

*"We must never cease to recall that our values, the values of our history, of Europe, which put men and women on an equal footing, will always be eminently superior to those of cultures which enslave women, which imprison them behind a veil, which subject them to genital mutilation, which forbid them to go to school, to have a job, to drive or to go out alone in the street. [...] How can you tolerate those who want our destruction today? By setting Europe to Islamic time, you are preparing our nations for an inevitable setback in women's rights and freedoms. To defeat this project, you will always find us on your way."* (Bardella 14/02/2023)

The contrast between the image of a gender-equal European civilisation *vis-à-vis* the allegedly misogynistic Islamic culture is accompanied by a similar narrative, one that sets PRR parties apart from the rest of the EP and the other EU institutions. Illiberal claims present PRR parties as the only actors who seem to notice or care about the challenges of violence and discrimination that affect the lives of women in Europe. By contrast, EU institutions are accused of ignoring the threat that Islam represents for women and for Europe. For instance, according to an MEP from AfD, the EP refuses to discuss the "real problems" that affect women and, instead, it addresses false or ridiculous issues such as gender mainstreaming and the gendered effects of climate change (Reil 16/02/2022). PRR MEPs not only maintain that EU institutions are failing to tackle immigration as the real cause of violence against women, but they also blame them for actively choosing to support Islamic immigration rather than protecting women. EU institutions are accused of "setting Europe on Islamic time", for example by using pictures of women wearing the hijab on the communication material of the European Commission or by financing and collaborating with pro-migrant associations and Muslim NGOs (Bardella 14/02/2023, Sardone 14/02/2023, Androuët 12/02/2020).

Therefore, PRR MEPs claim to protect women and European values not only against the foreign influence of Islam, but also against the negligence of a European Union that has turned its back on women's real needs and priorities. Therefore, the 'clash of civilisations' theme is an Islamophobic narrative that exploits the important topic of violence and discrimination against women with two overarching goals. The first is to foment fear and rejection towards immigrants and Muslims by depicting them as a threat to European values and identity. The second is to discredit the EU's commitment to preventing violence and promoting equality by portraying EU institutions as unable or unwilling to protect women from the alleged threat of immigration.

'The threat of gender ideology' is a theme that appears primarily within ambiguous claims. Therefore, it is present in the claims advanced by AfD, FN, Fidesz, Vox, Lega, and PiS. Unlike illiberal claims, which focus on the problem of violence against women, most ambiguous claims touch upon various issues. Through this theme, PRR MEPs convey the message that, although they believe that achieving equality between men and women is a crucial endeavour, they reject the EU's instrumentalisation of women's issues to advance the so-called gender ideology. The theme is characterised by both liberal and choice feminist arguments. On the one hand, liberal feminist arguments are used to portray PRR parties in a positive light by displaying their commitment to promoting gender equality, tackling violence against women, and eradicating inequalities in the labour market. For instance, according to an MEP from PiS, eliminating the gender pay gap and creating opportunities for women in the labour market is crucial to achieve equality and mitigate the negative effects of the Covid-19 crisis on female workers (Mazurek 13/12/2021). On the other hand, choice feminist arguments are used to highlight that, although it is necessary to guarantee equal pay and opportunities in the labour market, women should be free to pursue different aspirations, such as dedicating themselves to their families.

*"While I fully support women's equal access to the labour market and to decision-making positions, I also regret that the role and choice of women who have decided to be stay-at-home mothers or to work part-time are devalued. For my part, I defend the free choice of women, to work, to undertake, to carry out the activities they wish, that is to say, also to devote themselves more to their family if that is their choice of life."* (Bruna 13/12/2021)

PRR MEPs claim to represent women independently of their life choices, whether they decide to pursue a career, care for their family, or balance the two. By contrast, the EU is criticised for condemning traditional family values and delegitimising the choices of women who do not prioritise their professional life over motherhood (Bruna 13/01/2020). This argument is part of a broader narrative according to which, under the false pretence of advancing gender equality, the EU imposes its gender ideology on the Member States. According to PRR MEPs, gender ideology encompasses everything from the promotion of LGBTQAI+ rights to the adoption of gender-inclusive language, the right to abortion, and access to sexual and reproductive rights. All these issues, which the EU strives to incorporate into its gender equality policies, are depicted as harmful to women and as an obstacle to achieving real gender equality. For instance, an MEP from Vox states that gender ideology creates fear and mistrust between men and women, thus destroying real equality (de la Pisa Carrión 19/10/2022). Similarly, other MEPs reject the inclusion of LGBTQAI+ rights and issues in the texts adopted by the Parliament because they consider them irrelevant or even contrary to the achievement of gender equality (Wiśniewska 09/06/2021, Bocksor 09/06/2021, Mazurek 13/12/2021). Moreover, the anti-gender ideology narrative includes the refusal that gender is anything other than biological sex. Whilst women are portrayed as naturally different and complementary to men, the gender ideology imposed by the EU is accused of questioning such distinctions.

*“If you, dear gender-moving colleagues, really want to stand up for women's rights, then simply take care of the 99% of women who know exactly when they get up in the morning that they are women and who don't want to choose one of the 66 genders.” (Kuhs 10/02/2021)*

Therefore, while ambiguous claims appear framed as substantive representation claims, cis-gender and heterosexual women are the sole object of PRR MEPs' representative efforts. PRR MEPs present themselves as the representatives of the ‘real’ women because they are aware of their struggles and willing to work for their rights and security. By contrast, they portray EU institutions as so focused on advancing policies imbued with gender ideology that they are entirely disconnected from women’s actual needs. EU decision-makers are considered guilty of “ignoring the millions of women who still feel free to think differently”, those who disagree with gender ideology and whose voices are represented by PRR parties (Baldassarre 23/06/2021). Additionally, in a few instances, the EU is even portrayed as a source of discrimination against women because, rather than combating gender stereotypes, it reinforces them by treating women as a vulnerable group needing protection.

*“You claim you want to fight gender stereotypes, yet you are reinforcing those stereotypes by repeatedly referring to women as a vulnerable group. [...] Instead of empowering women to be strong and self-confident, you degrade them into helpless beings in dire need of the administration’s help. Surely you couldn’t be any more misogynistic than that.” (Anderson 08/03/2022)*

Ambiguous claims depict the EU as a misogynistic actor whose gender equality policies harm and disempower ‘real’ women rather than responding to their demands. This allows PRR parties to create a representative vacuum that they fill in by speaking on behalf of those who, according to their narratives, are excluded by the EU gender equality policies. In this way, PRR MEPs can advance homophobic and transphobic ideas by justifying them with the need to represent the perspectives of all women, even those that disagree with the EU-sanctioned gender ideology. Thus, ambiguous claims are particularly concerning because they are more effective than purely illiberal claims in normalising illiberal narratives under the guise of substantive representation.

### *The value of ‘our’ women: Making Gender Equality a National Competence*

Typical substantive representation claims, which are advanced by MEPs from PiS, Lega, AfD, SD, Vox, and Fidesz, are characterised by the idea that gender equality is best achieved at the national level rather than via the policies imposed by the EU. The most frequent feminist arguments are both liberal and neoliberal ones. Liberal arguments are used in a similar way as in ambiguous claims to underscore that PRR parties are committed to the promotion of equality and the elimination of sex-based discrimination. They contribute to displaying that, in countries governed by PRR parties, gender equality issues are effectively tackled by national

laws and policies. MEPs from the Polish party PiS are particularly vocal in praising their country's achievements in terms of guaranteeing equality between men and women:

*“Perhaps the European Parliament should take an example from Poland, where the gender pay gap is one of the lowest in Europe, and the low rate of violence against women places Poland among the safest countries on the Old Continent.”* (Mazurek 12/02/2020)

PRR parties tend to depict the countries and the regions they govern as models of equality and non-discrimination. Their claims aim at demonstrating that the intervention of the EU is not needed to promote gender equality. In several cases, the EU is explicitly accused of infringing the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, according to which the EU Treaties establish the distribution of competencies between Member States and the EU.<sup>10</sup> An MEP from Vox claims that, by imposing gender equality measures such as quotas and sanctioning countries that do not comply with them, the EU not only violates the jurisdiction of Member States, but it also fails to tackle the real challenges that affect European women's lives (de la Pisa Carrión 05/10/2020). For this reason, PRR parties tend to reclaim for Member States the prerogative to promote gender equality, free from the interferences of the EU.

However, the way PRR parties intend to achieve equality is strictly intertwined with their portrayal of women's roles in society. This, in turn, can be better understood by looking at the role that neoliberal feminist arguments play within typical substantive representation claims. Indeed, the use of such arguments displays why PRR parties value gender equality and how they intend to achieve it. Certain claims, specifically those advanced by MEPs from Lega, view greater equality and women's participation in the labour market as functional to pursuing further economic growth in the EU. For instance, eliminating labour market disparities is considered crucial for allowing Europe to compete with the world's emerging economic powers (Tovagliari 09/06/2021). But women's value, according to most PRR MEPs, does not lie exclusively in their productive roles. PRR parties consider women's reproductive labour as equally crucial for the future and demographic development of the European society (Wiśniewska 4/07/2022). Therefore, they hold that women's domestic work should be valued and promoted by guaranteeing work-life balance and investing in family policies to support mothers and children. Although a few MEPs acknowledge that gendered division of labour is among the causes of labour market inequalities, they fail to encourage a change in the status quo. Instead, they normalise the current division of labour, where domestic and childrearing responsibilities are borne primarily by women.

*Women are said to be managers of poverty, managing the household budget, looking for opportunities, additional forms of employment, and cutting expenses. Therefore, acting for women and investing in them is*

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<sup>10</sup> The principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are enshrined in Article 5(3) of the Treaty on the European Union. They establish that, when the EU does not hold exclusive competence over a certain matter, Member States maintain jurisdiction over that domain unless it is shown that a relevant objective cannot be effectively achieved by the Member States acting individually. Source: European Parliament official website. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/7/the-principle-of-subsidiarity>

*an investment in their families, especially children. Women are the future of Europe. Its demographic development depends on them.* (Wiśniewska 04/07/2022)

Under this theme, women are at times defined as independent and empowered individuals who do not need the EU to advance their careers, while other times they are depicted as mothers whose domestic and childrearing responsibilities should be recognised and supported. The construction of women's identities, needs, and priorities by PRR MEPs seem to vary and transform according to the EU policy they are attempting to challenge, rather than reflecting the reality of the women they want to represent. Furthermore, similarly to previous themes, the EU is portrayed as disconnected from women's real needs, and its policies are depicted as weak, ineffective, or outright discriminatory and sexist (**Anderson 05/10/2020**). This is aligned with the overarching aim the majority of typical substantive representation claims share: delegitimising the EU's attempts to promote gender equality and reclaiming it as a national competence.

### *Gender Equality Through Structural Changes: Cooperating for a Gender Equal Future*

This theme encompasses the claims that I labelled as atypical substantive representation claims. These are a small group of statements advanced by MEPs from PiS, Lega, FN, and FdI and centred nearly exclusively on feminist arguments to represent women's interests. These claims underscore the need for a joint European effort to promote gender equality across ideological differences. The prevailing arguments pertain to liberal feminism, although some claims add certain aspects of neoliberal feminism, particularly when it comes to promoting women's work-life balance and female entrepreneurship. The central topics of discussion are the multiple forms of gender inequalities and discrimination against women that persist in Europe. Three problems appear as most prominent under this theme. The first is the gender pay gap, which is considered one of the worst forms of sex-based discrimination (Gemma 30/03/2023) and one of the main reasons why the risk of poverty disproportionately affects women (Możdżanowska 12/02/2020). The causes of the wage gap are identified in structural labour market inequalities that place women at a disadvantage, such as their disproportionate presence in low-wage occupations and their limited access to managerial positions (Zambelli 30/03/2023).

The second issue tackled by atypical substantive representation claims is women's underrepresentation in decision-making processes. In this regard, the claims advanced by the MEPs from the French party RN are particularly interesting. Contrarily to the other MEPs considered in this study, they are the only PRR representatives explicitly supporting the EU Gender Balance on Corporate Boards directive (COM/2012/0614), which introduces a series of measures to ensure gender balance among non-executive directors of European companies (Bruna 22/11/2022, Lebreton 22/11/2022). Additionally, the creation of more opportunities for female decision-makers, for example through entrepreneurship programs (Możdżanowska 02/05/2022) and structural changes in the male-dominated composition of governments and parliaments (Możdżanowska 04/07/2022) is considered vital to achieving a more gender-equal society.

The third aspect that falls under this theme is that of gender stereotypes. Within atypical substantive representation claims, gender stereotypes are considered a cross-cutting issue that affects women in the many dimensions of their lives. Indeed, stereotypes are often acknowledged not only as a source of socio-economic disparities, but also as one of the root causes of violence against women.

*“There is a strong need to address the stereotypes that continue to represent the main obstacle to enhancing women's skills and are also the cultural root of violence. The keywords for change are awareness of the problems and education as a lever of transformation to achieve a change that can no longer be delayed.”* (Regimenti 10/02/2021)

What distinguishes atypical substantive representation claims from the ones previously analysed is the acknowledgement that achieving gender equality requires meaningful changes to the present structure of our society. Rather than using feminist arguments to justify racist or homophobic stances and using women's representation as an excuse to criticise the EU, typical substantive representation claims seem to entail a genuine intention to tackle the structural causes of gender inequality and discrimination.

*“Madam President, honourable colleagues, Madam Commissioner, we support the importance of gender equality as a common value. If we want to be consistent, let's work to promote it in all European Union policies, as well as in Parliament, but as a cultural revolution and not as an imposition.”* (Lizzi 12/02/2020)

Hence, these claims seem to show that, under certain conditions, PRR MEPs may be willing to collaborate with the other parties in the EP, as well as with the European Commission, to promote gender equality across all EU policy areas. They represent a case in which feminist arguments are not co-opted for other purposes, but they are indeed adopted to convey a shared European commitment to the value of gender equality and the substantive representation of women. However, atypical substantive representation claims are reduced to a limited number of examples compared to the body of claims advanced by PRR parties. Although under this theme the EU is viewed as a space for cooperation, many more claims portray it as a nearly-authoritarian force that violates Member States' sovereignty and ignores women's real interests. Equally, even if atypical substantive representation claims refrain from defining women according to conservative ideas of femininity and gender roles, most claims analysed in this study exclusively represent women who comply with heteronormativity and traditional gender norms. Therefore, the claims that utilise feminist arguments to promote inclusivity, cooperation, and meaningful change, although important, seem too scarce to have a relevant impact on the main PRR narratives of women's representation.



## Chapter 5: Discussion

The present thesis studies the consequences that a potential convergence between feminism and radical-right populism may have on women's representation in the EU. The question that guides this research is: *how do populist radical-right parties adopt feminist arguments in their representative claims for women in the European Parliament's plenary debates between 2019 and 2023?* To provide an answer, this study applies a thematic analysis on 82 claims for women advanced by PRR parties during 26 plenary debates of the EP's current legislature. The analysis led to the construction of four themes displaying the relationship between feminist arguments and the representative claims for women advanced by PRR MEPs. This chapter discusses the results presented in the previous section and places them in conversation with the existing literature. First, it introduces a brief overview of this research's key results. Secondly, it presents why it is important to study the relationship between feminism and radical-right populism. The third part covers the main objectives that PRR feminism seems to pursue at the EU level. Finally, the fourth section discusses how PRR feminism affects women's representation by advancing an exclusionary understanding of women and their interests.

### Overview of the Data

The 82 claims collected for the present research are distributed among 28 MEPs. This seems to indicate that only a small portion of the 121 PRR representatives in the EP adopts feminist arguments to represent women. Most MEPs who do so are women themselves and are also the authors of most representative claims in the dataset. Therefore, the data suggest that using feminist arguments to represent women is primarily a feature of female PRR party members. Regarding the type of feminist arguments that PRR MEPs adopt, the data supports the idea that PRR parties favour liberal feminist arguments, as they are present in nearly all the representative claims analysed. This denotes that the main concerns in terms of feminist arguments for PRR representatives are labour market and economic inequalities, as well as violence against women in its multiple forms. However, also neoliberal and choice feminist arguments seem to play a somewhat relevant role in shaping the PRR understanding of gender equality, women, and women's interests. Overall, the data suggest that PRR parties tend to advance forms of feminism which, despite highlighting the need to achieve better conditions of equality in Europe, fail to tackle the structural sources of gender inequality and rather seem to reinforce the status quo of gender relations.

Furthermore, the analysis identifies three types of representative claims that utilise feminist arguments, namely illiberal claims, substantive representation claims, and ambiguous claims. The majority of the claims present in this study pertain to the category of substantive representation claims. This seems to imply that the presence of feminist arguments in speeches by PRR MEPs is likely correlated with attempts to represent women substantively. However, it is important to acknowledge that the representation process often entails a specific construction of women's identities and interests that may include certain women while, at the same time,

excluding others. Moreover, although substantive representation claims may be the most likely outcome of PRR MEPs' use of feminist arguments, this by no means excludes the possibility that feminist arguments could be co-opted to advance discriminatory narratives. This is shown by various Islamophobic and anti-gender ideology statements present in both illiberal and ambiguous claims. By contrast, it is interesting to note that a small set of claims within the substantive representation category appears to use feminist stances to underscore a certain willingness to cooperating at the EU level to better ensure women's rights and interests.

Each typology of claim is associated with a theme, which aims to identify the core message conveyed by the corresponding category. First, the 'clash of civilisations' theme communicates that immigration poses a threat not only to women's rights and security, but also to the core values of European identity. Secondly, the 'threat of gender ideology' theme states that the EU instrumentalises gender equality policies to impose on Member States a harmful gender ideology, which disrupts traditional family values, rejects cis-heteronormativity as the ground of gender relations, and is contrary to women's real interests. The third theme, 'the value of 'our' women', supports the idea that PRR parties at the national level are conscious of the challenges that women experience due to their multiple societal roles, and for this reason they are better equipped than the EU to respond to women's real needs. The fourth and final theme, by contrast, expresses the need to tackle gender inequality and stereotypes through structural and cultural changes, and suggests the possibility that this may be achieved through greater cooperation at the EU level. The differences, similarities, and interrelations between these themes suggest a complex and nuanced picture of women's representation by PRR parties. Therefore, understanding them may offer important insights into how PRR parties can rely on feminism to represent women.

### Populist Radical-Right Feminism: Does It Exist and Why Does It Matter?

At the beginning of this research, I introduced the convergence we seem to witness between certain strands of feminism and right-wing ideologies. Whereas several academic works substantiate the presence of neoliberal feminism and choice feminism (Fraser 2016; Celis & Childs 2018; Arfini et al. 2019; Schreiber 2018; Della Torre & Cooper 2022; Ylöstalo 2022), the existence of a cohesive form of PRR feminism appears rather questionable and limited to a handful of national examples (see for instance Sprengholz 2021, Gwiazda 2021, and Kamenou 2023). By looking at the PRR speeches in the EP, this study suggests that, although some PRR MEPs may rely on feminist arguments in their representative work, the role of feminism remains marginal in the overall PRR discourse. Only a limited number of MEPs from a subset of PRR parties appear inclined to adopt feminist arguments in their representative claims for women. This reflects what was found by previous research on right-wing parties' representation of women. According to Celis and Erzeel, most right-wing representatives who act for women tend to reject the feminist label and are unlikely to engage in feminist activism (Celis & Erzeel 2015; 58). Moreover, their study finds that, within radical-right parties, "male critical actors [of women's representation] actually outnumber their female counterparts" (ibid.; 56). This might

explain why claims containing feminist arguments seem rather uncommon among PRR MEPs who engage in the representation of women's interests. My research shows that male representatives are rather unlikely to adopt feminist arguments when speaking on behalf of women, contrarily to female MEPs.

Nevertheless, there are three main reasons why it may be worth developing a broader and more nuanced conversation on the convergence between feminism and radical-right populism. First, women appear to be gaining an increasingly active stance within PRR parties, and feminism could be one of the tools they use to achieve this. For instance, Gwiazda shows that, since 2019, female members of the Polish party PiS have been playing a significant role in rendering conservative feminism a dominant component of their party's ideology (Gwiazda 2021; 588). By creating the first PiS Women Forum, they could mainstream some of their ideas, which they explicitly endorsed as conservative feminist, and bring them into the party's 2019 manifesto (*ibid.*). Therefore, it is not surprising that, in the sample considered for this study, female MEPs from PiS are the ones engaging the most in the representation of women's interests through PRR feminist arguments compared to the other national parties.

Secondly, talking about PRR feminism is important because, although it is true that “the righting of feminism” is often linked to xenophobic and anti-emancipatory agendas (Farris & Rottenberg 2017; 8), the present research suggests that this is only a portion of the relationship between feminism and radical-right populism. Although PRR parties sometimes adopt feminist arguments to support illiberal narratives, the presence of ambiguous and substantive representation claims suggests that feminist arguments may serve also other purposes. As the following sections will discuss, the themes identified in this research display how PRR parties can use feminist arguments to construct and reshape the discourse around women and their interests. By doing so, PRR feminism may popularise an understanding of gender equality diametrically opposed to the inclusionary and intersectional feminist stances that have arisen thanks to third and fourth-wave feminism.

However, the results of this study seem to hint that the existence of PRR feminism may also be seen in a positive light. The third reason why understanding PRR feminism is important is that, in certain cases, the adoption of feminist stances by PRR representatives might provide a ground for greater cooperation between PRR parties and other political actors within the EP and the EU. To achieve this, women's representation by PRR parties would have to respect three principles of feminist representation: inclusiveness, responsiveness, and egalitarianism (Celis & Childs 2020; 89).<sup>11</sup> Feminist representation would allow PRR representatives to respond to conservative women's interests while, at the same time, remaining open to the existence of alternative women's interests and identities represented by other parties. This may benefit the EU gender equality policies and overall democratic process by ensuring the inclusion and equal representation of the wide

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<sup>11</sup> The three principles of feminist representation developed by Celis and Childs are described in greater detail in the theoretical framework of this paper.

variety of women's voices and interests that exist. Unfortunately, according to the findings of this study, such a form of representation is far from being the prevailing one within PRR feminism.

Therefore, if PRR feminism exists, and if one agrees that it is an important subject of study, the question remains: what does PRR feminism look like? From the data presented in this study, the picture of PRR feminism that arises is primarily linked to liberal feminism. A possible explanation for this is offered by Akkerman's comparative work on gender and radical-right populism in Western Europe. According to the author, PRR parties inevitably act within a liberal context, and therefore they have to adapt their views and language to such a framework (Akkerman 2015; 56). Hence, the commitment to liberal feminism may be instrumental in legitimising PRR parties' highly conservative stances and granting them a way out of the political fringes and into the mainstream. In this sense, both neoliberal and choice feminism could be seen as auxiliary scaffolding supporting the liberal façade where needed. On the one hand, neoliberal feminism reinforces PRR parties' commitment to achieving gender equality in the labour market by highlighting the value of women's individual merit, competencies, and contribution to the pursuit of economic growth. On the other hand, choice feminism contributes to justifying gendered division of labour by reclaiming the right for women to choose domestic and childrearing work over a career. This type of feminism, which resembles quite well the notion of "emancipatory complementarity" developed by Arfini et al., in most cases fails to address the structural foundations of inequality, thus advocating for a form of gender equality that leaves the root causes of women's oppression unchanged (Arfini et al. 2019; 22).

### Opposing and Reshaping: What Are the Goals of Populist Radical-Right Feminism?

Having established the existence of a certain form of PRR feminism, it is necessary to assess which goals PRR parties may pursue through it. The four themes developed through the analysis of the data suggest at least three main objectives. First, the 'clash of civilisations' theme shows that PRR feminism can be exploited to reinforce anti-immigration and Islamophobic narratives justified by the alleged desire to defend women's rights. This is in line with the findings of previous literature on the role of gender equality in the PRR agenda. The convergence of feminism and anti-Islam narratives has been explored extensively in the literature, thus denoting how feminist stances can be co-opted to legitimise a racist view of foreign cultures as incompatible with European values (Fekete 2006; 7). PRR parties are often found to bend debates on women's rights towards the topic of immigration in order to incite hatred and fear against immigrants and Muslim people (Kantola & Lombardo 2021a; 574). The result is the construction of a 'correct' form of feminism that defends the safety and interests of women against a dangerous and foreign 'Other' that threatens them.

The second objective that PRR parties can pursue through PRR feminism is creating an exclusionary and limited understanding of the category 'women' and their interests. 'The threat of gender ideology' theme, in fact, entails denying representation to all those women who do not conform to heteronormative and binary

standards of gender and sexuality. This is a feature of the PRR discourse which, similarly to their anti-immigration stances, has been largely investigated in the literature on radical-right populism. Ahrens et al. highlight how PRR parties reframe the language of human rights to oppose the so-called gender ideology and deny rights and recognition to the LGBTQAI+ community (Ahrens et al. 2021; 8-9). However, research on the topic also finds that PRR parties tend to challenge gender ideology by depicting it as a threat to the Christian roots of the European society (Krizsán & Siim 2014; 47-48). Moreover, some PRR representatives portray gender ideology as contrary to the national values and customs of the ‘native’ people in their respective countries (Kantola & Lombardo 2021b; 593). These religious and ethnonationalist arguments are absent from my analysis because the claims in the dataset almost never refer to the Christian religion or national values to support their homophobic and transphobic statements.<sup>12</sup> Rather, their use of feminist arguments to oppose the so-called gender ideology is typically linked to the need to protect ‘real’ gender equality and women’s ‘real’ interests. Nevertheless, once again, we are faced with another constructed opposition, one between the ‘true’ representatives of women, namely PRR parties, versus those who do not care about their needs and interests, i.e. the promoters of gender ideology.

The third goal of PRR feminism, according to this research’s findings, is the delegitimisation of the EU as an actor able to guarantee women’s real interests. In the ‘clash of civilisations’ theme, the EU is portrayed as having turned its back on women to serve the needs of immigrants and Muslim communities in its territory. Similarly, through ‘the threat of gender ideology’ theme, PRR MEPs accuse the EU of instrumentalising women’s issues to impose on Member States its harmful ideas on gender, LGBTQAI+ rights, and reproductive rights. In this way, the EU is depicted as unable or unwilling to guarantee the interests of women in Europe. ‘The value of ‘our’ women’ theme effectively exploits feminism to pursue such a goal. By displaying the alleged successes that PRR parties have accomplished regarding gender equality at national and local levels, they argue that the EU’s intervention is not necessary to achieve true equality between men and women. Hence, these themes appear tied to a PRR narrative associating gender equality with broader anti-EU stances. Previous research has found that PRR parties often use Eurosceptic arguments to contrast the EU’s attempts to advance progressive and inclusive gender equality policies (Kantola & Lombardo 2021a; 573-574). However, in a study on the framing of gender equality in the EP, Krizsán and Siim highlight that PRR parties apply to the topic what they call a form of “cautious Euroscepticism” (Krizsán & Siim 2014; 47). On the one hand, PRR parties frame gender equality as a matter that should be regarded under the jurisdiction of the individual Member States (*ibid.*). On the other hand, they do not reject gender equality as an EU competence, but they criticise how gender equality policies are formulated and enforced (*ibid.*). This ambivalence is also present in the findings of the present research. This is shown by the fourth theme, ‘gender equality through structural changes’, which seems to entail that some PRR MEPs might, in certain cases, support the adoption of common European gender equality policies. However, these are often the same MEPs who associate feminist stances

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<sup>12</sup> Explicit references to the Christian religion are mentioned only in two out of the 82 claims analysed. Therefore, they were not considered relevant to the PRR representative claims containing feminist arguments.

with illiberal, exclusionary, or Eurosceptic narratives. Therefore, it is rather difficult to assess the extent to which their openness to a shared European gender equality approach may be genuine.

Overall, these reflections lead to two main considerations regarding the nature of PRR feminism. The first is that PRR feminism reinforces the 'us' versus 'them' narrative that characterises the radical-right populist ideology. This allows PRR parties to portray themselves – 'us' – as the true champions of gender equality while depicting an unclear and ever-changing 'them' as a threat to women's rights and interests. 'Them' may refer to 'dangerous' immigrants and Muslims, but it could include the proponents of a 'harmful gender ideology', and it may also encompass the EU institutions accused of ignoring or deliberately working against the interests of women in Europe. As Kamenou points out, feminism appears to be a strategic tool that PRR representatives can use to “(re)construct far-right gender discourses and present them as the only alternative to ‘dangerous’ interpretations of gender and gender equality” (Kamenou 2023; 75). Therefore, the second consideration is that, within the EP, PRR parties do not merely oppose gender equality, even if this remains a central component of their discursive strategy (Kantola & Lombardo 2021a). Rather, the adoption of PRR feminism may constitute a source of legitimacy for PRR parties to support their representative claims for women. This, in turn, may allow PRR representatives to actively engage in gender equality conversations at the EU level and, perhaps, to shape them as well.

### Exclusionary Feminism: Which Women Does Populist Radical-Right Feminism Represent?

Recent studies on women's representation have highlighted how political representation is an inherently active process that allows politicians to construct the interests of those they represent, as well as their identities (Celis et al. 2014; 156). Therefore, it is likely that the presence of feminism within representative claims for women may play a role in how PRR parties portray women and their interests. To understand who the women represented through PRR feminism are, it may be useful to acknowledge which women are excluded from the representation process. First, PRR feminism does not represent migrant women. The 'clash of civilisations' theme seems to suggest that PRR parties try to advocate for the emancipation of Muslim women who experience oppression in their communities. However, their representation is reduced to the image of women as victims of violence, forced marriage, and genital mutilation. Therefore, it is ultimately functional to the portrayal of Islam as the main source of danger for women in Europe. However, as Dauvergne points out, Islamophobia does not protect Muslim women. Rather it subjects them to further discrimination and racism (Dauvergne 2020; 2579). Hence, the anti-immigration narrative, which illiberal claims condone through PRR feminism, disempowers Muslim women rather than representing them substantively.

Secondly, PRR feminism fails to represent women who do not conform to the heterosexual and binary definition of womanhood and femininity. As it appears clear from 'the threat of gender ideology' theme, LGBTQAI+ issues are considered irrelevant or harmful to women's interests. The discourse on gender ideology

serves to justify discriminatory practices such as the establishment of LGBTI-free zones in Poland and, at the same time, it reinforces heteronormative relations and traditional gender roles (**Kantola & Lombardo 2021b; 592-593**). Therefore, PRR feminism seems to represent exclusively the interests of cis-gender heterosexual women who comply with conservative gender norms. In this way, it reduces gender equality to equality between cis-men and cis-women, leaving aside the multiplicity of identities and sexual orientations that the word 'gender' entails.

Finally, PRR feminism fails to represent women from an intersectional perspective. Adopting an intersectional approach to women's representation means acknowledging that women's interests are "complex, varied, in flux, and divergent", as they are shaped not only by gender but also by race, nationality, class, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and other categories that compose their existence (Smooth 2011; 438-440). The opposite of intersectionality is determining women's interests "along a singular axis", thus reducing their identities to a definite and unitary model (*ibid.*). PRR feminism, according to this research's findings, encapsulates women's experiences under the categories of victims of violence, professionals who need equality and opportunities in the labour market, and mothers who deserve support and recognition for their domestic and childrearing work. Although these identities are certainly relevant to the lives of many, they are by no means univocal and applicable to all women indistinctly. Therefore, whereas PRR feminism may offer recognition to a set of women who see their values and interests reflected in PRR representative claims (Sprengholz 2021; 498, Kamenou 2023; 67), there is a myriad of alternative and coexisting identities that remain invisible.

On the whole, PRR feminism refuses to represent women according to the multiplicity of their interests and identities. Instead, PRR parties limit their representative efforts to the identities that are conducive to their conservative and ethnonationalist ideology. By ignoring the needs and the interests of women from marginalised groups, PRR representatives relinquish the capacity of feminism to "transform antagonistic relationships between 'enemies' into agonistic relationships between 'adversaries'" (Kantola & Lombardo 2021b; 582). This means that, rather than cooperating with other parties to represent women in a comprehensive and nuanced way, one that could also include the voices of conservative women, PRR representatives tend to use feminism to exclude rather than include.

Therefore, PRR parties' attempts to represent women through feminism seem to lack what Celis and Childs identify as the feminist principle of inclusiveness, according to which women's representation entails encompassing women's multiple voices and perspectives (Celis & Childs 2020; 89). Instead, the relationship between feminism, radical-right populism, and women's representation is marked by an exclusionary attitude towards women's identities and interests. Therefore, the spreading of PRR feminist stances, though relatively remote for the time being, may risk weakening the inclusionary efforts that feminism has been undertaking throughout its third and fourth waves. However, as I will discuss in the concluding section of this research,

this need not be the sole outcome of the presence of PRR feminism within the European gender equality discourse.



## Conclusion

This research addressed the question: *how do populist radical-right parties adopt feminist arguments in their representative claims for women in the European Parliament's plenary debates between 2019 and 2023?* To answer this, it tried to uncover: 1) whether a PRR form of feminism exists and what it may look like; 2) which goals PRR parties pursue when they use feminist arguments to represent women; 3) which women are represented or excluded when PRR parties adopt feminist arguments in their claims. The analysis of 82 representative claims for women advanced by PRR politicians within the EP showed that, although some PRR MEPs adopt feminist arguments to represent women, feminism is not a prevailing feature of the overall PRR discourse. However, the convergence between feminism and radical-right populism seems to play a role in how some PRR representatives discuss gender equality and portray women's identities and interests. Therefore, it is a topic worth investigating.

PRR feminism takes primarily the shape of liberal feminist arguments, thus tackling most frequently two overarching issues: gender equality in the labour market and sex-based discrimination in the form of violence against women. This is because PRR parties must perform their representative work within a liberal framework, and therefore liberal feminism can contribute to legitimising their political stances. Moreover, PRR feminism appears to pursue three main objectives. First, it contributes to the portrayal of immigrants and Muslim people as a threat to gender equality and women's rights in Europe. Secondly, it constructs an image of women that reinforces heteronormativity and the conservative family-centred norms often promoted by PRR parties. Finally, PRR feminism supports a broader Eurosceptic narrative that portrays the EU as unable or unwilling to advance 'real' gender equality and represent women's real interests. Therefore, the primary role of PRR feminism is to foster an 'us' versus 'them' narrative where PRR parties are portrayed as the champions of gender equality and women's interests against those that endanger them. At the same time, however, PRR feminism tends to represent women in an exclusionary and non-intersectional way. This means that it fails to address the multiplicity of interests that women may hold and the challenges they may face not only because of their gender but also due to their gender identity, sexual orientation, class, race, nationality, disability, and the other categories that make up the human experience.

This does not mean that PRR feminism cannot contribute to the substantive representation of women. Nevertheless, its representative efforts are often reduced to a limited group of women whose interests and identities are reflected by PRR parties. Therefore, this research suggests that the convergence between radical-right populism and feminism may weaken the principles of intersectionality and inclusivity that characterise the most recent forms of feminist activism. However, I believe that the presence of this exclusionary form of feminism may also lead to the opposite outcome, namely the strengthening of those very principles. Facing the "righting of feminism" can strengthen the feminist conversation, prompting different or novel types of

feminism to grow more vocal and redirect feminist struggles towards greater openness and inclusion (Farris & Rottenberg 2017; 9).

The existence of multiple strands of feminism, including its right-wing declinations, shows that there cannot be a univocal way of representing women, and there is no need for one. Feminism may provide a space where a nuanced and comprehensive conversation on women, gender, equality, and non-discrimination can occur, and where there is room for views and ideas from across the political spectrum. Some of the representative claims analysed in this study hint that a certain degree of openness towards a broader feminist conversation could be possible even within PRR feminism. However, this is certainly a topic that would require further empirical inquiry.

As for the present research, investigating such a broad and complex field has not come without limitations. First, the main issue lies in the generalisability of the findings presented. The relatively small sample of plenary debates and representative claims considered fails to cover instances of PRR feminism that may have occurred in other settings. Secondly, this study could have benefited from comparing PRR claims for women that include feminist arguments and those that do not. This may have provided a better understanding of the role played by feminism in the construction of women, women's interests, and gender equality within the PRR discourse. Moreover, it could have been interesting to discuss in greater detail the way different national parties use PRR feminism, not only within the EP but also at the national level. To do this, the research could have compared the selected representative claims with national parties' manifestos and electoral campaigns. This, in turn, would have provided further insights regarding the extent to which PRR feminism plays a role in each PRR party's overall strategy. Finally, one main limitation is my personal biases regarding feminism and radical-right populism. Being aware of such biases, I did not attempt to maintain impartial objectivity throughout the present study because this would have been impossible. Instead, I subscribe to a form of feminist objectivity understood as "situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988). This means acknowledging that my research results from interpreting, contesting, deconstructing, and engaging with the object of analysis through the lenses of my partial perspective (ibid.; 585). This is why it is important to stress that, by following the method of reflexive thematic analysis, the themes identified in this research were constructed via my engagement with the data rather than emerging from the data themselves.

Despite these limitations, the present work contributes to exploring the patterns of convergence between feminism and radical-right populism at the European level, thus adding to the knowledge gathered through national case studies. This work has tapped the surface of a rich and fruitful topic that future research may continue exploring. For instance, further studies could analyse the use of PRR feminism within sites of representation beyond parliaments and official institutions. The notion of representative claims could be particularly suitable for this purpose because it can be applied to various settings, including public media, electoral campaigns, and even interest groups' activities. Additionally, if one wanted to maintain the focus on

the European Parliament, researchers may consider the relationship between PRR feminism and other forms of feminism within the institution. This would make it possible to investigate which form of feminism prevails in the EP discourse on gender equality, and it may offer insights into the extent to which PRR feminism is influencing it. Finally, it would be interesting to investigate whether instances of PRR feminism that seem willing to tackle structural gender inequalities through a common European approach may constitute a more open and inclusive attitude towards women's representation.

As radical-right populism plays an increasingly prominent role in European politics, acknowledging its impact on gender equality and gender relations is more crucial than ever. In this regard, studying the relationship between feminism and radical-right populism is necessary to understand not only how we can challenge exclusionary 'us' versus 'them' narratives advanced in the name of women's interests, but also how we can promote a more inclusive and intersectional approach to representation.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: List of European Parliament's Debates

Debate	Date	N. of claims
EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence (debate)	25/11/19	4
EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence (oral explanation of votes)	28/11/19	0
Gender pay gap (debate)	13/01/20	7
Gender pay gap (oral explanation of votes)	13/01/20	3
The EU priorities for the 64th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)	12/02/19	4
Gender Equality Strategy (debate)	12/02/20	7
Women in decision making on company boards, including the state of play on the directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures (debate)	05/10/20	5
Gender Equality in EU's foreign and security policy (debate)	22/10/20	0
Istanbul Convention and violence against women (debate)	25/11/20	2
The need for a dedicated Council configuration on gender equality (debate)	16/12/20	1
The gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period - The EU Strategy for Gender Equality - Closing the digital gender gap: women's participation in the digital economy (debate)	21/01/21	4
Challenges ahead for women's rights: more than 25 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (debate)	10/02/21	4
Promoting gender equality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers (debate)	09/06/21	4
Women in politics – combatting online abuse (debate)	09/06/21	1
Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health (debate)	23/06/21	3
Identifying gender-based violence as a new area of crime listed in Article 83(1) TFEU (debate)	15/09/21	0
The impact of intimate partner violence and custody rights on women and children (debate)	04/10/21	0
The International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women and the State of play on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention (debate)	25/11/21	2
Equality between women and men in the European Union in 2018-2020 (debate)	13/12/21	3
Combating gender-based violence: cyberviolence (debate)	13/12/21	0
The EU priorities for the 66th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)	16/02/22	2
EU Gender Action Plan III (debate)	08/03/22	2
Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament – annual report 2020 (debate)	08/03/22	0
International Women's Day – Address by Oksana Zabuzhko	08/03/22	0
Reaching women's economic independence through entrepreneurship and self-employment (short presentation)	02/05/22	2
Women's poverty in Europe (debate)	04/07/22	2
US Supreme Court decision to overturn abortion rights in the United States and the need to safeguard abortion rights and Women's health in the EU (debate)	04/07/22	0
Fighting sexualised violence - The importance of the Istanbul Convention and a comprehensive proposal for a directive against gender-based violence (debate)	19/10/22	1
Gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges (debate)	22/11/22	6

Eliminating violence against Women (debate)	23/11/22	1
Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence: EU accession (debate)	14/02/23	2
The EU priorities for the 67th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)	14/02/23	4
Women activism – human rights defenders related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) (debate)	15/03/23	1
International Women's Day (debate)	15/03/23	0
Strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women (debate)	30/03/23	5
SUM		82

## Appendix 2: List of PRR Representative Claims

Date	Debate	MEP	Illiberal claims	Feminist arguments
25/11/19	EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence (debate)	Christine Anderson Afd - ID	Mister President! Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. A month ago today, in my hometown, a woman was run over by her husband's car and the man then tried to behead his wife with an ax on the street. I would have liked to have taken part in a funeral march taking place in her honor at the moment, but I am now sending my sincere condolences to my hometown, Limburg, and I hope Sana is in a better world now. A culture of misogyny is spreading across Europe. Men, or men's groups as they are called in Germany, measure their toxic masculinity - the colleague has just left - by the cruelty with which they earn respect and restore their honor. No more symbolic expressions of dismay! Meeting a culture that despises women with tolerance does not eliminate violence, but rather courts and enables it. This culture has lost nothing in Europe. Islam does not belong to Europe!	Gender inequality persisting in Europe  Examples of women victims of violence/harassment
25/11/19	EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence (debate)	Isabella Tovaglieri Lega - ID	Mr President, honourable colleagues, one in three women worldwide is the victim of physical or psychological violence at least once in their life. These acts of violence are also perpetrated in countries considered to be more advanced, where culturally backward environments still exist, and this also due to uncontrolled migratory flows, coming from territories where women are still considered profoundly submissive. It is no coincidence that in Italy 67% of feminicides are perpetrated to the detriment of foreign women. In Italy, however, also thanks to the red code wanted by the League, the strength and courage to denounce this violence has also increased. Italy has ratified the Istanbul Convention, but this is not enough, we must do more. That's why I say that every day of the year should be regarded as remembered as November 25th. Not only today, therefore, but also tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and every day of the year we must fight for this battle for civilization which cannot be relegated to a single anniversary, after which the spotlights go out, but the violence continues every day.	Violence against women
25/11/19	EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence (debate)	Mathilde Androuët FN - ID	This day is for us, women, MEPs and members of the Identity and Democracy Group, an opportunity to recall to what extent violence committed against women is a constant concern, inseparable from the promotion of our model of civilization based on equality between men and women. Clarity, however, obliges us to consider all sources of violence: at least 1,400 victims in Rotherham, England, by Indo-Pakistani gangs; 478 sexual assaults in Cologne by hordes of illegal immigrants during the 2015 parties; 52% of rapes committed in Paris are committed by foreigners. Although it is obviously not exclusive, the share of non-native aggressors in these acts is still significant. States or associations that are more ideological than feminist must stop minimizing the role of immigration in the attacks perpetrated against women. To open wide the floodgates of immigration is to multiply the threats to the fate of European women; to prevent women from saying so is to confine the victims of these attacks to a double penalty.	Gender equality as an important EU value  Violence against women
12/02/20	The EU priorities for the 64th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)	Annika Bruna FN - ID	Mr President, it is a question of defining the priorities of the European Union with regard to the status of women. Our delegation will defend the fight against the wage gap for equal work, against cyber-violence, forced marriages and genital mutilation. We will also plead for the recognition of the work of mothers at home and domestic work. Obviously, we will not vote for your caricatural resolution, which calls into question	Promoting equality in labour market  Violence against women  Problem of genital mutilation

			<p>the sovereignty of States and intends to impose the Istanbul Convention. I take advantage of this intervention to highlight a crucial subject, which is taboo for you: the weight of radical Islam in the attacks on women's rights in the world, but also in Europe. In France, a young girl named Mila, harassed in her high school, sharply criticized Islam on social networks. She received several hundred thousand aggressive messages, including death and rape threats. She was unable to return to her school, her safety there not being assured, and was placed under police protection. After three weeks out of school, she had to change schools. This young girl symbolizes the daily life of thousands of women in Europe who are under the influence of radical Islam, propagated by non-assimilated populations. Feminists, often so brawling, have been totally silent on this subject, visibly taboo for them. Our group asked for a debate on this topic during this plenary, but it was refused. However, it is high time you opened your eyes to the harmful role of immigration and radical Islam in the living conditions of women in Europe.</p>	<p>Problem of forced marriage</p>
12/02/20	<p>The EU priorities for the 64th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)</p>	<p>Mathilde Androuët FN - ID</p>	<p>Mr. President, dear colleagues, to your petty-bourgeois feminism, I prefer that of the real. What do you intend to do, not to improve the lives of women, but really to save their lives? Genital mutilation, rape, violence, harassment. Every day a new atrocity is committed against women. So what will you talk about in front of the United Nations? Of those times when you asked the leaders of pro-migrant associations to keep rapes silent, because it played into the hands of the populists? From the English police who refuse to file complaints against Indo-Pakistani pedophile gangs, for fear of accusations of racism? Prostitution of African, Romanian or Albanian teenagers, because of your sacrosanct freedom of movement? Feminists who condemn a teenager threatened with death in France for insulting Islam? I'm wondering. Will you admit that you let the neighborhood law become the only law? That you abandoned women to their executioners, just because they were and still are your voters? I'm not even asking you to be feminists anymore. Women are electoral adjustment variables for you. Just one thing: remember that you are Europeans and as such, you must rediscover the courage of this civilization which knew how to make women saints, queens, ministers, empresses or warlords. In front of the United Nations, remember where you come from.</p>	<p>Gender equality as an important EU value</p> <p>Violence against women</p> <p>Problem of genital mutilation</p> <p>Self-proclaimed feminism</p>
25/11/20	<p>Istanbul Convention and violence against women (debate)</p>	<p>Guido Reil AfD - ID</p>	<p>Written. Certain taboos should be broken on the issue of increasing violence against women. The increasing violence against women in Europe is primarily related to immigration from certain countries and regions of origin. A study by the Federal Criminal Police Office in November 2019 on intimate partner violence pointed out that in the categories of murder, manslaughter, sexual assault, rape, pimping and forced prostitution, the proportion of non-German perpetrators is significantly larger than the proportion of foreigners in the total population of Germany. Immigration confronts us with an image of women that has nothing to do with equal treatment and non-violent relationships. Researchers in Beirut pointed to the link between violence against women and societal factors such as women's lack of political and economic participation, discriminatory legal systems and impunity for violence against women and girls. In some Middle Eastern countries, 70 percent of women are victims of sexual violence. This makes social progress impossible. A survey conducted in Morocco in 2019 by the Ministry of Social Affairs found that around 54 percent of all women experience violence. As I said, immigration from these countries and regions inevitably leads to increasing violence against women in Europe.</p>	<p>Problem of inequalities in the labour market</p> <p>Problem of lack of punishment for violence against women</p>

10/02/21	Challenges ahead for women's rights: more than 25 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (debate)	Peter Kofod DF - ID	Sir. Chairman! This proposal about lack of equality really says everything about the EU Parliament. Everything is mentioned: the climate, it is obviously a problem for equality, the gender gap across digital technology areas is a problem for equality, but in these 15 pages, they do not mention the most important problem, you forget that. The most important problem for me is Islamic immigration and its consequences on European soil: oppression of women, dominance violence, social control, forced marriages and so on. It is simply not mentioned. To me, this is political correctness of the worst sort. Islamic societies are not the best societies to grow up in as a woman or be in as a woman, on the contrary. When you import the Islamic culture with all the problems it must have, you know it will go wrong, and the Parliament here does not even mention it in the text. I think it's shameful.	Violence against women  Problem of lack of dignity and freedom for women  Problem of forced marriage
23/06/21	Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health (debate)	Gilles Lebreton FN - ID	Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the equality of men and women is a fundamental value of European civilisation. Faced with the threat of Islamism, the Matic report could have offered the opportunity to reaffirm it without a spirit of controversy. Unfortunately, that's not what he does. Under the pretext of recalling that women have rights, it interferes in the jurisdiction of States by seeking to impose on them a questionable conception of the family, based on gender theory and the intersectional approach. Without any respect for the right of each European nation to legislate freely on abortion, it evacuates the fundamental question of the reconciliation between the right to life and the freedom of women and promotes a right to abortion without limits. He even goes so far as to question the conscience clause which allows each doctor, in accordance with the Hippocratic oath, to refuse to perform an abortion. It is rightly said that wisdom often comes with the weight of years, I observe with sadness that this is not the case for the European Union, whose Matic report shows that it is sinking into radical militancy, which sweeps away the problems of conscience and the respect of nations.	Gender equality as an important EU value
16/02/22	The EU priorities for the 66th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)	Guido Reil AfD - ID	Mr President, ladies and gentlemen! I'm coming out today: I'm an old white man and I love women. And that's why I fight with all my heart for equal rights and against the oppression of women. I am all the more shocked to find out what is important to the EU and what it values: It is important for the EU to recognize that women are disproportionately affected by climate change. It is also important to advocate for the implementation of targeted gender equality measures in connection with gender mainstreaming in climate policy to use. It is also found that women and girls are particularly often climate refugees, namely 80%. And it is also a huge scandal that only 32% of the employees in the field of renewable energies are women. What a scandal! I personally have other problems: I have problems with the oppression and exploitation of women, I have a problem with violence against women, I have a problem with sexual assaults on women, I have a problem with child marriages, I have a problem with forced marriages, and I have a problem with female genital mutilation. And all of this is happening overwhelmingly, for example, in North Africa and the Middle East and in the country where the situation is worst for women: that's Afghanistan, before the Taliban, when that puppet government ruled there, which was supported by the EU with 4 billion euros - 4 billion! And none of that brought anything. So other things are important to me. And we should finally take care of the real problems and let us all be honest. The enemy of women is not climate change. The enemy of woman is Islam. It is the fundamental anti-women ideology of Islam.	Promoting equality between men and women  Violence against women  Problem of genital mutilation  Problem of forced marriage

23/11/22	Eliminating violence against Women (debate)	Guido Reil AfD - ID	<p>Madam President, ladies and gentlemen. Today we are talking about the International Day for Combating Violence against Women. And as always - things have got much worse. And as always, we don't want to talk about the real causes of these problems. About the situation in Germany: Domestic violence increased by 50% in 2013. The women's shelters are completely overcrowded and 70 % of the women in the shelters are not German. They come from Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan and Iraq. Genital mutilation - a particularly disgusting crime. Here, too, there has been an increase of 40 % since 2017. Victims come from Eritrea, Somalia and Iraq. Gang rape - actually a phenomenon we didn't know at all before 2015. In 2020 alone, there were 704 cases of gang rape, and the perpetrators are from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. These are just examples. I could mention the figures for homicide, forced marriages, forced prostitution - always the same perpetrators. And now the former SPD Family Minister Giffey says: "We know that immigration confronts us with an image of women that has nothing to do with equal treatment and non-violent relationships. That's what the SPD Family Minister says. And if we know all this, why don't we act? If we want to protect women, we must finally deport them consistently, and we must finally put an end to the illegal mass immigration of young men from the most misogynistic culture on earth.</p>	<p>Violence against women</p> <p>Problem of lack of dignity and freedom for women</p> <p>Problem of forced marriage</p> <p>Problem of human trafficking</p>
14/02/23	Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence: EU accession (debate)	Jordan Bardella FN - ID	<p>Madam President, the Istanbul Convention is an important text in the fight against violence against women and we obviously support its cause. Throughout its recent history, Europe has been the civilization that enabled women to take their full place in society, by sanctifying their rights, by sanctifying their freedoms, by tending to offer women and men the same chance to rise in society. We must never cease to recall that our values, the values of our history, of Europe, which put men and women on an equal footing, will always be eminently superior to those of cultures which enslave women, which imprison her behind a veil, which subject her to genital mutilation, which forbid her to go to school, to have a job, to drive or to go out alone in the street. This is, among others, the position of the NGO Yavuz Sultan Selim, a Turkish Islamo-nationalist brotherhood financed to the tune of 31,000 euros by the European Commission and, therefore, by taxpayers' tax. How could these obscurantists, for whom women's freedom is synonymous with offense, accustomed to violently anti-Semitic and homophobic remarks, which justified the attacks on the Bataclan yesterday, have they been able to receive a single penny of public money? How can you talk about protecting women's rights, but at the same time support with taxpayers' money the enemies of women and the enemies of Europe? How can you tolerate those who want our destruction today? By setting Europe to Islamic time, you are preparing our nations for an inevitable setback in women's rights and freedoms. To defeat this project, you will always find us on your way.</p>	<p>Gender equality as an important EU value</p> <p>Violence against women</p> <p>Problem of genital mutilation</p>

14/02/23	Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence: EU accession (debate)	Silvia Sardone Lega - ID	Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, talking about violence against women is always very important, but today I would like to bring the case of Saman Abbas to the House's attention. Saman Abbas was an 18-year-old girl of Pakistani origin, killed in Italy by her family. The motivation? She wanted to be a free woman. She wanted to choose the man to love and not be forced into an arranged marriage. She wanted to live dressing as she believed best, perhaps even without wearing the Islamic veil. She was killed by her family. Yet her father's extradition from Pakistan is continually being postponed, with numerous hearings constantly missing. She is a disgrace. We want justice for Saman. Pakistan must bring this murderer to justice and Europe must intervene, and not only in the case of poor Saman, it must intervene for all those women of the Islamic faith who choose freedom, who want to live without perhaps the Islamic veil. Among other things, the veil that too often the European Commission also carries forward in the advertisements and posters of the activities of the Commission itself. So I ask Europe to intervene urgently in memory of Saman and for women's rights.	Examples of women victims of violence/harassment  Freedom to choose one's life path
15/03/23	Women activism – human rights defenders related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) (debate)	Mathilde Androuët FN - ID	Madam President, this quote from Simone de Beauvoir, “You are not born a woman, you become one”, has long guided feminist activism. It is, however, a lure that bursts into the light of the violence exercised against women who refuse to be aped or denied. Because the reality is this: we are women and we accept it or not. Feminist activism is plagued by the hazy concept of the convergence of struggles. This idea that all minorities, because minorities, have common interests, regardless of whether the objectives are contradictory. Yet it is from these contradictions that feminist activism is dying. The convergence of struggles explodes in the collision of struggles. Indeed, what feminist can walk alongside Islamists who want to make women's bodies invisible? What feminist can accept surrogacy which is none other than the rental of the uterus? What lawyer can plead for a transitioning rapist to enter a women's prison? What sportswoman can celebrate the victories of transsexuals sweeping all the chances of competitors? What pubescent can not laugh at the mention of menstruation and pregnancy of men? The fractures of militancy are gaping and numerous. And worse, they now generate death threats, as against J.K. Rowling or Dora Moutot. So yes, let's say it again, we are women and we accept it, or not.	Self-proclaimed feminism

Date	Debate	MEP	Typical substantive representation claims	Feminist arguments
25/11/19	EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence (debate)	Andželika Anna Moźdzanowska PiS- ECR	Mr. Chairman! Ladies and Gentlemen! Today we celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. It is appalling that 137 women die at the hands of a family member every day in the world. None of us can be indifferent to this fact. We can't keep silent. I would like to emphasize that the Polish government fully identifies itself with the values of the right to equal treatment and non-discrimination. It opposes all forms of slavery, human trafficking and violence. We not only oppose violence and discrimination against women, but also effectively prosecute and punish the perpetrators of this violence. Apart from the provisions with which we fully agree, the Convention also contains a number of provisions that go beyond the scope of its declared objectives. I want to believe that the assumption that the socio-cultural differences in the roles, behaviors, characteristics and actions of women and men are the cause of violence against women is simply a mistake. I want to believe that this is not a deliberate indoctrination aimed at eradicating traditions and customs and replacing them with a vision of a reduced, new man. Let's eliminate violence. Let's promote equality. But we also cherish differences. They are one of our European values.	Promoting equality between men and women  Violence against women Tackling violence against women
13/01/20	Gender pay gap (debate)	Maximilian Krah AfD - ID	Madam President, ladies and gentlemen! The gender pay gap is also one of the modern legends, and the less one specifically asks about it, the easier it is to get worked up about it. There is an unadjusted and an adjusted pay gap. If we take the adjusted one, the difference is between 2 and 7 %, for the younger ones, the 20 to 30-year-olds, even inversely to the detriment of men. If we look at the unadjusted gender pay gap, we have to say that the cause lies in the policies of the political left, which to this day have not managed to give adequate economic recognition to child-rearing periods and motherhood and to include them, for example, in the calculation of pensions. We are currently seeing how conservative countries such as Hungary, but also Poland, whose Minister of Family Affairs will be speaking here soon, are going down the path of taking into account precisely the services that mothers provide when they take care of children, so that the unadjusted gender pay gap is falling, while precisely where women are seen only as economic farm animals and family services are not rewarded, it is rising, as in many Western European countries. In this respect, it is a new ideological attack by the Commission. It would be necessary to protect family work and motherhood in order to enhance the status of women, and not to conduct such phantom debates.	Promoting equality in labour market  Problem of inequalities in the labour market
13/01/20	Gender pay gap (debate)	Jadwiga Wiśniewska PiS - ECR	Madam President! Madam Commissioner! Indeed, there is still a wage gap between men and women in the European Union, which is around 16% on average. I am lucky enough to come from Poland, where the wage gap is currently at the level of 7% and is decreasing. As for unemployment among women, Poland managed to reduce it from 18% to 5%. However, when we look at the gender pay gap globally, there is indeed a lot to be done. There are many reasons for the gender pay gap, but I am convinced that one of the main ones is women's responsibility to take care of their families. They bring up children, often take care of old, sick parents. Women are therefore more likely to work part-time and in less profitable sectors. That is why we should think about how to compensate women who fulfill the role of mothers and carers of their ailing parents with these differences in remuneration. I want to emphasize one more thing, namely that, unfortunately, there is a feminization of poverty. Women earn less and have much lower pensions than men.	Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Gender inequality persisting in Europe  Women's poverty  Gendered division of labour causes gender pay gap



13/01/20	Gender pay gap (debate)	Isabella Tovaglieri Lega - ID	Madam President, honourable colleagues, the greatest theft in history, as it has been defined by the United Nations, continues unpunished before our eyes: even today, women in the world earn on average 23% less than men. Europe is not doing enough: it is not enough, in fact, that representative quotas are dedicated to women within the boards of large companies, representative quotas that are absolutely not sufficient to solve the problem. It is, in fact, an illiberal solution: instead of restricting the freedom of enterprise, Europe should instead support the Member States in eliminating the economic and cultural barriers that really prevent women's access to the highest professional and salary levels. Getting the incorrect and dangerous message across that women are a category "protected" by women's quotas really runs the risk of weakening, rather than reinforcing, female bargaining power. On the contrary, however, the right recognition of skills and merit will be the only possible solution to combine equal opportunities with equal dignity.	Promoting equality in labour market  Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Equality in the labour market by recognising individual merit
13/01/20	Gender pay gap (debate)	Elzbieta Rafalska PiS - ECR	Madam President! According to recent reports, the situation in Poland in terms of the gender pay gap is good compared to other highly developed countries. It just keeps getting better, changing and improving. In the years 2000-2017, Poland made a lot of progress in improving the situation of women in the labor market. Poland's position improved as it jumped from 19th to 8th place. So, according to Eurostat calculations, this difference is small and in 2017 it amounted to 7.2. At the same time, the European Union average was 16%. A lower level of this indicator was observed only in Romania, Italy, Luxembourg and Belgium. Let us remember, however, that the wage gap is a complex phenomenon and results from the coexistence of many factors influencing the situation of women and men in the labor market. They include objective factors, such as different education, professional experience and profession. Let us also remember that women have the right to choose their life, family and professional path. But there is still much to be done in this area.	Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Freedom to choose one's life path
13/01/20	Gender pay gap (debate)	Beata Szydło PiS - ECR	Mr. President! Madam Commissioner! The topic we are debating today is one of the most important topics. This is a topic that, one could say, is part of what should be the foundation of the European Union: respect for equal rights, equal laws, respect for everyone, regardless of where they live, what they do and in what part of our continent, in what part of the European Union. In Poland, we have managed to effectively introduce solutions that allow us to eradicate poverty and, on the other hand, as my Polish colleagues have said before, also solve the problems of pay inequality between men and women. Women want to work, they want to be professionally active, but they also want to fulfill themselves as mothers and have a chance to raise their children. This is one of the reasons why we appreciated mothers who brought up at least four children and introduced special pensions for them. On the other hand, and finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is symptomatic that in today's debate it is mainly women who speak. I hope that all of us here in Parliament will effectively solve this problem.	Gender equality as an important EU value  Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Women need/want to balance work & family life
13/01/20	Gender pay gap (debate)	Andżelika Anna Mozdżanowska PiS- ECR	Dear Commissioner! Mr. President! Today is an extremely important day because, regardless of gender, we are talking about tackling the wage gap that affects most countries, affects women. And this is the day when we speak with one voice, when all the arguments have sounded, when we can say that support instruments and systemic solutions are important, but cooperation with entrepreneurs is also very important. I can also confirm this from my own experience as the deputy minister of investment and development in the Polish	Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Women need/want to balance work & family life

			<p>government, when we exchanged all solutions with entrepreneurs on the creation of cooperation tools, when the Polish government developed a free tool enabling employers to assess the scale of inequality and allowing, thanks to the application, to estimate wages in a given industry, region and the average salary in the European Union, when we were laying the foundation for open solutions so that women could run their own business, we were preparing systemic solutions so that they could reconcile family and professional life. And I think that's the direction. But unfortunately, we in the European Parliament have to speed up, because progress in the European Union is very slow. The gap has narrowed by just one percent in the last seven years.</p>	
30/01/20	Gender pay gap (debate)	Elena Lizzi Lega - ID	<p>Madam President, honourable colleagues, on the scale of European values, equality between men and women is second only to the protection of human rights. We still have to change the perception that the work of caring for children and the elderly carried out in support of the family is taken for granted by women or is not important. This cultural revolution would allow women to participate more in the economy, promoting its growth. I did not vote for the resolution in question because, albeit in an acceptable spirit, specific interventions by the Commission are proposed on wages and on areas of competence of the member states, moreover also on small and medium-sized enterprises. However, the burdens due to the gender pay gap must not fall only on businesses, especially medium and small ones, but must be supported for a universal cultural change. We should not only talk about the pay gap, but also and above all about equal treatment and policies that favor greater inclusion of women in the world of work.</p>	<p>Promoting equality in labour market</p> <p>Gender equality as an important EU value</p> <p>Gender equality brings economic growth</p>
30/01/20	Gender pay gap (debate)	Jadwiga Wiśniewska PiS - ECR	<p>Madam President! I am the author of the ECR resolution regarding the wage gap and this problem is noticed not only in the European Parliament. Women's earnings in relation to men's earnings in the European Union are still lower by an average of 16%. Poland, which I have the honor to represent in the European Parliament, has this gap one of the lowest among the Member States. My resolution pointed out that we should call for greater efforts by enforcing the principle of equal pay for equal work at national level. I pointed out that the duty of caring for children and sick family members rested more often on women than men. Women are more likely to choose part-time work for this reason, as they try to combine professional work with family responsibilities. Unfortunately, you voted against this resolution and supported a resolution that violates the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and points to solutions that are detrimental to business.</p>	<p>Promoting equality in labour market</p> <p>Problem of inequalities in the labour market</p> <p>Gendered division of labour causes gender pay gap</p>
30/01/20	Gender pay gap (debate)	Guido Reil (AfD) (ID)	<p>Madam President, dear colleagues! What are we talking about today? We talk about the principle: equal pay for equal work, regardless of gender. So for me this principle is the most normal thing in the world. But unfortunately that wasn't always the case. Thank God we have achieved a lot in the past. The 20th century was the age of emancipation. Thank God. We are now living in the 21st century and we have to realize that women in the European Union actually earn 16% less than men on average. For me this is a scandal. But you have to ask: why is that, why is it like that? It's primarily because – and we have to be quite honest here – that women have children and women therefore work more part-time, that women therefore have less chance of being promoted and gaining qualifications accordingly. This is the real scandal. We need a sensible family policy. Women who have children must be supported. That must be the focus of our policy in the future, to finally make a sensible family policy. I also find it significant that this wage</p>	<p>Promoting equality in labour market</p> <p>Problem of inequalities in the labour market</p> <p>Gendered division of labour causes gender pay gap</p>

			gap in Catholic countries such as Poland, for example, is much lower than in countries governed by the left.	
12/02/20	The EU priorities for the 64th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)	Jadwiga Wiśniewska PiS - ECR	Mr. President! The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality discriminates against smaller political groups and denies them the right to represent voters at the annual conference of the Committee on the Status of Women in New York. Are you really comfortable with it? Therefore, the voice of conservative women who want to combine professional and family life will not be heard at the conference. Women who do not treat marriage and motherhood as the proverbial ball and chain that interferes with their professional career. Nor will there be a voice saying that life must be protected, that life is a miracle and that it is the highest value. On the other hand, the voice of left-liberal circles striving to recognize abortion as a human right and a method of family planning, as well as striving to sexualize children and manipulate sexuality will be very strong. That is why I am calling for repentance. So please vote for a resolution that expresses concern for the future of women without unnecessary ideology. This is an ECR resolution.	Women need/want work life-balance
12/02/20	The EU priorities for the 64th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)	Beata Mazurek PiS - ECR	Although 25 years have passed since the World Conference on Women held in Beijing, this debate reminds us that there is still much to be done to protect and strengthen the role of women in various areas. We need to answer the question of what has already been done and what steps should be taken so that women around the world stop struggling with such problems as violence, broadly understood economic inequalities, or even discrimination against women as mothers in the employment environment. Perhaps the European Parliament should take an example from Poland, where the gender pay gap is one of the lowest in Europe, and the low rate of violence against women places Poland among the safest countries on the Old Continent. At the same time, we say a firm "no" to the demands of some circles that abortion should be one of the methods of family planning, and that the European Union should finance organizations involved in its promotion. This begs the question of what the European Parliament really intends to do in terms of full respect for women's rights and gender equality. Specifics, schedule of activities, what are the plans for the future?	Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Gender inequality persisting in Europe  Violence against women
12/02/20	Gender Equality Strategy (debate)	Jadwiga Wiśniewska PiS - ECR	Madam President! Equality is a core value of the European Union, so the new gender equality strategy should be both ambitious and realistic. So what should its shape be? We face many challenges, such as the fight against the wage and pension gap, the broadly understood feminization of poverty. I would like us to propose legal regulations that will strengthen women who combine professional work with raising children, so that we support them in motherhood and appreciate the unpaid work performed by women at home. We also need to tackle violence against women, including cyberbullying, pornography and human trafficking. Unfortunately, in the European Union, even little girls are exposed to forced marriages and genital mutilation. I would also like, Commissioner, that the new strategy does not encroach on the competence of the Member States. May Parliament respect its motto 'united in diversity'.	Gender equality as an important EU value  Women's poverty  Violence against women Problem of genital mutilation  Problem of forced marriage  Women need/want to balance work & family life

12/02/20	Gender Equality Strategy (debate)	Luisa Regimenti Lega - ID	Madam President, honourable colleagues, women are a mystery who constitute an immense work in the history of human generations due to their mission and vocation to serve humanity and life, due to the daily contribution made of sensitivity, intuition, dedication and generosity towards the family and civil life, and for the elaboration of a culture capable of combining reason with feeling, a characteristic of femininity, with which women enrich the understanding of the things of the world and contribute to the full authenticity of human relationships. One's dignity is constantly visible in the tireless battles for equal rights of the person and there is no doubt that even today there are many obstacles that prevent its full realization. The growth of real female emancipation is a question that can no longer be postponed. And this for all those women who silently, with sacrifice, commit themselves and hope, while aware of living in a complex hostile reality, the same reality that subjects them to injustices on their merits, to abuse, and which often fails to even protect their life. Violence and injustices against women feed on silence, stereotypes, loneliness, indifference, ignorance, sleep of consciences. This is why we welcome the initiative of the European Commission to propose a strategy for gender equality, which should contain strong commitments, clear indicators and a monitoring mechanism to make accountable... (the President cut off the speaker)	Gender inequality persisting in Europe  Violence against women Gender stereotypes
12/02/20	Gender Equality Strategy (debate)	Jessica Stegrud SD - ECR.	Madam Speaker! I am extremely grateful for the women's struggle and achievements of previous nations, something that we Swedish women are reaping the benefits of today. For example, women increasingly dominate at universities, at managerial levels in the public sector and in social media. I am therefore concerned about the image that continues to be cultivated in the name of equality - a narrative where women are to be seen as victims and where unequal outcomes are usually explained by discrimination and white patriarchal structures. There are still things left to do. The risk is, however, that the new strategy aims the wrong way and instead of further increasing gender equality, rather creates privileges for a new group. With mandatory measures such as gender quotas and shared parental leave, we are not only on the way to replacing an old injustice with a new one, but we are negotiating away what we have also long fought for, namely freedom of choice and the right to direct our own lives.	Gender inequality persisting in Europe  Recognising importance of past women movements  Freedom to choose one's life path
12/02/20	Gender Equality Strategy (debate)	Silvia Sardone Lega - ID	Madam President, honourable colleagues, if we are here to talk about gender equality, you must know that in my country, Italy, only 4% of managing directors are women, despite the fact that the level of education is very high. There has been talk in this House about wage differences, there is no doubt about it, but I don't think quotas are the solution. I don't want to be called a panda or something to protect as a woman. I claim the right to be evaluated for my abilities and skills and, if I'm better than a man, to be paid more, not equally. So I conclude my speech by saying that I would like to avoid this ongoing campaign by men and women to set quotas or somehow treat women as if they were a reserve. Instead, we should continue to bring forward the idea of women as people and then really value their abilities and reward them in case they deserve it.	Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Equality in the labour market by recognising individual merit

5/10/20	Women in decision making on company boards, including the state of play on the directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures (debate)	Christine Anderson AfD - ID	Mister President! Every company acts in such a way that it maximizes its profit. Of course, this also applies to vacancies. So if a woman is more suitable for a position than a man, then it is in the company's best interest to hire that woman and not the man. But the Commission is not counting on that. Instead, the Commission is now harassing the Member States with their highly distressing, politically correct women's quota fuss. But why is the demand actually limited to quotas for women in management positions? Why don't we also demand quotas for women among construction workers, truck drivers and sewer workers? It's no wonder that more and more companies are migrating to developing and emerging countries, where they can make sensible business decisions free from ideological nonsense. In the end, the market will regulate what the Commission is trying to enforce. If, in the end, men and women are equally unemployed, they can establish gender parity in the area of transfer payments. There is certainly something to be found within the framework of EU unemployment insurance. No, it stays the same: quotas for women are state-celebrated benevolent sexism. A state-enforced women's quota expresses what women's movements of the past rightly fought against - namely the image of women that women are apparently too weak to be successful in their jobs and therefore need the support of the state. You are not helping women with your call for quotas for women. On the contrary: you reveal your pathetic, condescending, overbearing and patronizing attitude towards women in a shameful way. The chauvinists and machos of this world pop the champagne corks. The EU Commission, led by a woman, officially confirms the chauvinistic image of women – well done!	Recognising importance of past women movements
5/10/20	Women in decision making on company boards, including the state of play on the directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures (debate)	Margarita de la Pisa Carrión Vox - ID	Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Commissioner Dalli, why are you here today? Is it on its merits or do we have to think that it is to meet a quota? When the woman joined the labor market, she had the freedom to choose the professions. Eight out of ten European toilets are women. Is this disproportionate? Shall we now invent a quota to favor the male presence? This would lack common sense. From the European institutions they threaten us with sanctions, harsh legislation, to keep us controlled and remote-controlled in their ideological objectives. But they do not land on the real concerns of the people. The problems are different in each country, in each company or in each family. They cannot be solved by pre-established quotas, which has also been shown to be that they do not work. If you want to help us, if you really want to help women, don't consider us statistics or require us to imitate men. Value us for who we are, women, mothers and excellent professionals. We don't need you to discriminate against anyone in order to shine.	Women need/want to balance work & family life
5/10/20	Women in decision making on company boards, including the state of play on the directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures (debate)	Elżbieta Kruk PiS - ECR.	The principle of equality between women and men is today an elementary standard of human and civil rights. In Poland, this principle is legally regulated and constitutionally protected. It is also clear that increasing the proportion of women in the top decision-making bodies of listed companies is an important goal. However, the analysis of the consequences of implementing the provisions of the submitted directive leads to questioning their usefulness in achieving the aforementioned equality, and imposing rigid parity standards on commercial law entities may have the opposite effect. It may lead to a situation of lowering the level of motivation among female entrepreneurs due to the expectation of preferential treatment. It is also possible that the so-called golden skirts, consisting in the simultaneous participation of a small group of women in supervisory boards and management boards of many companies, as a result of which the share of women in the highest decision-making bodies of companies will not increase.	Gender equality curcial human rights standard

			The aim of the directive is therefore not to improve the status and situation of women, but is an expression of ideological feminism. And what is equally important, this project is in conflict with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality regulated in Art. 5 sec. 3 of the Treaty on European Union. Finally, it is worth noting that forcing women's representation by the principle of parity diminishes the value of female candidates in advance and is also at odds with the elementary sense of justice and dignity.	
5/10/20	Women in decision making on company boards, including the state of play on the directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures (debate)	Andżelika Anna Możdżanowska PiS- ECR	It is our duty to ensure equal rights for women to sit on boards! Employing women and men with the required competences in high decision-making positions means better strategies and great financial results. It is a different approach to solving problems or the organizational culture of enterprises. Women are very well educated, and organization and a sense of duty is their natural advantage. Who else is better able to reconcile family life and professional work than a mother, wife and daughter who take care of the upbringing of children, home peace and care for elderly parents? In the process of equalizing the employment of women and men in management boards, not only the word parity is important. Let's take care of investments that support women who want to work and achieve their goals, also when raising children. The 2012 proposal for a directive imposes hard targets and sanctions on Member States, imposing regulations on commercial entities that go beyond the minimum necessary to achieve the objective. Women must be treated equally during the recruitment process. However, many countries are improving in this matter without implementing hard regulations. Let's support women, promote their competences and select the best candidates for management boards in accordance with the principle of gender equality and respect for the law in the Member States.	Promoting equality in labour market  Women need/want to balance work & family life  Gender equality brings economic growth
5/10/20	Women in decision making on company boards, including the state of play on the directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures (debate)	Jadwiga Wiśniewska PiS - ECR	Written. Increasing the participation of women in the highest decision-making bodies of companies is an important goal on the way to achieving equality, and the implementation of this goal must be adequate to the economic and social conditions. We must support women and promote their entrepreneurship. Recruitment and qualification criteria for positions should be clear and transparent and take into account the principle of diversity policy. I believe that the objectives of the draft directive can be sufficiently achieved by national initiatives of varying scope, scope and effectiveness.	Promoting equality in labour market  Women's entrepreneurship
16/12/20	The need for a dedicated Council configuration on gender equality (debate)	Jadwiga Wiśniewska PiS - ECR	Madam President! Madam Commissioner! Once again, we find ourselves in a situation where Parliament is trying to extend its powers contrary to the Treaties. Once again, representatives of the leftist trend are pushing their political agenda. Contrary to this rhetoric, the absence of a dedicated gender equality body in the Council does not mean a lack of commitment and action. Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the Union and the Council is obliged to respect it. The Council cannot be subjected to political pressure, it should be independent and freely decide about its organizational structure. And as a woman, I want to say that our actions are concrete, so I would recommend that today we consider how many women among the European Parliament's catering staff dismissed since January 1 are losing their jobs. Perhaps you from the left will stand up for the rights of women who lose their jobs here in the European Parliament in the pandemic. Finally, deal with real problems.	Gender equality as an important EU value

21/01/21	The gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period - The EU Strategy for Gender Equality - Closing the digital gender gap: women's participation in the digital economy (debate)	Jadwiga Wiśniewska PiS - ECR	Madam Commissioner! Colleagues! Our common goal should be to care for the well-being of women, to ensure that women have the same opportunities and opportunities no matter where in the world they live, the same opportunities and opportunities as men. our common concern here in the European Union should be respect for the Treaties and the competences of the Member States. Our common concern should be to respect the fundamental right to life, from which all other rights derive. Unfortunately, the report has been watered down by left-wing ideology and is really ruining everything. In fact, it became a stimulus for the left to present a kind of political manifesto. And yet, beyond political divisions, we should focus on bridging the wage gap, the pension gap, limiting, and preferably eradicating violence against women: sexual, cyberbullying, psychological violence. We have so much to do together. It was here in the European Union that 500,000 cases of female genital mutilation. It is here in the European Union that underage girls marry adult men. It's time to stop it. It's here that women's rights are violated in the European Union. Let's deal with the real rights of women. And the answer to these rights is the resolution of the European Conservatives and Reformists, which responds to all these challenges. I am asking for her support.	Promoting equality in labour market  Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Violence against women Problem of genital mutilation  Problem of forced marriage
10/02/21	Challenges ahead for women's rights: more than 25 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (debate)	Jadwiga Wiśniewska PiS - ECR	Mr. President! Madam Commissioner! Ladies and Gentlemen! The 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration is an opportunity to take stock of actions for gender equality and the protection of women's rights. So let's take a look at what it was really about. It was intended to draw attention to the problem of poverty, education, the situation of women in armed conflicts, and the issue of violence against women. Twenty-five years later, let's look at how it works and how it has affected the situation of women in the European Union. More than half a million women in the EU have experienced genital mutilation. We also still have the problem of a large wage gap when it comes to women's salaries. Fortunately, in Poland, which is mentioned here so often, this gap is one of the smallest. Yes, the wage gap in Poland is one of the smallest in the European Union. It's about women's rights. However, in the European Union, little girls are still forced to marry adult men, which is de facto a pedophile practice. So we still have a lot to do in our common home in Europe.	Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Gender inequality persisting in Europe  Problem of genital mutilation  Problem of forced marriage
9/06/21	Promoting gender equality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers (debate)	Isabella Tovaglieri Lega - ID	Mr President, honourable colleagues, Commissioner, Europe is deluding itself that it can solve the problem of gender inequality with the anachronistic principle of women's quotas or with sterile nominalisms such as [the female version of] engineer, a lawyer, a minister. Around us, on the other hand, the emerging countries are rushing towards the future and facing international competition in a pragmatic way, massively incorporating female talent into technical-scientific professions. In neighboring Central Asia, STEM graduates account for half of the total, 75 per cent in Burma alone. But China invests 200 billion in scientific research every year and soon the number of Chinese female scientists will explode. In Europe, however, we remain nailed to 36%, a figure that drops dramatically to 16% in Italy. If we don't want to fall behind not only in equality but also in technical-scientific progress, and therefore in the economic and geopolitical challenge, we must intervene where training courses begin, removing gender stereotypes and directing women towards the professions of the future right from Primary School. Community studies say that we will be able to achieve equal pay in 2050, with a simultaneous 10% increase in the European Union's GDP per capita. But all this on one condition: that Europe implements concrete measures and abandons old ideological approaches with no future at all.	Promoting equality in labour market  Gender equality brings economic growth

23/06/21	Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health (debate)	Beata Mazurek PiS - ECR	Respect for women and full respect for their rights are obvious to me, just as obvious as respect and respect for the rights of every human being, regardless of age, race or religion. The Polish government upholds equal rights for men and women, knowing how important a woman's role is in our communities. One has to ask the question, do we care and care for women when debating such an extreme left-wing report? Do you think abortion on demand is a procedure that has a positive effect on a woman's health? Should the European Parliament instruct the member states of the community in this regard? After all, according to Treaties, all competences in the field of organization of health care systems and in the field of related education in the broad sense belong exclusively to the Member States. Today, we should fight for every life, because every human being, and such is undoubtedly a child in the mother's womb, deserves it. Report, in which claims access to safe and legal abortion as a method of family planning, i.e. the de facto killing of a defenseless, unborn child, is a report of disgrace and all of you who vote for it should be ashamed!	Promoting equality between men and women
25/11/21	The International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women and the State of play on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention (debate)	Jadwiga Wiśniewska PiS - ECR	Mr. Chairman! Madam Commissioner! Ladies and Gentlemen! We must speak out about violence and help break the silence of its victims. Every third woman in the world has experienced physical, psychological, economic or sexual abuse. Unfortunately, women and girls in Europe also continue to experience the very special and cruel violence of genital mutilation, and underage girls marry adult men in the European Union as well. I would like to express my regret that this issue was not raised either in the Commissioner's speech or in the position of the European Commission. Are you pretending that these cruel crimes do not exist? Cyberbullying is also an increasingly common form of violence. Stalking, hate speech, distribution of pornographic materials. I believe that anything that is illegal offline should also be illegal online. Data shows that domestic violence has increased during the pandemic as victims have been forced to stay locked up with their perpetrators. Last year, in my country, Poland, which you are so interested in, an anti-violence law was passed. The new rapid response procedure for perpetrators of domestic violence consists in quickly isolating the victim from the perpetrator and ordering him to leave the apartment immediately. Please follow our example, let's exchange good practices. Let the cause unite us, and unfortunately, ideology divides us.	Violence against women  Problem of genital mutilation  Problem of forced marriage
16/02/22	The EU priorities for the 66th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)	Jadwiga Wiśniewska PiS - ECR	Mr. President! Madam Commissioner! Well, climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and global warming is causing world hunger, malnutrition, exposure to disease and lack of access to water. What should be our priorities for the New York session? When we look at this climate change, we could say that in the European Union it affects women to a lesser extent than in other continents, but in the European Union women also face very serious problems. I will come back to this issue because I believe there is a great deal of indifference to this issue in this House. Well, still in the European Union little girls are exposed to forced marriages with adult men. Ladies, focus on real problems and let us support women, regardless of their age, their status, their social position, their religious denomination. Let's not forget the little girls who are brutally raped.	Violence against women  Problem of forced marriage



2/05/22	Reaching women's economic independence through entrepreneurship and self-employment (short presentation)	Jessica Stegrud SD - ECR.	Mr Speaker! As an economist, I understand the importance of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship. As an individual, I understand the importance of being able to choose. And as a woman, I understand the importance of being given equal opportunities, because it is equal opportunities, not equal outcomes, that should be the self-evident principle even when it comes to business and entrepreneurship. But that is not the case here in the European Parliament. Here, through quotas, equality integration, targeted resources, gender perspectives and laws, they want to force equal outcomes in all areas. What we should do instead is invest in what benefits us all and business in general, namely education, reduced bureaucracy, access to risk capital and low taxes.	Promoting equality in labour market
4/07/22	Women's poverty in Europe (debate)	Jadwiga Wiśniewska PiS - ECR	Madam President! Madam Commissioner! Ladies and Gentlemen! Poverty in the European Union has a woman's face. The female dimension of poverty results from many factors. It is not only lower wages and pensions, age discrimination, employment in low-paying industries and precarious conditions, but also economic violence, unpaid work from home and single motherhood. As many as 85% of single parents are women. And one in four children in Europe is at risk of poverty. Women are said to be managers of poverty, managing the household budget, looking for opportunities, additional forms of employment, and cutting expenses. Therefore, acting for women and investing in them is an investment in their families, especially children. Women are the future of Europe. Its demographic development depends on them – it is on us. But in the context of aging European societies, it is also worth remembering that they play a key role and dominate quantitatively in the health and care services sectors. Thank you, Madam Rapporteur, for your constructive, good work.	Promoting equality in labour market  Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Women's poverty  Violence against women
22/11/22	Gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges (debate)	Margarita de la Pisa Carrión Vox - ID	Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, we are talking about 40% of non-executive positions, 33% if we include executives. What can be celebrated? Of course, the presence of women enriches and improves the results. Let's extol female talent, proud of our nature and the nuances we can bring to decision-making. But this directive: it even puts a cap on the female presence. Presenting ourselves as underdogs and naturally disadvantaged doesn't help if we want to show the worth of women. Free enterprise is being attacked. It is up to an organization to decide on the composition of its council. It is a political interference in companies, with a regulation that should be legal-commercial, in accordance with national legislation, not European. Quotas are a drastic, discriminatory and unfair system. The never ending story. Now for sex, well, no, for gender. But it could also be based on race or ethnicity. It is disrespectful to focus on the characteristics of people and not on people. It is our training or abilities or experience that should determine us. Collectivization makes us one of a group. It takes away our names and surnames, confronts us and accentuates prejudices. Turn just causes into power battles. Let's recover hope and harmony in this world. Measures like this only increase the tension.	Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Equality in the labour market by recognising individual merit

22/11/22	Gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges (debate)	Isabella Tovagliari Lega - ID	Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, imposing equality on the boards of large companies is a facade operation, which progressives certainly like, but which unfortunately does not solve the root problem of gender inequality in the workplace. To have more women at the top, you don't need quotas or fines for companies, but an efficient welfare and a valid training offer, which allow women to establish themselves thanks to their merit and their skills. This is demonstrated by the case of the advanced Lombardy – and here my thoughts go to the governor Roberto Maroni, who has contributed to making it great – where 48% of the managers of all of Italy work. Then we need more pragmatism and less ideology. We don't need preferential lanes, but fair competition on equal terms, in order to arrive at a real and not convenient equality, which can guarantee, in addition to women's rights, also the economic and cultural progress of our nations. (The speaker agreed to respond to a "blue card" intervention)	<p>Promoting equality in labour market</p> <p>Problem of inequalities in the labour market</p> <p>Gender equality brings economic growth</p> <p>Equality in the labour market by recognising individual merit</p> <p>Equal competition in labour market</p>
22/11/22	Gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges (debate)	Isabella Tovagliari Lega - ID	"blue card" response. – I believe that focusing exclusively on women's quotas is a diversion in order not to face the problem. We are facing the digital transition and there will be new professions in the future, especially in STEM subjects, but we must be aware that only a very small percentage of women approach technical-scientific subjects, because we are told that these subjects are probably the prerogative of men. So let's work on this, providing guidance especially in schools among the youngest, to make women look and approach these subjects, where, by the way, they obtain even more brilliant results than men, to actually give them quality jobs, which allow them to balance work and family as well. This is true equal opportunity, there must be competition, on equal terms, but there must be competition.	<p>Promoting equality in labour market</p> <p>Problem of inequalities in the labour market</p> <p>Gender stereotypes</p> <p>Women need/want to balance work &amp; family life</p> <p>Equal competition in labour market</p>
22/11/22	Gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges (debate)	Isabella Tovagliari Lega - ID	"blue card" response. – In this regard, I have just mentioned the good practices of the region I come from, which is the Lombardy region, where 48% of women managers in Italy reside, without the need to impose quotas. We have achieved better percentages, but I'm not satisfied. The problem is that I do not think quotas are an appropriate tool. We need welfare, this is the only solution and it is the only keyword that we must pursue. To ensure a balance and equal opportunities we must allow women not to have to choose whether to pursue a career or dedicate oneself to work. Creating quotas on boards only means giving priority to women who will go on to cover elite roles but, beyond the women who work on boards and women managers, there are millions of women who do not have the possibility of accessing those positions, but who still have the right to be able to have a career and to be able to balance their family life. So, we can't do elite politics, we have to think of all women, leave none behind.	<p>Promoting equality in labour market</p> <p>Freedom to choose one's life path</p>
14/02/23	The EU priorities for the 67th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)	Alessandra Basso Lega - ID	Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, to achieve equality, and I don't like to call it gender equality, we don't need female quotas or laws that reserve some place for us, almost as if it were almsgiving. For the European Union, the priority must be education, including digital education. Instead, in developed countries we often see battles to arrive at an inclusive language: "partners" instead of "husband" and "wife", "staff" instead of "workers". Instead of worrying about making language evolve towards gender neutral, let's worry about the more than 700 million people in the world who cannot read and write, because of these 700 million, two-thirds are women. So what's important? Only with basic education will it be possible to give women, young women, the same opportunities as men, in all fields, including the digital one, because education often means freedom.	<p>Promoting equality in labour market</p>

14/02/23	The EU priorities for the 67th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)	Lívía Járóka Fidesz - NI	President! Promoting the opportunities of women, and especially disadvantaged women, is one of our most important common causes. We must strive to eradicate all forms of discrimination and discrimination, and it is very welcome, as reported by the Commissioner, that in the field of digitization, in the field of startups, we can further boost the social inclusion and participation of women and girls with this European strategy. Obtaining and accessing information is very important, especially in the poorest environments. However, it is very important to point out, and this is the weakness of this report, that it intends to bring elements under the jurisdiction of the Member States under a unified scope of action at many points, and thereby violates or may violate the primacy of the right to decide on matters under the jurisdiction of the Member States. Respecting these powers is, I think, more important than anything else. We must take united action to promote equal opportunities for women and girls.	Promoting equality in labour market  Problem of inequalities in the labour market
30/03/23	Strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women (debate)	Elżbieta Rafalska PiS - ECR	Mr President, I will speak about the situation of women, in terms of the wage gap, in my country, Poland - a country that is so often attacked and criticised here in Parliament. The wage gap in Poland is 4.5%. Only Luxembourg, Romania and Slovenia are ahead of us. So, in this ladder, Poland is highly placed. As far as the public sector is concerned, we have a negative wage gap of 0.6%. In the private sector, on the other hand, it is actually at the European average, so it is 13%. As far as women aged 55-64 are concerned, the figure is more than 6% in favour of women. In the construction sector, women earn better (9.6%), and in the economic sector called transport and storage, there is also an advantage for women. I mention this in order to say that there are countries which, prior to the directive, pursued this equality without an EU mandate. I am proud that this took place in my country. There is, of course, some scope for improvement and the directive will certainly help here.	Problem of inequalities in the labour market
30/03/23	Strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women (debate)	Elżbieta Rafalska PiS - ECR	response to a speech signalled by raising a blue card. - I am well aware of the pay gap between men and women in different countries. The gap is enormous between what the pay gap is in Luxembourg and what it is in rich Germany, France and the Netherlands, for example, where the average is between 0.7% and 18 or even 22%. I understand that there is an effort to minimise this gap. But I would like to draw attention to the fact that there are some countries that conduct their social policy - and I will refer to other areas as well - without prescriptions, using their own national strategies. I appreciate what is being done in Parliament, but I want the work done by the member states to be appreciated in this House as well.	Problem of inequalities in the labour market

Date	Debate	MEP	Atypical substantive representation claims	Feminist arguments
12/02/20	Gender Equality Strategy (debate)	Elena Lizzi Lega - ID	Madam President, honourable colleagues, Commissioner, we support the importance of gender equality as a common value. If we want to be consistent, let's work to promote it in all European Union policies, as well as in Parliament, but as a cultural revolution and not as an imposition. The barriers that prevent female participation in the world of work lead to particularly high costs of well-being and growth. Removing obstacles is important. Research by the European Institute for Gender Equality proves that gender equality would foster economic growth. But does the Institute also monetize the role of women in reconciling family and work? Improvements in gender equality would create over ten million additional job opportunities in Europe and GDP per capita would grow by almost 10% by 2050. But which balance for households? Gender equality will also have to be promoted in the context of the new European Union policies - digital single market, Green Deal and artificial intelligence - in which the employment gap is even more dramatic. Now a new Commissioner with exclusive responsibility for equal opportunities will have to change the management of previous policies on the matter, also because the European Court of Auditors will examine gender mainstreaming in the European Union budget and, according to what was made public today, the audit report will be released in spring 2021. Then we will see what impact the policies of the von der Leyen Commission will have on the world of women.	Promoting equality in labour market  Gender equality as an important EU value  Gender equality needs to be achieved in all areas  Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Gender equality brings economic growth
12/02/20	Gender Equality Strategy (debate)	Andželika Anna Możdżanowska PiS - ECR	Dear Madam President! Madam Commissioner! It is very good that we are working on a gender equality strategy. This is a challenge we must face. We are talking about the fourth industrial revolution, about technological progress, about the digital revolution, and we still have not achieved equality in such an important aspect as gender equality. We have hard data. If by 2030 all countries in the world eliminated discrimination based on sex and guaranteed equality of citizens in this one aspect, the world's GDP would increase by USD 6 trillion. After all, neither the world nor Europe can afford to give up the involvement of women. They cannot afford it either economically or socially. And only on the issues we are talking about today - not only the wage gap, not only the fact that women are at risk of poverty (because the pay gap is 16%, and the pension gap is over 35%), that they are underrepresented in parliaments and governments, that they still face a glass ceiling in the business world - we need to pay attention to this. European poverty cannot have a woman's face.	Gender equality needs to be achieved in all areas  Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Gender inequality persisting in Europe  Women's poverty  Women underrepresentation in positions of power  Gender equality brings economic growth
21/01/21	The gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period - The EU Strategy for Gender Equality - Closing the digital gender gap: women's participation in the digital economy (debate)	Andželika Anna Możdżanowska PiS - ECR	Dear Madam President! Madam Commissioner! Colleagues! Thank you for taking up this important topic during the session of the European Parliament. Closing the digital gap and the participation of women in the digital economy is an extremely topical topic in the era of competitive challenges economy. But not only that, because especially today it is a huge challenge to fight the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. It is precisely today that this economic crisis and the long struggle against it hits with redoubled strength the sectors where a large proportion of employees are women. This has been digitization for years fundamentally changes most aspects of our lives. We already know today that the COVID-19 crisis and its aftermath will cause lasting changes in life across Europe, in the lives of all Europeans, increasing the particular need for digital competences in every area of social and professional life. Not only are gender stereotypes a serious obstacle, but as well as solutions and possibilities to reconcile work and family life. Because we cannot afford to deepen the	Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Women need/want to balance work & family life

			<p>gap in the digital sector, to prevent women from participating. We must seize the full potential of women's role as users, innovators, creators, participation in life, challenges of the economy, especially the digital one. Unfortunately, even today, in the 21st century, women show less confidence in their own digital skills, and it is they who give the opportunity for equal and fair access, which today more than ever, in the months of lockdown, we see every day, in our families and in workplace. Not there can be no consent to digital exclusion. Already scary is the available data, according to which the majority of employees need to acquire digital skills to keep their jobs. Globally, 75 million jobs could disappear as a result of automation. Thank you very much for taking up this topic and I ask for (words inaudible) providing additional funds for access and improving digital competences.</p>	
10/02/21	Challenges ahead for women's rights: more than 25 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (debate)	Luisa Regimenti Lega - ID	<p>Mr. President, honourable colleagues, 25 years after the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing and despite numerous cases of formal recognition and progress made on gender equality, women and men do not enjoy the same rights and persist social, economic and cultural inequalities. Even today, phenomena such as poverty, education, health and violence are enormous challenges for women all over the world and for the realization of an equal society. There is a strong need to address the stereotypes that continue to be the main obstacle to enhancing women's skills and are also the cultural root of violence. The key words for change are awareness of the problems and education as a lever of transformation to achieve a change that can no longer be delayed.</p>	<p>Promoting equality in labour market</p> <p>Gender inequality persisting in Europe</p> <p>Women's poverty Violence against women</p> <p>Gender stereotypes</p>
09/06/21	Women in politics – combatting online abuse (debate)	Andželika Anna Moźdzanowska PiS - ECR	<p>Mr. President! Madam Commissioner! Mrs. Minister! The importance of abuse on the Internet is a very urgent, extremely important and huge problem that all of us face today, because in the era of the development of digital space, in the era of the development of modern technologies and their unlimited possibilities, unfortunately today is a very dangerous and still illegal, dark side of the force. It is true that women are affected by this dramatic problem more often and more brutally, because any violence, including online violence against women, is both a cause and a consequence of, among others, violence against women. many still functioning stereotypes and differences in the treatment of women and men. Unfortunately, the silent consent of reality is the daily acceptance of hate, cyberbullying and disinformation, the impunity of users and the lack of immediate consequences, the lack of reaction and real responsibility of rights owners towards the perpetrators in such an unlimited online space of the digital world, even though none of us is anonymous on the internet. The fight against online crime today is uneven, and accountability is unfortunately a pure abstraction. Enough of this tacit acceptance for a space dominated by aggression and hatred, and freedom of speech in public opinion often has a distorted status, with a special power of consent when it concerns public figures. It is time to end the consent to intimidation, harassment, violation of personal rights and insults, an attack on human dignity, ridicule, defamation and profanity, which by the power of digital social impact have already led to many human dramas and tragedies. With one caveat: counteraction must not lead to the restriction of rights.</p>	<p>Violence against women</p> <p>Problem of lack of punishment for violence against women</p> <p>Gender stereotypes</p>
02/05/22	Reaching women's economic independence through entrepreneurship and self-employment (short presentation)	Andželika Anna Moźdzanowska PiS - ECR	<p>Women more often experience difficulties in entering or returning to the labor market, in particular after a break related to the birth and upbringing of children, which often makes their professional skills and qualifications outdated. Being self-employed can be seen as a strategy for those women who cannot find other forms of employment and therefore a way to earn money, or as evidence of an "entrepreneurial spirit" and a</p>	<p>Problem of inequalities in the labour market</p> <p>Gender equality brings economic growth</p>

			<p>desire to be their own boss. For many women, entrepreneurship has become a way to break down the so-called glass ceiling, overcoming financial problems, greater job satisfaction and freedom of action, which manifests itself in the ability to set your own rules. Entrepreneurship programs aimed at women, education and development of their competences should be supported. Access to finance for women entrepreneurs and self-employed women and the removal of administrative barriers to business start-ups are also crucial. Women's entrepreneurship also supports the diversification of economic activity by stimulating innovation and diversification in management, in production and marketing practices, and in products and services. Following the author of the report, it should be emphasized that empowering women entrepreneurs and investors makes economic, business and ethical sense. This issue therefore needs to be addressed as it is essential for creating new jobs, boosting the economy and economic recovery in Europe, as well as for strengthening the EU's competitiveness.</p>	Women's entrepreneurship
04/07/22	Women's poverty in Europe (debate)	Andželika Anna Mozdżanowska PiS - ECR	<p>Written. At the end of the 18th century, women dared to fight for their rights and for equality. We have the 21st century, the EU community is economically and intellectually developed, and yet women's poverty is a significant problem on a European scale. According to Eurostat, 22.9% of women in the EU in 2020 were at risk of poverty. Women are the first victims of austerity and the economic crisis. Stereotypes, pay gaps (from 5% to 20% across the EU), pensions, and the lack of high-quality public services are some of the deep roots and main causes of women falling into poverty and social exclusion. Women work in feminized, low-paying industries, such as the care sector, where nearly 70% of women are employed. Gender equality in the labor market and reconciliation of work and family life is an important instrument to eradicate women's poverty, which benefits the whole economy and has a positive impact on GDP, employment and productivity. Improving gender equality would lead to an increase in EU GDP per capita of 6.1-9.6% and an additional 10.5 million jobs. Women are the future of Europe, so it is essential to promote structural change in governance as we see women under-represented in governments and parliaments. The problem of the "glass ceiling" in the business world is still a common phenomenon. It's time for poverty to have no more a woman's face!</p>	<p>Promoting equality in labour market</p> <p>Problem of inequalities in the labour market</p> <p>Women's poverty</p> <p>Women underrepresentation in positions of power</p> <p>Gender stereotypes</p> <p>Women need/want to balance work &amp; family life</p> <p>Gender equality brings economic growth</p> <p>Recognising importance of past women movements</p>
22/11/22	Gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges (debate)	Annika Bruna FN - ID	<p>Madam President, I am delighted that we have finally reached an agreement with a view to adopting the directive on the participation of women on boards of directors. I invite you to support this reasonable text put to the vote today and which aims to give Member States the necessary means to achieve a more balanced representation of men and women among the directors of listed companies. This directive is a strong signal for women who will thus be able to get involved in the decision-making process. This increased involvement is an essential vector for ensuring better corporate governance, in terms of both performance and development. This directive, supported by the MEPs of the National Rally, will enable Member States to accelerate the progress made in this area and to set an example for the different spheres of power that make up our societies.</p>	Promoting equality in labour market

22/11/22	Gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges (debate)	Gilles Lebreton FN - ID	Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the equality of men and women is a fundamental principle of European civilisation. This is why I am in favor of this directive which asks the Member States of the Union to achieve a better gender balance on the boards of directors of large companies. From this point of view, the objective, accompanied by adjustments, of reserving at least 40% of non-executive director positions for the under-represented sex by 2026 seems reasonable to me. In the short term, it is obviously women who will benefit from this measure. At a time when Iranian women are fighting for their freedom from the obscurantist regime of the mullahs, I am delighted with the beautiful message of hope that we are sending them today. Yes, true equality of rights is possible between men and women. No, no obstacle is insurmountable on the way to it, whether economic, social or religious.	Promoting equality in labour market  Gender equality as an important EU value
30/03/23	Strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women (debate)	Chiara Gemma Fdi - ECR	Mr President, honourable colleagues, Commissioner, once again we find ourselves in this House debating one of the most unpleasant forms of discrimination that exists: the wage gap between men and women for equal work and work of equal value. It is necessary to insist on strengthening the application of the principle of fair distribution, through the transparency of wages and related enforcement mechanisms. But it is also important to underline that, while European companies with more than 100 employees will be required to disclose wage information to expose existing gender pay gaps, this will not be the case for those with up to 100 workers, who will have no obligation and therefore no additional administrative or economic burden. The realities of small and medium-sized Italian enterprises, the fundamental fabric of our economy, must not be penalized in any way. This is the path to take to eradicate once and for all a cancer that has been poisoning the world of work for too long.	Promoting equality in labour market  Problem of inequalities in the labour market
30/03/23	Strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women (debate)	Stefania Zambelli Lega - ID	Ladies and gentlemen, the principle of equal pay for men and women should not even be debated in this House, as it should be a long-established right. Unfortunately, this is not the case. In fact, the data tell us of a 13% wage gap between men and women in Europe, numbers that still make us reflect on the condition of women in 2023. The causes of this gap are to be found in women's family choices, in the lower presence of women in management roles or in the presence of more women in low-paying jobs. It is time to say enough to penalizing working women, who must enjoy the same rights, the same salary and the same career opportunities as a man. This is why this directive goes in the right direction, striving to close the gender pay gap, without, however, imposing heavy economic or bureaucratic burdens on small and medium-sized enterprises.	Promoting equality in labour market  Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Labour market inequalities justified by women's choice

Date	Debate	MEP	Ambiguous claims	Feminist arguments
13/01/20	Gender Equality Strategy (debate)	Annika Bruna FN - ID	Madam President, a man and a woman performing the same tasks and having the same skills should have the same salary. For equal work, equal pay: this simple principle must prevail, and it is up to sovereign States to enforce it. The problem is that today, Parliament is debating the concept of the gender pay gap, that is to say the differences in pay between men and women explained by hours worked, experience or position held. In many cases, however, these differences are a matter of women's choice and priorities. We must defend equal pay for equal work and allow women who so wish to be able to access the same positions and remuneration as men. However, certain concepts defended here come from an ideology denying the differences between men and women and from an exclusively mercantile vision, the ultimate example of this drift being the freezing of oocytes so that women shift their family life to the benefit of their professional constraints. Women also have the right not to want to be men like the others.	Promoting equality in labour market  Labour market inequalities justified by women's choice  Women's right not to be like men
12/02/20	Gender Equality Strategy (debate)	Christine Anderson AfD - ID	Madam President! I note that the Bureau of the Session is terrified of national flags, which I think is a great shame. I comply with the request and have now removed my national flag. But we are talking about the EU gender equality strategy here. Gender equality already exists, because we were all born equal. Men and women - no one will be able to deny that although men and women have the same value, they still have very different inclinations, strengths and weaknesses. Men and women face different challenges. But instead of blaming men for alleged advantages, some of which are imagined, why not focus on promoting gender harmony? Why not encourage men to be men and encourage women to be women? Workplace injustice that favors either women or men shouldn't it be addressed by nation states and corporations? But no, it has to be the dictates of the central office of the EU. Let families decide for themselves who does the dishes, who raises the children, who brings the money home. I eagerly await the day when the Commission presents an action plan to more equitably share breastfeeding between fathers and mothers. Why are women persuaded that they are only worth something if they go to work? This is an unbelievable disparagement and discrimination against all women who make a conscious choice to do family work. But no, you are determined to force women into the workforce. It is interesting, however, that women's quotas are only called for in the executive floors. Where is the proportion of women among bricklayers, truck drivers or sewer workers? Stop turning people into mere objects of your social experiments. Stop trying to transform people. Stop conforming people to your delusional ideas about society. Let people be people again!	Freedom to choose one's life path  Women discriminated if choose family over career
25/11/20	Istanbul Convention and violence against women (debate)	Silvia Sardone Lega - ID	Madam President, honourable colleagues, today is the International Day against Violence against Women and I want to be clear: for a certain political party, the protection of women begins and ends with gender language and women's quotas - as if we were pandas to protect - without taking any consideration of merit and commitment. This is not how violence and abuse are fought. Words are no longer enough to oppose the submission of women, which occurs with female circumcision and the obligatory Islamic veil, all things for which, too often, the same political party is silent. Words are no longer enough to denounce the ridiculous penalties for rape in too many countries. We need more tools to denounce, we need more certainty of the penalty. In a nutshell, I would say, less pro-1968 feminist propaganda and more facts.	Violence against women  Tackling violence against women  Problem of lack of punishment for violence against women  Problem of genital mutilation



21/01/21	The gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period - The EU Strategy for Gender Equality - Closing the digital gender gap: women's participation in the digital economy (debate)	Annika Bruna FN - ID	President, your strategy for gender equality is more akin to a desire for non-differentiation than to the search for legitimate equity between the two sexes. For you, any difference between men and women would be stereotypes that need to be corrected. Your ideology even becomes authoritarian. Nations or NGOs that do not share your goals or your theories of gender or intersectionality are denounced. You even intend to impose quotas. A policy contrary to values of equality and meritocracy and which undermines the legitimacy of those it claims to promote. Faced with your vision, the ID group offers an alternative text. We renew our commitment to equality between men and women, their differences and their complementarity. We recall what should be the priorities of the European Union in terms of women's rights: the fight against domestic violence, the harassment but also the delinquency they suffer, the fight against the various human trafficking of which they are the first victims and which the European policy of strainer borders favors, the obtaining everywhere of equal pay for equal work and equal skills. Finally, European demography is at a dramatically low level. Member States should encourage the birth rate by increasing the financial value of the time spent by mothers who choose to educate their children. We don't want to impose on our daughters to become men like the others. Our goal is to guarantee women in Europe security, but also the freedom to choose their way of life according to their aspirations, sometimes different from those of men, but always legitimate.	Promoting equality in labour market  Promoting equality between men and women  Violence against women Problem of human trafficking  Freedom to choose one's life path  Women's right not to be like men
21/	The gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period - The EU Strategy for Gender Equality - Closing the digital gender gap: women's participation in the digital economy (debate)	Christine Anderson AfD - ID	This report seeks to highlight the idea that the small percentage of women involved in ICT / STEM is primarily due to 'gender stereotypes'. This reasoning is missing two crucial elements: Choice: Graphs and figures, don't tell a person's full story. If lack of self-confidence may play a part in the professional path taken by women, we can't overlook the fact that education and career are first of all the result of a personal choice, based upon preferences and competences. Forcing women to engage in career paths that they might not feel particularly interested in is counterproductive and anti-democratic. In addition, it is in contradiction with Article 15 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, which enshrines the freedom to choose an occupation and right to engage in work. Focus on sexual harassment: though cyber violence is addressed in Articles 28 through 31 of the report, it is overrun by ideology. The portion of articles suggests to combat cyber violence through 'comprehensive sexual and relationship education'. This is yet again a way of pushing for more 'gender ideology' under the guise of protecting women, and ultimately putting the needs of the digital labour market above women's choice of career.	Freedom to choose one's life path  Labour market inequalities justified by women's choice
10/02/21	Challenges ahead for women's rights: more than 25 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (debate)	Joachim Kuhs AfD - ID	Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen! Given the list of speakers, it seems an affront for a man to speak on women's rights. I do it anyway. Women often complain about a lack of freedom of choice between family and career, because it is really difficult to reconcile both. We must therefore support this freedom of choice. Incidentally, men like to tell how many children they have – women do not. Why actually? You shouldn't be ashamed of your motherhood. 25 years after Beijing, we should go back to what was really decided there: that gender means nothing other than the male and female sex in the social environment. If you, dear gender-moving colleagues, really want to stand up for women's rights, then simply take care of the 99% of women who know exactly when they get up in the morning that they are women and who don't want to choose one of the 66 genders. Just accept the biological differences between men and women and stop meddling with the Creator.	Women need/want to balance work & family life  Freedom to choose one's life path

09/06/21	Promoting gender equality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers (debate)	Christine Anderson AfD - ID	Mister President! Encouraging girls and women to decide on a career in the MINT profession is the right thing to do, and of course it is also helpful to look to female role models. The report contains some correct approaches, but also problematic ones. Prejudices, the gender gap, the underrepresentation of women and stereotypes are repeatedly mentioned as the obstacles that need to be removed. The report emphasizes the need to engage in dialogue with relevant interest groups and stakeholders to address the grievance of fewer women in STEM professions. Interestingly, the report lists all the actors and stakeholders here - all but the one it should be about: the women themselves. Throughout the report, countless reasons are lamented for women failing to succeed in business. All of these reasons are based solely on external factors over which women have absolutely no control. That is why politicians must now take resolute action, thereby underscoring the fatal image of women conveyed by this report as a weak, helpless victim. A 20-page report in which women are attested to their helpless situation does not fight stereotypes, but celebrates and manifests them. The fact that the women are not even asked shows very clearly that it is not about them at all. No, the chief ideologues are really concerned with the construction of a beautiful, new, colorful, CO2-neutral, gender-fair Tralala world in which people, just as they are, are just a nuisance. Please stop trying to shape people according to their delusional ideological ideas! Let's just be humans again!	Promoting equality in labour market
09/06/21	Promoting gender equality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers (debate)	Andrea Bocskor Fidesz - NI	Quality and inclusive education must play a fundamental role in increasing the participation of women in ICT and TTMM related fields and eliminating the gender disproportion in this field. Digital education also plays a positive role in improving digital skills and advancing the more intensive participation of women in the digital world. I welcome the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 and its action "Encouraging Women's Participation in TTMM". Research shows that girls make up only 36% of TTMM graduates in the EU, which it would be nice to increase it. The report contains many good and important findings, but there are also elements that I strongly reject, such as gender-based data collection, the EU strategy for social gender equality, the introduction of quotas for LGBTI women, etc. I think that women play a very important role in science. Dr. shows this well. Katalin Karikó is also an example, without whom the treatment of the Covid pandemic would be unthinkable now. Good teachers, a supportive and motivating environment contribute to the fact that more women enter the scientific career, because they are also greatly needed here, so I also encourage girls and women to dare to embark on this career.	Promoting equality in labour market
09/06/21	Promoting gender equality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers (debate)	Jadwiga Wiśniewska PiS - ECR	The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the crucial role that science, technology, engineering and mathematics play in today's world. Never before has the role of STEM professionals been so prominent. Unfortunately, only 2 out of 5 scientists or engineers are women. This disparity between women and men is worrying, as STEM careers are defined as the jobs of the future, driving innovation, social prosperity, inclusive growth and sustainable development. Therefore, increasing women's participation, removing barriers limiting women's interests and choices in the STEM sector is crucial. It is important to encourage women to take up STEM studies more widely and to develop careers in these fields. I agree with many parts of the report, but unfortunately there were some problematic issues that I could not support, such as gender-sensitive language, proposals for an anti-discrimination directive or a directive on women on boards, and even references to reproductive and sexual health and rights.	Promoting equality in labour market

23/06/21	Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health (debate)	Simona Baldassarre Lega - ID	Mr President, honourable colleagues, we are today talking about an ideological and divisive report. As shadow rapporteur, I am appalled that not a single one of the 60 amendments tabled by the ID group has been taken into consideration. Colleagues, ignoring a part of this Parliament on such sensitive issues means ignoring the millions of women who still feel free to think differently. Over 350,000 signatures have been collected from European citizens who wanted to deliver their "no" to the Matic report directly to the European Parliament and I am with them. We are faced with a text that proposes unthinkable things, such as that men can give birth or that gender should enter all schools in Europe. Furthermore, as a doctor, rather than as a politician, I consider the attack launched against conscientious objection which in Italy is even protected by the Constitution to be absurd! We are really tired of this ideological interference from Brussels and the Matic report is the culmination of it. I would like to appeal to the moderate forces in this Parliament to reiterate the vote by which they rejected the Estrella report on sexual and reproductive rights in 2013. Instead of thinking so much about abortions, let us try to understand the reasons which lead so many women to abort. What does the European Union do to help a young mother or a family in a difficult situation to avoid abortion? Truly protecting women means creating the conditions for them to choose life.	Freedom to choose one's life path
25/11/21	The International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women and the State of play on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention (debate)	Simona Baldassarre Lega - ID	Mr President, honourable colleagues, Commissioner, we women represent the engine of change, we are the ones who govern society, who carry on the family and, very often, we find ourselves having to divide ourselves between work and caring for the most fragile. Unfortunately, if we look at the latest official Eurostat data on femicides in Europe, in 2019 four women were killed a day, one woman every six hours, and one in three women has suffered physical or sexual violence at least once since the age of 15 years. We can only imagine how these numbers have worsened with the pandemic, with complaints soaring during the lockdown phases. In my country alone, Italy, since the beginning of 2021 we have had 57 victims of femicide. So we have a duty to report any attack on a woman whether physical, psychological, economic or online. Above all, we cannot forget the violence that is talked about less. I am thinking, for example, of the drama of the rented uterus, on which we have not been able to take a clear-cut position in this legislature. A violence based on the exploitation of myriads of women, forced to sell their bodies out of hunger, becoming mere tools to fulfill the selfishness of those who want to buy a child. This is the new slavery of the third millennium! Colleagues, on this international day for the elimination of violence against women, let us not limit ourselves to often ephemeral words, but let us all make a serious commitment together to act promptly to meet the real needs of European women. Women can really be the engine of the restart. I want to conclude today by recalling the words of Oriana Fallaci: "Being a woman is fascinating. It is an adventure that requires such courage, a challenge that never bores."	Violence against women  Women need/want to balance work & family life
13/12/21	Equality between women and men in the European Union in 2018-2020 (debate)	Annika Bruna FN - ID	Madam President, I really regret not being able to vote in favor of this text, not being able to support the proposals on gender equality which, if they were not used, should be able to win unanimous. Obviously, I support the objectives of "equal work, equal pay", better management of maternity leave, additional measures in the face of domestic violence or the fight against human trafficking. However, I regret certain excesses of this text when it explicitly condemns traditional family values, defends gender theory and condemns any opposition to these excesses. While I fully support women's equal access to the	Promoting equality in labour market  Violence against women Problem of human trafficking  Freedom to choose one's life path

			<p>labor market and to decision-making positions, I also regret that the role and choice of women who have decided to be stay-at-home mothers or to work part-time are devalued . For my part, I defend the free choice of women, to work, to undertake, to carry out the activities they wish, that is to say also to devote themselves more to their family if that is their choice. of life. I also note that, listing the threats to women in Europe, the text does not say a word about the threat caused by the spread of radical Islam or its consequences. Finally, the text calls for the European institutions to interfere in the organization of healthcare systems, in social policies, in educational policies and even in household taxation. So many fields of action which are by nature the competence of the Member States and which, for us, must imperatively remain so. It is above all this new federalist advance to which, by our vote, we blindly refuse to subscribe.</p>	<p>Women discriminated if choose family over career</p>
13/12/21	<p>Equality between women and men in the European Union in 2018-2020 (debate)</p>	<p>Lívía Járóka Fidesz - NI</p>	<p>Ms. President! The issue of gender equality is extremely important in the shadow of the Covid epidemic. We have regrettably experienced that the closures at the EU level and the economic stagnation only further increased the feeling of insecurity and thus also the differences between women and men. It is important for us to finally understand that the poorest, those exposed to poverty - and especially the Roma in Europe - start with a similarly cumulative disadvantage. There, in the case of women, believe me, these differences are even more striking, their proportion is more significant, and their problem is much more serious. We cannot turn a blind eye to the rights of the poorest women either. However, here, in this report, using the issue not as a goal, but rather as a means, I feel that they are trying to emphasize ideological elements - we are very far from a solution. Making these mandatory for the member states is, in my opinion, impermissible and exceeds the competence, as one colleague has already mentioned. Since 2010, we have achieved a lot of results in Hungary with the tax discount for mothers with many children or the unique family support system. Please follow these!</p>	<p>Problem of inequalities in the labour market</p> <p>Gender inequality persisting in Europe</p> <p>Women's poverty</p>
13/12/21	<p>Equality between women and men in the European Union in 2018-2020 (debate)</p>	<p>Beata Mazurek PiS - ECR</p>	<p>Madam President! Madam Commissioner! We will all agree in this Chamber that the inequalities that exist between women and men, both in social and professional life, must be effectively combated. Let's take a look at the gap in wage inequality, which has recently been slightly smaller, but still visible. Pay discrimination against women is one of the most serious obstacles to real gender equality. Bridging these differences is a task that should be a priority for the Member States. The issue of employment is similar, where in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic there are significant differences in the lack of work between men and women. Ladies and Gentlemen! Reducing the disparities I have mentioned can have a real impact on equality between women and men in the European Union. However, the question is whether the issues raised in the report, such as LGBT rights, legal abortion, reproductive and sexual health and rights, will lead to women earning as much as men or full parity in positions held. Personally, I don't think so. And a request to you, Commissioner, please do not fight Christmas, because it is absurd and nonsense. Please fight for equal pay for equal work for men and women.</p>	<p>Promoting equality in labour market</p> <p>Gender equality needs to be achieved in all areas</p> <p>Problem of inequalities in the labour market</p>
08/03/22	<p>EU Gender Action Plan III (debate)</p>	<p>Christine Anderson AfD - ID</p>	<p>Mr President, dear colleagues, the Gender Action Plan III report is full of big concepts and ideas, but we could break it down to the real and biggest issue: submitting the bodies of millions of poor women across the world to surrogacy, using their vulnerability to blackmail them into selling themselves off to the desires of clients from the most privileged parts of the world and then having the audacity to call it 'sexual rights'. Under the threat of taking away humanitarian aid, Members of</p>	<p>Gender stereotypes</p>

			<p>this House are ready to mould Third World countries into a copy of what they fantasise Europe to be, without any regard for the right to self-determination, especially the one of women they claim to defend. While insisting to be the home of human rights, embracing diversity – lifting it as a banner just to show the world how great we are – we are about to vote in favour of enslaving women from all over the world under the pretence of saving them from sexual violence. Yes indeed, we have lost all sense of shame. You claim you want to fight gender stereotypes, yet you are reinforcing those stereotypes by repeatedly referring to women as a vulnerable group. Please spare the women your hypocritical pity. Instead of empowering women to be strong and self-confident, you degrade them into helpless beings in dire need of the administration's help. Surely you couldn't be any more misogynistic than that. And here, too, for the record, out of the 705 Members of this House, only 17 are currently present. That is a shame in and of itself.</p>	
08/03/22	EU Gender Action Plan III (debate)	Margarita de la Pisa Carrión Vox - ECR	<p>Mr President, the European Union's external action in the fight against inequality cannot be based on ideological theories that undermine human identity: gender ideology is perverse, it degrades women, it pits us against men and it destroys the family and society. Third countries that need our support have the right to be respected in their identity and not to be contaminated with atrocities such as the promotion of abortion. It is manipulation, blackmail: exporting these theories corrupts their culture and traditions, as is happening here in Europe. We are in favour of the promotion of economic and social rights, of equality, of guaranteeing the autonomy of women and girls, but always respecting their essence and their greatness, never in opposition to men nor in a permanent conflict of the sexes: we make progress together, men and women, complementing each other. We denounce practices that denigrate the dignity of women, that affect their freedom. This action plan does not show this concern. Let us pass on all the good things that our European cultural heritage has left us, let us not deprive them of the wisdom of our roots in Christian humanism.</p>	<p>Promoting equality between men and women</p> <p>Problem of lack of dignity and freedom for women</p>
19/10/22	Fighting sexualised violence - The importance of the Istanbul Convention and a comprehensive proposal for a directive against gender-based violence (debate)	Margarita de la Pisa Carrión Vox - ECR	<p>Madam President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the fact that someone calls himself a defender of women does not mean that he is. Look at the results. Faced with the drama of violence, let's analyze the causes: alcoholism, addictions, affective disorders, hedonism... Radical cultural ideas that denigrate women. To foster respect we have to educate in virtues, build healthy and orderly ties, not hypersexualize society or objectify people. Gender ideology stigmatizes and criminalizes men in a general way. It is an unfair topic that destroys real equality between men and women, and causes fear and mistrust. And, furthermore, it prevents the real aggressors from being recognized. Whoever commits these acts must be prosecuted, not go unpunished, so that he cannot return to being a threat to its victims. Women in this situation need social services that get involved, that give them real solutions: deep, psychological, affective, and spiritual support, according to their specific needs. Resources today are lost along the way financing associations and activist NGOs that do not help and, instead, do generate social confrontation. Many times, attention to women is limited to offering them the inhuman resource of abortion. Ideological laws, such as the so-called "yes is yes" in Spain, far from protecting women, are distorting criminal types and devaluing penalties. This who protects is not the woman, but the real aggressors.</p>	<p>Violence against women</p> <p>Tackling violence against women</p>

14/02/23	The EU priorities for the 67th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)	Margarita de la Pisa Carrión Vox - ECR	Mr President, Madam Commissioner, colleagues, for yet another year, the Commission on the Legal and Social Condition of Women closes its eyes to the reality of women and continues like a steamroller with its established agenda. Last year: climate change and gender equality. This year: digitization and gender equality. Next up: gender equality achievements. There is a permanent effort to promote gender ideology. Meanwhile, there are women in the world who still do not have their dignity as people recognized and are prohibited from occupying their space in public life. It is happening today in Iran. Women are killed for showing a lock of hair. This does not seem to be of interest to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, or at least not its priority. On the other hand, it is true to treat anything with a gender perspective, when this focus on any subject distorts the objective meaning. Many women – those who want to – already play an indispensable role in the field of science, technology and innovation. Let us guarantee equal opportunities, ensuring the right to a quality education that allows our children to choose their path.	Promoting equality in labour market  Problem of lack of dignity and freedom for women  Freedom to choose one's life path
14/02/23	The EU priorities for the 67th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (debate)	Annika Bruna FN - ID	Mr President, in this resolution I am sorry to see that you have obscured certain priorities for women. The text that we are going to vote on is partly disconnected from the daily life that women and young girls now live. Indeed, not a word about the increase in insecurity in Europe, street harassment or radical Islam, factors aggravated by massive and uncontrolled immigration. Nor does the resolution mention the difficult working conditions of professions with a high proportion of women in certain sectors, such as care or education, the precariousness of certain mothers or the complex work-life balance of family. At a time when, in France, Emmanuel Macron, under pressure from the European Union, is trying to reform the pension system, no solution is proposed to boost the birth rate of European women. With the ID group, we tabled an alternative resolution, which takes up the major issues for women. But, like every year, it will certainly not be put to the vote. It is clear that you are often perhaps more attached to putting the gender perspective in all the policies of the European Union rather than tackling certain crucial issues.	Problem of inequalities in the labour market  Violence against women  Women need/want to balance work & family life
30/03/23	Strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women (debate)	Ádám Kósa Fidesz - NI	President! It is an indisputable goal that in the world of work, full equality of women and men must also be ensured in terms of their salaries. However, this draft policy lost sight of that goal by forcing issues brought into vogue by a liberal mainstream. What is worst is that the draft directive wants to rewrite the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union with stealth legislation, completely illegally. I will not give my name to this illegality. We have been working for decades to ensure that women receive the same wages as men. When we finally reach this goal, we will wake up to the fact that the debate is no longer about equal pay, but whether men are men and women are women. This is ridiculous and absurd. We are legislators. The voters entrusted us with eliminating the pay gap between men and women. That's what we have to deal with, nothing else.	Problem of inequalities in the labour market