



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Addressing Gender Employment Inequalities: The Effectiveness of the European Employment Strategy in influencing Dutch Employment Policies

Struik, Laura

Citation

Struik, L. (2024). *Addressing Gender Employment Inequalities: The Effectiveness of the European Employment Strategy in influencing Dutch Employment Policies*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [License to inclusion and publication of a Bachelor or Master Thesis, 2023](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3728212>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Addressing Gender Employment Inequalities:
The Effectiveness of the European Employment Strategy in influencing
Dutch Employment Policies



Universiteit Leiden

L.A. Struik, s1620088

MSc Public Administration: International and European Governance

Leiden University

Supervisor: Dr. R. de Ruiter

05 January 2024

Abstract

Gender employment inequalities remain a constant issue in the European Union (EU), including the Netherlands. Gender equality in Dutch employment policies can be measured by focusing on three gender equality indicators: the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap, and the regulation of childcare. While these indicators are mostly of national concern, the EU has created the ability to regulate these topics via the European Employment Strategy (EES). The EES is a regulatory mechanism that follows the principles of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and is implemented in the European Semester (ES) process. This research answers the following research question: To what extent has the EU been successful in mobilizing the Dutch government and Dutch parliament to address gender equality issues in employment policies, and how can this be explained? By conducting a frame analysis on documents published within the ES process, as well as analysing the minutes from plenary debates and two committee debates of the Dutch parliament, this research finds that the EU has not succeeded in mobilizing the Dutch government and parliament. This was caused by the underdevelopment of one frame, the underutilization of both frames, and the good performances of the Netherlands compared to other EU Member States.

Table of Contents

1.	<u>Introduction</u>	5
2.	<u>Background</u>	9
	2.1. <u>The Gender Pay Gap in the Netherlands: Definition, Statistics and Causes</u>	9
	2.2. <u>The Gender Employment Gap in the Netherlands:</u>	
	<u>Definition, Statistics and Causes</u>	13
	2.3. <u>Formal Childcare in the Netherlands: Definition and Relevance</u>	17
	2.4. <u>Consequences of Gender Inequality in the Employment Field</u>	18
3.	<u>Literature Review</u>	20
	3.1. <u>The Open Method of Coordination, the European Employment Strategy and the European Semester</u>	20
	3.2. <u>Frame Analysis</u>	24
	3.2.1. <u>The Identification of the Collective Action Frame</u>	24
	3.2.2. <u>Analysing the Effectiveness of the Collective Action Frame</u>	25
	3.3. <u>The Role of the Dutch Parliament in the European Employment Strategy</u>	30
4.	<u>Case Selection, Methods of Data Collection and Analysis</u>	34
	4.1. <u>Case Selection</u>	34
	4.2. <u>Methods of Data Selection</u>	36
	4.3. <u>Data Analysis</u>	38
	4.4. <u>Limitations</u>	41
5.	<u>Results</u>	43
	5.1. <u>Collective Action Frame Identification</u>	43
	5.1.1. <u>Collective Action Frame 1: Gender Employment Gap and Childcare</u>	44
	5.1.2. <u>Collective Action Frame 2: Gender Pay Gap</u>	47
	5.2. <u>The Mobilization Effect: The Dutch Government</u>	50

5.2.1. Collective Action Frame 1: Gender Employment Gap and Childcare	50
5.2.2. Collective Action Frame 2: Gender Pay Gap	54
5.3. The Mobilization Effect: The Dutch Parliament	56
5.3.1. Discussions in Plenary Debates	57
5.3.2. Discussions in the Committee of European Affairs	59
5.3.3. Discussions in the Committee of Social Affairs and Employment	59
6. Discussion and Conclusion	63
7. Bibliography	69
Appendix 1: Overview of Expectations and Methodology	83

1. Introduction

Female labour participation and women's earnings were recent topics of national debate in the Netherlands, and was repeatedly highlighted in the media. In November 2022, for example, the gender pay gap became a topic of discussion when a female employee working for a Dutch retail company found out that she earned €1000 per month less than her male colleague, despite the fact that the female employee had more experience (De Witte, 2022). The difference in salary between men and women is also addressed annually on Equal Pay Day (European Commission, n.d.b.). Furthermore, the Dutch government started a campaign in March 2023 to address female labour market participation, aimed at stimulating Dutch women to increase their worked hours in paid employment (Mees, 2023). Earlier that year, Lynn Berger, a journalist from the Correspondent, published an opinionated essay on this topic, titled: "I already work (I just don't get paid for it)" (original title: "Ik werk al (ik krijg er alleen niet voor betaald)"). In her book, she claimed that many part-time working women in the Netherlands actually work full time due to maintaining the household, childcare or long-term care of family members. Consequently, the author tried to debunk the idea that Dutch women only relax besides their part-time job (Berger, 2023). Childcare regulations have gained increased attention over the years as well, as the Dutch government has opted to make formal childcare completely free in order to stimulate women to increase their paid hours worked (*Klimaat, kinderopvang, hoger minimumloon*, 2021).

These are examples that show the presence of a gender employment gap and gender pay gap in the Netherlands, as well as the importance of childcare regulations, that cause inequalities in the labour market for women. Dutch women are the 'European champions' in working part-time: 78 percent of the female workforce in the Netherlands worked part-time in 2021 (The World Bank, 2022). This high percentage became increasingly problematic from 2022 onwards, as the Dutch labour market continued to struggle with a high personnel shortage

(Klein, 2022). Furthermore, 62.4 percent of the Dutch women had paid employment compared to 71.3 percent of the Dutch men in 2021, resulting in a gender employment gap of 8.9 percent (International Labour Organization, 2021). The gender pay gap in the Netherlands is also resilient: on average, Dutch females earn 13 percent less than their male counterparts (Women Inc., 2022).

The European Union (EU) has made many efforts to address the gender employment gaps and gender pay gaps in its Member States, including the Netherlands. The two gaps can be addressed and regulated via employment policies. Although employment policies are mostly of national concern, the EU can deliver suggestions of improvement via the European Employment Strategy (EES). The EES is regulated via a soft law mechanism called the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The OMC relies on creating benchmarks and best practices for the EU's Member States, as opposed to hard laws that rely on punishments in case of non-compliance (EUR-Lex, n.d.). As a result, the EU has only little direct power in the field of employment policies and has to rely on the willingness of Member States to implement the recommendations that the European Commission (EC) makes. This is why the EC needs to convincingly formulate their concerns, in order for the Member States to address them on the national level. One way of analysing this, is by using the theory of framing.

Based on this topic, a number of gaps in the literature were identified. Firstly, academics have paid much attention to the influence of the EU in social policy fields and the effectiveness of the OMC in its starting years (López-Santana, 2006; Trube & Trubek, 2007; Kantola, 2010; Tholoniati, 2010; Ahrens, 2019). However, after the merger of the EES in the European Semester (ES) in 2011, the scholarly attention has faded to some extent. This is presumably because of two reasons: the ES is a new and larger mechanism that includes a combination of hard and soft law and has resulted in a focus shift in the academic literature, and the term OMC is no longer used since its merger. Secondly, a specific focus on the way in which the gender

employment gap, gender pay gap, and the regulation of childcare have been used by the EU to create policy change has been underexamined. While Tomlinson (2011) examined the effect of the OMC on two national governments based on these three gender equality indicators, this research was done prior to the implementation of the EES into the ES. Furthermore, the research was not applied to the Netherlands. This is why this research aims to update the literature on the effectiveness of the EES, by focusing specifically on the gender aspects of this soft law mechanism. Given the fact that the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap, and childcare regulations have played a prominent role in the Netherlands in the past decade, this country would be an interesting subject of research.

In all, this research answers the following research question: To what extent has the EU been successful in mobilizing the Dutch government and Dutch parliament to address gender equality issues in employment policies, and how can this be explained? In order to answer this question, the analysis of this research is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the identification of the collective action frames that the EU has created to address the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap and the regulation of childcare policies, and how the EU uses these frames to make recommendations aimed at mobilizing the Dutch government. These frames are sought for in the EU's Joint Employment Reports (JERs), Council Conclusions (CCs), Country Reports (CRs), and Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs), all published between 2011 and 2020. The second part of the analysis focuses on whether the Netherlands uses these frames in the annual National Reform Plans (NRPs), published between 2011 and 2020. Finally, the third part focuses on the mobilization effect on the Dutch parliament between 2011 and 2020, by analysing the minutes from plenary debates, the debates of the European Affairs committee, and the debates of the Social Affairs and Employment committee.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter two gives background information on three gender equality indicators in the Netherlands. Like in Tomlinson's article (2011), this

research focuses on the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap and the regulation of childcare policies. Chapter three is a literature review that focuses on three topics: the workings of the OMC, the EES, and its collective merger into the ES; an in-depth overview of the literature on conducting a frame analysis, including the literature on the identification of a collective action frame and how to analyse its effectiveness; and finally, an overview on the importance of parliamentary participation in the EES, with a specific focus on the Dutch parliament. Chapter four addresses the case selection, the methods of data collection and the analysis of the data. Chapter five includes the results of the analysis. Finally, the conclusion answers the overall research question of this thesis.

2. Background

This background chapter is focused on explaining three gender inequality indicators in relation to employment policies in the Netherlands. Like in Tomlinson's article (2011), this research focuses on the gender pay gap, the gender employment gap, and childcare. The chapter defines the issues, shows how the issues are visible in the EU and the Netherlands by using statistics from 2011 until 2020, and provides potential causes for its occurrence. In all, this chapter justifies why research on gender (in)equality in EU employment policies is (still) necessary.

2.1. The Gender Pay Gap in the Netherlands: Definition, Statistics, and Causes

The gender pay gap can be defined from a judicial or an economic perspective (Tijdens and Van Klaveren, 2011). The judicial term follows the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, which means that men and women must earn the same salary if they perform the same or comparable tasks in their jobs. This definition is also known as the corrected pay gap, as it takes factors into consideration that contribute to the extent of the gender pay gap. Such factors include differences in educational level, experience, and age (Tijdens and Van Klaveren, 2011). Based on official EU statistics, however, it can be concluded that the EU follows the economic definition of the gender pay gap. This definition is also known as the uncorrected pay gap and is defined as “the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees and of female paid employees as a percentage of average gross hourly earnings of male paid employees” (Eurostat: Data Browser, 2023c). Because the EU's statistics are based on the economic definition or uncorrected gender pay gap, this research uses this definition as well.

The most recent statistics showed that the gender pay gap in the Netherlands was still 13.7% in 2021 (Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History, 2021). This is an average percentage, since the gender pay gap is higher in the private sector compared to the public sector (*Man-vrouwloonverschil*, 2022). The average uncorrected gender pay gap in the private sector

between 2011 and 2020 in the EU and the Netherlands can be found in Figure 1. The average corrected gender pay gap in the same period could not be found, yet it is expected that these percentages were lower than the uncorrected gap. Statistics for the public sector are not included either, as the EU only considers companies with ten or more employees (Eurostat: Data Browser, 2023c).

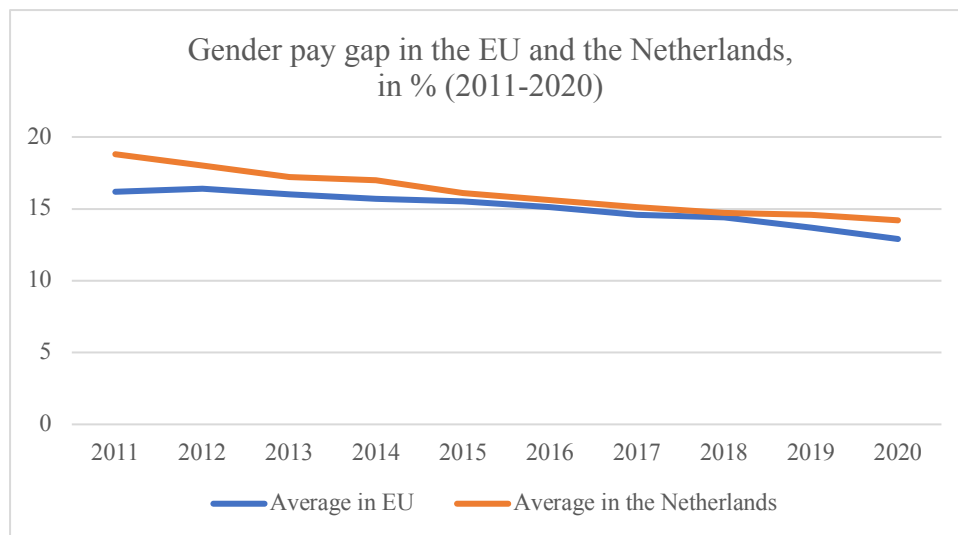


Figure 1: Average Gender Pay Gap in the EU and the Netherlands (2011-2020) (source: Eurostat: Data Browser, 2023c).

The gender pay gap has been studied extensively, and most research has been focused on the judicial and uncorrected gender pay gap. This is because the corrected gender pay gap searches for reasons that explain the gender pay gap. However, the literature that is focused specifically on the existence of the gender pay gap in the Netherlands is scarce. Scholars have found a number of causes for the existence and perseverance of the gender pay gap. Tijdens and Van Klaveren (2011), for example, gave an overview of twenty papers written between 1995 and 2008, that each analysed a possible cause for the gender pay gap. A total of nine possible causal groups could be identified: “1. Human capital; 2. Sector, collective employment agreement (Dutch: *CAO*) and remuneration policy; 3. Job classification; 4. Job level, managerial roles and hierarchical structures; 5. The glass ceiling; 6. Company size; 7. Contract

length; 8. Gender-composition of the profession and workspace; 9. Family composition and career breaks.” (Tijdens & van Klaveren, 2011, p. 31). Before analyzing the articles, Tijdens and van Klaveren explained that data from the Equal Treatment Commission (Dutch: ‘*Commissie Gelijke Behandeling (CGB)*’) showed that discrimination did not play a significant role in explaining the gender pay gap. Rather, based on the analysed articles, they found that it was more beneficial for women working in the public sector compared to private, that the gender pay gap increases once hierarchy increases, and that female-dominated professions are less profitable than male-dominated professions. The private sphere also affected the gender pay gap: family expansions, career breaks and the re-entrance in the labour market were all disadvantageous for female wages (Tijdens & van Klaveren, 2011, pp. 28-29). Due to methodological differences between the twenty articles, however, it was not possible to rank the causes from most to least contributable to the gender pay gap.

Fransen et al. (2012) have also identified a number of causes for its existence and perseverance in the Netherlands. In their research, they questioned what caused the persistent gender pay gap in the Netherlands, despite earlier efforts to improve the human capital of women, e.g. increasing education levels and work experience (Fransen et al., 2012, p. 4343). Although not discussed in their article, it could be that these earlier efforts referred to the government campaign titled “A smart girl is prepared for her future” (Dutch: “*Een slimme meid is op haar toekomst voorbereid*”), aimed at stimulating young women to follow higher education. In their research, they focused on the difference in “education, life time patterns (age and experience) and [...] job and sector-characteristics” between men and women over the course of ten years (1996-2006). Women had improved their human capital in those ten years: they had obtained a higher education compared to ten years earlier, and they had increased their work experience (Fransen et al., 2012, p. 4347). Hence, the authors searched for different causes of the persistent pay gap in the Netherlands, and they found that the gap could be attributed to

the difference in job and sector-characteristics between men and women. They pointed towards two causes: women were underrepresented in “higher level jobs with supervising tasks” (Fransen et al., 2012, p. 4353) and there was an “unequal distribution of men and women over the different sectors”, whereby “male dominated sectors are paid at a higher level than female dominated sectors” (Fransen et al., 2012, p. 4352).

This is in line with findings by De Ruijter et al. (2003), who found that employees in female-dominated sectors earn, on average, 9 percent less compared to employees in male-dominated sectors. Interestingly, there were no wage differences between men and women working in female-dominated sectors. To some degree, the wage differences were caused by employees in female-dominant sectors possessing “less human capital than the workers in male-dominated occupations,” resulting in lower wages in female-dominated sectors (known as the Human Capital Theory) (De Ruijter et al., 2003, p. 355). However, the main cause for differences between male- and female-dominated sectors was the underappreciation of female-dominant occupations (known as the Comparable Worth or Gender Bias theory), with greater differences in “occupations of high worth, i.e. occupations that require relatively high levels of education, skill, and responsibility” (De Ruijter et al., 2003, p. 356).

While the literature on the gender pay gap in the Netherlands deserves an update, the statistics shown earlier indicate that not much has changed in the past decade. On average, women are now higher educated than men (*Al 23 jaar op rij*, 2023). Yet, this is not reflected in the salaries of women, as the statistics showed that the gender pay gap has only decreased slightly between 2011 and 2020. Furthermore, women continue to work in sectors that have lower wages, such as education and healthcare (European Parliament, 2023).

2.2. The Gender Employment Gap in the Netherlands: Definition, Statistics and Causes

The EU uses the following definition for the gender employment gap: “the difference between the employment rates of men and women aged 20-64” (Eurostat: Data Browser, 2023b). This research follows the same definition.

The gender employment gap in the Netherlands was 8.9% in 2021, and therefore lower than the average employment gap measured in the EU. However, the differentiation in gender between part-time and full-time employment is more remarkable: with a percentage of 74% in 2018, the Netherlands was the Member State with the highest number of women in part-time employment, compared to 23% of the Dutch men. Compared to the average percentage of people working part-time across EU Member States, which was 30% for women and 8% for men, the percentage of women working part-time in the Netherlands is extremely high.

Figure 2 shows a comparison between the average gender employment gap in the EU and in the Netherlands between 2011 and 2020. The figure shows that the Netherlands has always had a gender gap lower than the EU average during this period. Furthermore, the gap has decreased more rapidly from 2016 onwards compared to the EU average.

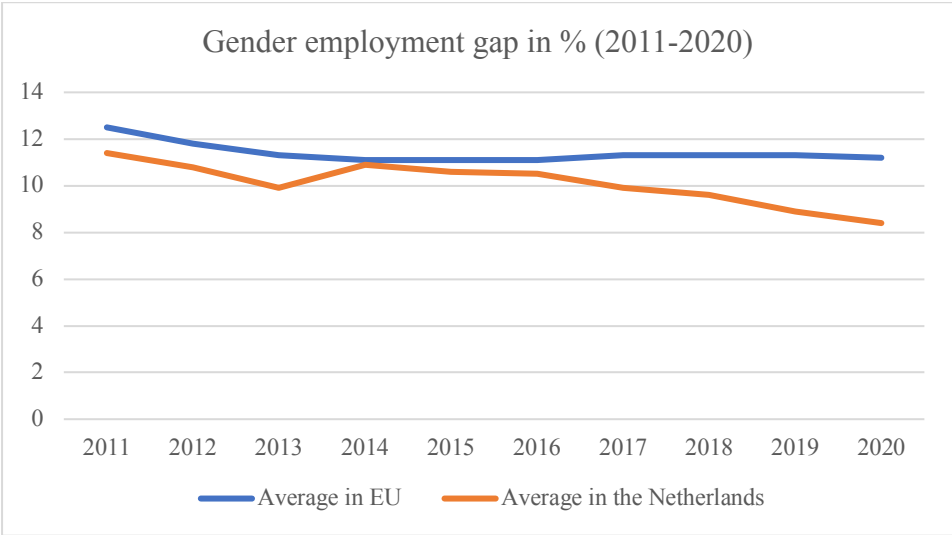


Figure 2: Average Gender Employment Gap in the EU and the Netherlands (2011-2020) (source: Eurostat: Data Browser, 2023b)

Consequently, figure 3 shows the average percentage of men and women working part-time and full time in the same time period. During this period, the employment rates for both genders have increased in the EU, as well as in the Netherlands.

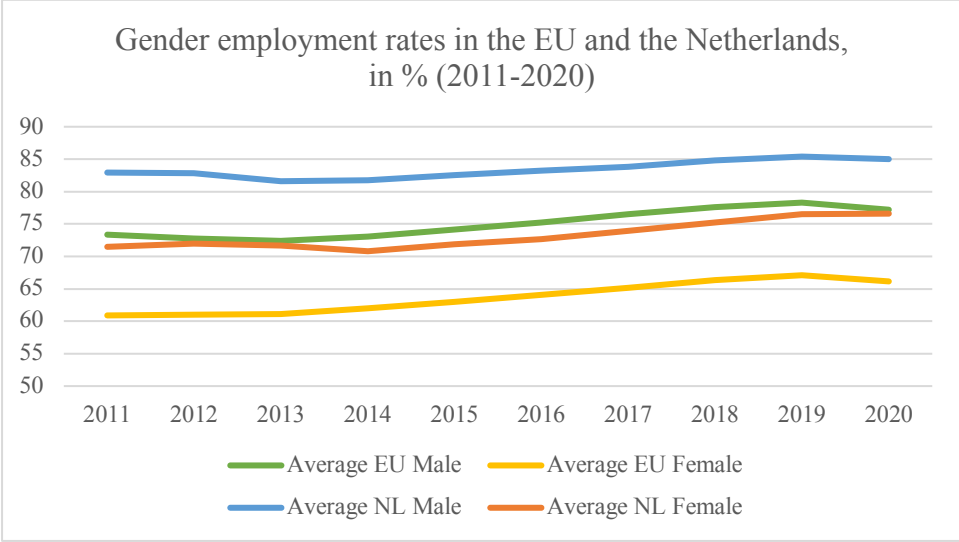


Figure 3: Average Gender Employment Rates in the EU and the Netherlands (2011-2020) (source: Eurostat: Data Browser, 2023a)

Finally, figure 4 shows the gender division in part-time and full-time employment in the Netherlands between 2013 and 2020. Data from 2011 and 2012 were unavailable. The employment rates of both genders have hardly changed during this time period.

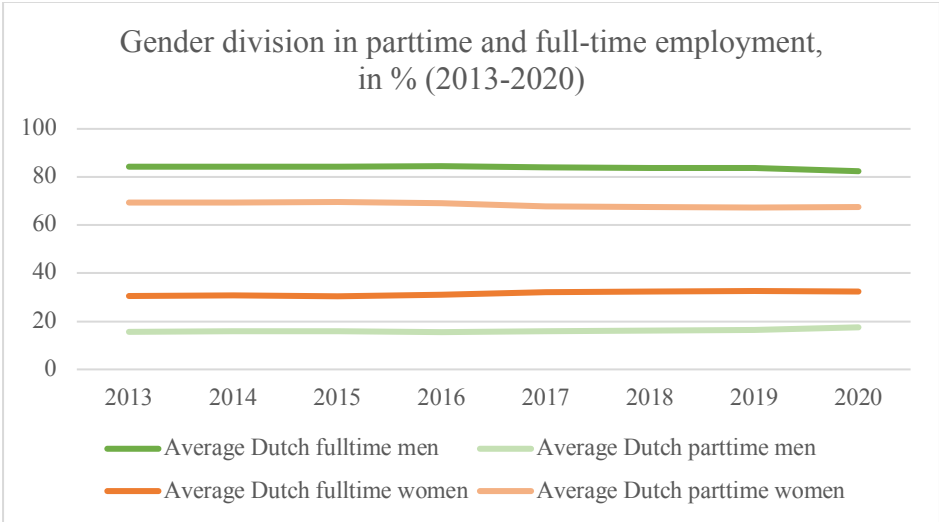


Figure 4: Gender Division in Part-time and Full-time Employment (2013-2020) (Source: Arbeidsdeelname; kerncijfers, 2022)

The figures show that the Netherlands has a high employment rate for both men and women. More remarkable, however, is the high rate of female part-time employment in the Netherlands. Most research has focused on this occurrence. Visser et al. (2009), for example, focused on the development of part-time employment in the Netherlands and gave three concurring reasons for its rising popularity: a spontaneous, institutional/normative, and legal process. Ultimately, these processes reinforced one another. The spontaneous process entailed the growing participation of Dutch women in the labour market, partially caused by institutional/normative processes such as the ending of forcibly terminating the employment of married women in 1975, and the gradual acceptance of working mothers. As a result, there was a steady increase in female employment from 1973 onwards (Visser et al., 2009). Another institutional/normative process was the 1982 Wassenaar Agreement and its aim to collectively reduce working hours due to a recession and high unemployment rates. Although the Agreement only partially succeeded in doing this, “the demand for flexibility and part-time jobs rose as an unintended consequence of the campaign for reduced working hours.” (Visser et al., 2009, p. 198). Finally, the legal process ensured further normalization of part-time employment and ensured equality between part-time and full-time employees, which finalized the normalization process of part-time employment in the Netherlands and created “a part-time economy” in the country (Visser et al., 2009, p. 215). However, despite the legal measures being applicable to both men and women, the majority of the part-time working population remained female.

The popularity of part-time employment amongst women can be explained by the idea of a male breadwinner and a female carer for household and children, which is in line with the gender regime of the Netherlands: the country has a conservative welfare state, which means that “social rights are linked to class and status [and is] combined with the maintenance of the traditional family [which] results in specific gendered patterns” (Kantola, 2010, p. 8). After 1975, women slowly started to enter the labour market again, despite marriage and children.

Nevertheless, it primarily remained the women's task to ensure that the household and children were taken care of.

There are a number of pros and cons to the ability of working part-time, although the cons outweigh the pros to a large extent. A pro to working part-time can be the ability to combine paid employment with caregiving tasks, e.g. when the person in question is a parent that needs to take care of (small) children. This is in line with the prevailing gender regime of the country (Kantola, 2010). Nevertheless, there are a number of cons to working part-time as well. The OECD report on working gender and working part-time in the Netherlands lists a number of them:

part-time jobs are *disproportionately held by women*, with *negative effects on gender equality at home and in the labour market*. Part-time work is often associated with *slower career progression, lower earnings, lower earnings-related pensions*, and, in many countries, *lower job quality* than that experienced by full-time workers. (OECD, 2019, p. 3. Stress added)

Another important con is the fact that, as a result of the high part-time employment rate amongst women, 1 in 6 women living in the Netherlands is not financially independent and thus has to rely on her partner or governmental funds for financial support (Government of the Netherlands, n.d.).

Because of continuous labour shortages in the Netherlands, the Dutch government started a national campaign in 2023 aimed at stimulating women to work more hours: 'Do you want to work more? Let it show' (Dutch: '*Wil je meer werken? Laat het merken!*') (Mees, 2023). The campaign is reminiscent of a similar campaign that aired in 1989 in the Netherlands discussed

earlier, called ‘A smart girl is prepared for her future’ (Dutch: *‘Een slimme meid is op haar toekomst voorbereid’*).

2.3. Formal Childcare in the Netherlands: Definition and Relevance

At first sight, stating that the regulation of childcare is an indicator of gender inequality in the Dutch employment sector seems remarkable: after all, it can be argued that formal childcare arrangements predominantly affect the gender employment gap. Yet, this research analyses Dutch childcare policies as a separate category, because of the close relationship between parenthood and female part-time employment in the Netherlands. Ultimately, high female part-time employment rates also affect the gender pay gap. The relationship between childcare and employment policies is mostly concerned with the combination of childcare and paid employment. Ultimately, the availability of formal childcare arrangements could improve this relationship.

There has been an overall consensus in the Netherlands that good formal childcare arrangements can increase the participation rates of women in paid employment. Yerkes (2011) dedicated a chapter in her book on the development of the childcare system in the Netherlands until 2010. Before 1995, there were no childcare policies put in place in the Netherlands and there was a heavy reliance on informal care: children were supposed to be taken care of by a parent (predominantly the mother) or other relatives. This article argued that multiple factors resulted in a shift towards more reliance on formal childcare, caused by a common actor orientation. This resulted in a mutual agreement amongst the actors involved that childcare affected female labour market participation and, according to the author, could be perceived as a social risk (Yerkes, 2011). An increase in female labour market participation was necessary because of an increase in demand for part-time employers (a position mostly popular amongst women) and labour shortages in female-dominated sectors, such as education and healthcare, in the near future. The government hoped that the social partners would independently put

childcare policies in place, but this failed. As a result, the government helped to regulate childcare policies by creating a system that partially financed formal childcare arrangements (Yerkes, 2011).

The stance on the relation between formal childcare arrangements and female participation rates has hardly changed since then. More recently, the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion created a policy brief in 2018, in which was stated that “high participation rates in formal childcare settings are not a prerequisite for high levels of female labour market participation”, but “lack of or limited formal childcare options can have negative consequence for female career development” (Janta, 2014, p. 2). Currently, the Netherlands is planning on changing the subsidy policies of formal childcare arrangements. At the end of 2021, the Dutch government announced to reimburse 95 percent of the costs for day care centres from 2025 onwards, with the aim of making day care centres completely free in the future (*Klimaat, kinderopvang, hoger minimumloon*, 2021). Yet, these plans have been postponed until 2027 because of budgetary cuts and personnel shortages in the formal childcare sector (*Gratis kinderopvang wordt twee jaar uitgesteld*, 2023). Nevertheless, it shows that the Dutch government still perceives formal childcare as an important factor for female labour participation in the Netherlands.

2.4. Consequences of Gender Inequality in the Employment Field

It is difficult to discuss the negative consequences of the gender gaps and insufficient childcare policies separately, because each element is related to each other: insufficient childcare policies partially cause the gender employment gap, and the gender pay gap is partially attributable to the existence of a gender employment gap. Because of this, the negative consequences of the three gender inequality indicators are discussed simultaneously in this section.

The presence of the three gender inequality indicators has negative economic consequences, as the three indicators affects the national GDP of EU Member States: while closing the gender pay gap would result in maximum increase in GDP per capita of 0.2% by 2050, closing the gender employment gap would result in a maximum increase in GDP per capita of 5.5% by 2050 (European Institute of Gender Equality, n.d.). Within the work sphere, the three indicators result in an unequal treatment between male and female employers in general: it results in less job opportunities for women, particularly in managerial or leadership positions (Eurostat, 2021). It also results in less diversity within companies in general. Furthermore, it causes inequality in the familial sphere, as the three indicators increase the chances of women becoming financially dependent on either their partner or the national government (Government of the Netherlands, n.d.). This dependence could continue after retirement, as the Netherlands also has a major gender pension gap: in 2021, the pension benefit of Dutch women was forty percent less compared to Dutch men (Geurts, 2021).

In all, it is evident that the gender pay gap, the gender employment gap, and childcare policies are ongoing issues in the Netherlands, that make it difficult to reach full equality between men and women in terms of employment. The statistics showed that the gender employment gap and gender pay gap have not changed significantly in the past decade. The question remains what actions the EU has taken to combat these inequality issues, which is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

3. Literature Review

This literature review is centred around three main goals. The first goal of this literature review is to give a thorough understanding of the workings of the EES and its success as a soft law mechanism. The second goal is to outline the literature on framing and the elements of a frame analysis, with a specific focus on its role in addressing gender employment issues. This information is used for the frame analysis of this research, done in chapter five. The final goal is to give a better understanding of the role of the Dutch parliament in the ES process. As the EU and the Dutch government are the primary actors in the creation of official documents in the ES process for the Netherlands, it raises questions of democratic accountability on the Dutch national level. These goals lead to a better understanding of the workings of the EES on the international and national level and lead to the identification of expectations that help support the analysis in chapter five and, ultimately, to answer the research question.

3.1. The Open Method of Coordination, The European Employment Strategy and the European Semester

With its principle of gender mainstreaming, the EU aims to uphold gender equality in all of its policy fields (Council of Europe, n.d.). This includes the social policy field, known as the field of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (European Commission, n.d.a.). The ES is embedded in this policy field. The ES was created in 2011, after the financial crisis had shown that the EU needed a better framework for the coordination of its economic policies (European Commission, n.d.c.). From a gendered perspective, the Semester is used to track “gender equality in context of labour market [and] social inclusion” in general (European Commission, 2020b).

For the purpose of this research, the most important policy instrument of the ES is the EES. The EES originates from the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 and focuses on “making the

European labour markets the most productive and competitive in the world” (Kantola, 2010, p. 141). From 2011 onwards, the EES has been part of the ES (EUR-Lex, 2017a). The EES is regulated via the OMC, which explains why the EES was referred to as the Employment OMC in its starting years. The OMC is a regulatory process that includes achievable goals and guidelines created by EU institutions, as well as benchmarking processes between EU Member States (EUR-Lex, n.d.). With these processes, the OMC can also make Member States aware of possible policy improvements on their national level. The OMC was introduced in the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 and fell under the Lisbon Strategy from 2000 onwards (EUR-Lex, 2017b).

The procedure of the EES is captured in the Employment Title of The Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), specifically Article 148. The process starts when the European Commission (EC) creates a Draft Employment Report (JER), after which it is sent to the Council of the EU and the European Council. When the Draft JER is accepted by these institutions, a final JER is sent to the Member States. Consequently, the Council and the EC create CRs and CSRs for each Member State. CSRs are adopted in two Councils: the Economic and Financial Affairs Council, and the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (Dawson, 2018). In turn, all Member States create a National Reform Program (NRP) based on the recommendations made in the CSRs, which are sent back to the Council and the EC. The NRPs reply to the recommendations made in the previous Semester cycle. From then on, it is up to the Member States to follow up on their NRPs and the recommendations made by the EU bodies. This cycle is repeated each year (EUR-Lex, 2016; General Secretariat of the Council, 2023).

Since its creation, the EU has applied the OMC process in a number of policy fields, including employment, social policies and education. While the OMC processes rely on beforementioned elements, the precise process is dependent on the field in which the OMC is

applied (Smismans, 2004). Since 2011, the EES has been implemented in the ES (EUR-LEX, 2017a) and the process is no longer referred to as the Employment OMC. The ES process between 2011 and 2020 was centred on reaching the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy and has integrated a social scoreboard within its process. The scoreboard has changed over the course of these ten years, by including social indicators that were aligned with the goals of the European Pillar of Social Rights. These changes were integrated into the ES process from 2018 onwards (European Commission, 2021). Each gender equality indicator is embedded within the social indicators and the Pillar.

Both the EES and the OMC are known as soft law mechanisms. During the 1980s, the EU experienced an increase in the importance of soft law measures (Kantola, 2010). Soft law distinguishes from hard law in that in the latter case, the European Court of Justice can hold the non-compliers accountable. Soft law does not have this option, which lead to many scholars questioning the effectiveness of soft law mechanisms in ensuring policy change. López-Santana (2006) explained in her article that, while soft law does not necessarily lead to changes in legislation, this does not mean that it is not working: it can, for instance, ensure that policy problems become part of the national agenda. Furthermore, soft law mechanisms are necessary because the EU does not have full competences in all of its policy fields and can thus not rely on hard law (EUR-Lex, 2022). Although hard and soft law are separate types of law, research has shown that they also complement each other in some gender-related policy fields. Trubek and Trubek (2007), for example, explained how hard law and soft law, together with the European Structural Funds, work in a complementary manner in order to create equality in the workplace. Ahrens (2019) showed in her research that the EC can even prefer soft law over hard law. By taking the gender equality programmes between 1982 and 2019 as an example, she showed that the EC, as an agenda-setter of gender equality issues, has the ability to choose between hard and soft law to address these issues accordingly without other EU bodies

intervening. Soft law can then be preferred by the EC, because it also affects Member States hesitant of accepting hard law (Ahrens, 2019).

Since Member States cannot be forced to comply with the policy suggestions made via an OMC process, Tholoniati (2010) measured the extent of the OMC's success from a political sociology perspective. In his research, he focused on two OMC processes: the EES and the Lisbon Agenda, as well as their development. He showed the change that both processes endured in three stages: the experimental stage, the streamlining stage, and the maturity stage. Although the OMC is at risk of the 'soft law dilemma', thereby referring to a "balance between activism and predictability" that needs to be present, Tholoniati was overall positive about the OMCs and their development (Tholoniati, 2010, p. 111). Overall, he concluded that the OMC is a good instrument when countries do not agree on a certain topic, and calls the OMC an "established form of socio-economic governance" (Tholoniati, 2010, p. 94). Specifically the success of the EES can partially be explained by its ability to address issues that the EU was not able to address earlier, such as "wages, quality and productivity of work [and] childcare" (Tholoniati, 2010, p. 104). This has led to a focus of employment policies in the broad sense.

While the literature is overall positive about the success of the EES, it is important to note that the overarching programs and goals changed three times over the years. Each change caused the goals for gender equality to become less apparent. During its creation, the EES was based on the Lisbon employment targets, which included a specific female employment target (Ivan-Ungureanu & Marcu, 2006). When the Europe 2020 growth strategy was implemented in 2010, this target disappeared. Instead, the general employment target was formulated as "including [...] the greater involvement of women" (EUR-Lex, 2010). Currently, the Europe 2030 social targets are in place, in which there is no specific reference to a female employment target (European Commission, 2022).

Based on these scholarly works, the following expectations are formulated:

Expectation one: The EU has been unsuccessful in mobilizing the Dutch government to address issues of gender equality in employment policies, because of the diminished presence of policy suggestions on gender equality issues in documents published in the ES process.

3.2. Frame Analysis

As previously stated, the aim of the EES is to make EU Member States aware of possible policy improvements. By focusing on gender equality policies, the ways in which problems and solutions are formulated can be analysed by conducting a frame analysis. An article by Benford and Snow (2000) and a more recent article by Snow, Vliegenthart, and Ketelaars (2019) both wrote articles that include an overview of the most studied ways of frames over the years.

3.2.1. The identification of the collective action frame

The concept of framing can be defined as “interpretive meaning construction” (Snow et al., 2019, p. 393). Applying the concept to the study of social sciences, Snow et al. (2019) defined collective action frames as “relatively coherent sets of action-oriented beliefs and meanings that legitimizes and inspire social movement campaigns and activities” (Snow et al., 2019, p. 395). The most important function of a collective action frame is its mobilization effect: “to mobilize or activate movement adherents so that they move, metaphorically, from the balcony to the barricades (action mobilization); to convert bystanders into adherents, thus broadening the movement’s base (consensus mobilization); and to neutralize or demobilize adversaries (counter-mobilization)” (Snow et al., 2019, p. 395).

Benford and Snow (2000) discussed that there are three ways in which collective action frames can occur, which they called discursive, strategic, and contested processes. Discursive processes create collective action frames by conversation, both in speech and in written form and can be further divided into frame amplification and frame elaboration (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et al., 2019). Strategic processes, then, aim to create collective action frames with

a certain goal in mind. These processes are guided by “four basic alignment processes” called “frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 624). Finally, contested processes create opposing reactions to the posed collective action frame. Contested processes can be divided into four categories, namely “counterframing by movement opponents, bystanders, and the media; frame disputes within movements; and the dialectic between frames and events” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 625). Snow et al. (2019) discussed that these conversations take place in either discursive fields or discursive opportunity structures, thereby emphasizing the significance of culture in creating these collective action frames.

López-Santana (2006) focused on the influence of framing in the EES process. She analysed the effect of the OMC on employment policies of three EU Member States. She found that the EU framed employment issues as collective EU problems and by repeating these problems, thereby creating benchmarks and giving a number of improvement options, the EU was successfully putting problems on the national agenda of Member States. There were two factors important for the success of the EU’s framing effect. The first factor was the ‘goodness of fit’ theory: if the framed problems fit national policies of Member States, there was an increased chance that the framed problem was accepted on the national level of Member States. The second factor was the European Structural Fund (ESF): if the ESF was already present on the domestic level, there was a higher chance of non-compliance (López-Santana, 2006).

3.2.2. Analysing the effectiveness of the collective action frame

Once the collective action frame is identified, the effectiveness of the frame can be analysed. A collective action frame has three core framing tasks: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et al., 2019). Put simply, diagnostic framing identifies the problem, prognostic framing gives the proposed solution to the problem, and motivational framing is aimed at convincing the audience that action is needed (Benford & Snow, 2000;

Snow et al., 2019). All three core framing tasks should be present, since “all three core framing tasks are essential for framing mobilization” (Snow et al., 2019, p. 397).

Next to the three core framing tasks, a collective action frame consists of four variable elements that make each frame unique (Benford & Snow, 2000). The first variable element refers to what the collective action frame identifies as a problem, known as the “problem identification and direction/locus of attribution” variable (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 618). In line with this variable, a number of researchers have identified two main problems that relate to the EU’s employment policies. The first problem consists of the EU’s difficulty in reconciling the economic and social perspective of European integration. In his research, Daniel V. Preece (2022) showed that the existence of different welfare states and the unwillingness of Member States to transfer their power on social policy regulation to the EU created an integration process that was predominantly centred around neoliberalism. Neoliberalism has a primary focus on the importance of the free market and an “emphasis on minimal state intervention in economic and social affairs” (Smith, 2023). Dawson (2018) argued that social policies have also become gradually displaced in the ES, resulting in its small and almost insignificant role in the creation and coordination of policies under the Semester. Vanhercke (2020), however, found that there was renewed attention to social policies in the ES from 2013 onwards. Both Dawson (2018) and Vanhercke (2020) saw the potential of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Social Scoreboard in increasing the importance of social policies in the Semester process, although Vanhercke (2020) emphasized that the post-Europe 2020 strategy must continue to focus on social policies in order to achieve complete socialization. Finally, Elomäki and Kantola (2020) specifically focused on the distinction between the economic and social perspective of gender equality in the EES and the European Pillar of Social Rights. By analysing the role of European employer and employee organizations in addressing gender equality issues in three different policy fields, they concluded that gender equality is

increasingly framed as something to achieve in order to improve the economy, rather than increasing equality between men and women in general. They conclude that “struggles around gender equality at the EU level are not only about gender equality per se, but they are about the relationship between the EU’s economic and the social goals, and the concern to transform the EU’s economic policies in a more gender equal direction” (Elomäki & Kantola, 2020, p. 1012).

The second problem is discussed in O’Connor’s research (2005), who focused on the EU’s difficulties in reconciling quantitative and qualitative employment objectives from a gendered perspective. The quantitative employment objective consisted of the percentage differences between male and female labour market participation, while the qualitative employment objective focused on the quality differences of these jobs. The quality of a job was determined by salary, job security and career growth. She found that, at the time, more women started to participate in the job market and there was a high chance of the quantitative employment objectives being met by the Member States. Yet, the jobs that they had were mostly of low quality, with a higher gender pay gap compared to higher quality jobs, and high part-time employment rates. She concluded that, despite different welfare and gender regimes, one OMC to regulate employment-anchored social policies in all Member States was crucial, as it gives the potential of policy learning via peer reviews and National Action Plans (now: NRPs) (O’Connor, 2005).

The second variable element consists of a collective action frame being “exclusive and rigid”, or “inclusive and flexible” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 618). Related to this is the third element, which refers to how broad the issue or problem of a collective action frame is defined. If the frame is broad, inclusive, and flexible, the frame could transform into a master frame on which other collective action frames are inspired by (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 619; Snow et al. 2019, p. 395).

The fourth and final element is focused on the effectiveness and mobilization effect of a frame and is called “resonance” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 619). The resonance of a frame can be measured by focusing on two categories: credibility and salience. Credibility focuses on the believability of the posed frame and depends on three elements “frame consistency, empirical credibility and credibility of the frame articulators or claimsmakers” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 619). Frame consistency seeks for any contradictions, either within the frame or within the frame and their makers. Furthermore, empirical credibility focuses on the extent to which the frame is believable based on empirical evidence (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 620). Finally, the frame makers should be perceived as credible, or believable as well. Salience, on the other hand, focuses on the prominence of a frame and depends on its “centrality, experiential commensurability, and narrative fidelity” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 621, as seen in Snow & Benford, 1988). Centrality focuses on the importance of the frames’ “beliefs, values, and ideas [...] to the lives of the targets of mobilization.” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 621) Experiential commensurability focuses on the extent of which the frame relates to the “personal, everyday experiences of the targets of mobilization”, or whether the frame is “too abstract and distant from the lives and experiences of the targets” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 621). Finally, narrative fidelity focuses on the extent of which the posed frame resonates with the audiences’ culture (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 622).

Additional to the elements of resonance, Snow et al. (2019) points to three resonance problems that scholars should be aware of when analysing its occurrence. The first resonance problem occurs when the posed frame does not align with the beliefs of the intended audience. Frame alignment, then, is based on four alignment processes, namely “frame bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation” (Snow et al., 2019, p. 400). The second problem is defined as a “circular-reasoning” problem, emphasizing that it is necessary to have certain attributes that help prove a frame’s resonance, such as credibility and salience, as opposed to

attributing a frame's effectiveness based on the (non-)appearance of a related protest event (Snow et al., 2019, pp. 401-402). Finally, the third problem relates to "the role of emotion" in creating the collective action frame, as an emotional occurrence prior to the creation of the frame could lead to higher resonance amongst the intended audience (Snow et al., 2019, p. 403). In all, these three problems also need to be considered when analysing frame resonance.

Related to the effectiveness of the OMC is Tomlinson's article (2011), who specifically focused on the reactions of the Swedish and British national governments to the OMC process, examined whether the OMC was an effective tool for policy change in gender equality or not. In order to examine this, she analysed NRPs between 2006 and 2009, thereby focusing on three elements in which gender equality could be measured in employment policies: the gender pay gap, the gender employment gap and childcare policies. She found that variance between the states are caused by different welfare and employment regimes. As can be read in chapter two, the Netherlands has a conservative welfare state (Kantola, 2010). Furthermore, the Netherlands has an employment regime that facilitates part-time employment.

From these extensive scholarly works ensue a number of expectations for this thesis.

Expectation two: The EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch government if the EU uses all three core framing tasks in their collective action frame.

Expectation three: The EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch government if the frame resonates with the Dutch government's beliefs, based on the credibility and salience of the collective action frame.

Expectation four: The EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch government if the frame resonates with the Dutch welfare and employment regime.

3.3. The Role of the Dutch Parliament in the European Employment Strategy

An important element of the OMC is the decentralized process and the involvement of different actors on all levels (De la Porte & Pochet, 2012). The most important actor of the Netherlands in the EES process is the Dutch government, since they are in charge of creating the annual NRPs (Visser, 2005, as cited in Duina & Raunio, 2007). Yet, an important actor is missing: the Dutch national parliament. The degree of involvement in the EES process by the Dutch parliament, or the lack thereof, raises questions related to democratic accountability and parliamentary control.

The inclusion of national parliaments in the EES process should be encouraged, because an increased involvement of “different types of domestic actors” can ultimately increase the chance of compliance with soft law (López-Santana, 2006, pp. 495-6). Kreilinger (2018) also argued that “if national parliaments are *not involved*, executive power is not under appropriate parliamentary control and it is unclear how constraints to national fiscal and economic policies are democratically legitimated” (Kreilinger, 2018, p. 326). If the decentralization process is not adequate, this could potentially lead to a democratic deficit in the process. Indeed, critics have argued that the EES suffers from this, since national parliaments are not directly involved in the process. As Smismans (2004) stated, “the OMC procedure is characterized by lack of public and parliamentary debate” and “the national parliaments and media are hardly aware of the existence of the OMC procedures” (Smismans, 2004, p. 16). Yet, other researchers had a more positive perspective on the matter. Duina and Raunio (2007) reflected on the position of national parliaments in the OMC process and while national parliaments are not directly involved in the process, there are two advantageous for parliaments to use the information that the OMC provides. The first advantage is to use the good and bad examples of policymaking that the OMC provides for other EU Member States. The second advantage is the ability to criticize their national government due to the country-specific information that the OMC

provides, which the authors described as a “public report card on the policy performance on any given country” (Duina & Raunio, 2007, p. 496).

Decentralization in the OMC process has been studied before its implementation in the ES. De la Porte and Pochet (2012) showed that the OMC has been studied in the past with the use of three theories, namely “European integration, New Modes of Governance, and Europeanization” (De la Porte & Pochet, 2012, p. 336). Particularly the latter is of great importance to this research, as it “focuses on how the OMC impacts welfare reform via policy learning” on the national level of EU Member States (De la Porte & Pochet, 2012, pp. 336-337). They stated that policy learning is based on the transformation of ideas to strategies with the help of “specific frames of problems and solutions” (Barbier, 2008, as cited in De la Porte & Pochet, 2012, p. 341). They found that it was hardly possible to see a causal effect between the ideas created via the OMC and possible policy change on the national level, as “[The OMC] has always been one factor among the others in a given reform process. The interesting aspect of reform processes is to obtain a full picture of *which actors are involved* and *with which instruments*” (De la Porte & Pochet, 2012, p. 345. Stress added).

Smismans (2004) focused on decentralization in the EES specifically and found that both the Lisbon Conclusions that defined the OMC, as well as the Employment Title of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) gave some indications that the OMC was meant to decentralize the process, in order to enhance the involvement of “the regional and local levels, as well as the social partners and civil society” (Smismans, 2004, p. 4). However, Smismans concluded that decentralization in the EES needed improvement, which could be achieved by having clearer guidelines. Consequently, this would enhance the roles of regional and local partners in the process of the EES (Smismans, 2004, pp. 23-4).

De Ruitter focused specifically on the involvement of the Dutch national parliament in OMC processes in a number of articles. In order for national parliaments to hold their

government accountable, parliaments must use the information that stems from the OMC processes (De Ruiter, 2010; 2012). In his research, De Ruiter (2010) focused on the role of the Dutch and British Upper and Lower Houses in three different OMC processes, and whether they used the information to shame or fame the information on national policies that the OMCs provided. Based on the content of parliamentary documents, he found that national parliaments only used the information to shame the national government for the content of the NRPs. The extent to which this happened depended on the presence of indicators and benchmarks, as well as the extent to which the national government informed the national parliament of the OMC process and its policies (De Ruiter, 2010). In a consequent article (2012), he found that two elements influenced the frequency in which the members of parliament from the opposition parties discussed the content of the OMC in their committee meetings: the presence of peer learning activities, indicators and benchmarks in the OMC, and the “EU-level activity in a policy field to the adoption of an OMC” (De Ruiter, 2012, pp. 106-108). An example of the latter is that, due to discussion of employment on EU level prior to the adoption of the employment OMC, the “differences in earning power between men and women” was discussed by members of the opposition parties in the national parliament (De Ruiter, 2012, p. 108). The influence of parliament members of opposition parties is reiterated in a later article, where he showed that joint reports created by the Council and the EC were used by the MPs of opposition parties to shame the government if issues came to light (De Ruiter, 2014). This shaming was primarily done in committee meetings, instead of plenary debates.

The topic of parliamentary involvement has not been given much scholarly attention since the implementation of the EES in the ES and is therefore in need of an update. It is possible that the role of national parliaments has increased after its implementation in the ES: Maatsch (2017), for example, claimed that “most national parliamentary parties acquire opportunities to position themselves on EU policy guidance during the drafting of National Reform Programme

(concerning social policies). [...] In some states, parliamentary committees also debate the Annual Growth Survey and country-specific recommendations” (Maatsch, 2017, p. 696). However, Hallerberg et al. (2018) showed that the Netherlands were only involved on an *ex post* basis in the ES via monitoring, instead of an *ex ante* basis via direct involvement in the creation of the documents. Differing committees were involved depending on the year examined. Data of discussions in Dutch plenary parliamentary debates is unknown, but the article stated that “rarely did plenaries put the issue on the agenda” and “they rarely discussed the National Reform Program” (Hallerberg et al., 2018, p. 256).

In all, the literature on the democratic legitimacy of the EES is present, but it needs an update. Furthermore, a recent focus on the involvement of the Dutch parliament in the EES process is lacking in the debate. Based on the literature, the following expectation is formulated:

Expectation five: The EU’s collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch parliament if the frame is discussed in plenary debates and/or in committee debates of the Dutch parliament.

4. Case Selection, Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

As previously stated, the research question of this thesis is as follows: To what extent has the EU been successful in mobilizing the Dutch government and Dutch parliament to address gender equality issues in employment policies, and how can this be explained? The mobilization effect of the EU's collective action frames is analysed based on two elements: the extent to which the Dutch government addresses the EU's collective action frames on the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap, and childcare regulation in their NRPs, and the extent to which Dutch members of parliament react to these collective action frames in parliamentary and committee debates.

This research is relevant for a number of reasons. First and foremost, as could be read in chapter two, the problems surrounding the three gender equality indicators are still a topic of debate. Secondly, the instrument with which the EU could put pressure on the Netherlands to tackle these issues, namely the OMC, has hardly been examined since its implementation in the ES, especially not in relation to the three gender equality indicators. Hence, this research provides an update on the research of the OMC and gives more insight into the ways in which the EU uses this instrument in the ES to tackle social issues.

4.1. Case Selection

In order to analyse the mobilization effect of the EU's collective action frames on the Dutch government, the focus lies on the following gender equality issues: the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap, and childcare policies. This is in line with the research by Tomlinson (2011). The documents published in the ES process between 2011 and 2020 were examined. There are two reasons for selecting these specific years for analysis. First and foremost, prior research has hardly focused on these years, making these years interesting to analyse in order to build upon the existing literature. Secondly, the COVID-19 outbreak affected the publication

process of the ES between 2020 and 2022, since the European Commission “decided to activate the general escape clause of the Stability and Growth Pact” (European Commission, n.d.). Hence, there was decided to choose the year 2020 as the final year of analysis.

For the analysis of the EU documents, five different documents were considered for each year of the analysis: the draft JER, the final JER, the JER Council Conclusions, the NRPs and the CSRs. These documents were retrieved from the website of the EC. However, not every document was available for each year. An overview of the documents that were retrieved and thus used for the analysis can be found in Table 1. As not all documents were published online, the results will give an overall conclusion of the mobilization effect over the course of ten years.

	Draft JER	Final JER	Council Conclusions	NRPs	CSRs
2011		X	X	X	X
2012				X	X
2013			X	X	X
2014			X	X	X
2015	X	X		X	X
2016	X		X		X
2017		X	X	X	X
2018		X	X	X	X
2019		X		X	X
2020		X	X	X	X

Table 1: Available EU Documents

Then, in order to analyse the mobilization effect of the EU’s collective action frames on the Dutch parliament, the committee meetings of the Dutch parliament between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2020 were examined. From the plenary meetings, the minutes between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2020 were examined, as prior minutes were unavailable. All minutes of the plenary and committee meetings of the Netherlands are published online on Tweedekamer.nl, the official website of the Dutch lower house. Based on the articles of De Ruiter (2010, 2012, 2014) and Hallerberg et al. (2018), there is a focus on two committees: the Social Affairs and Employment committee, and the European Affairs committee. All reactions from an *ex ante* and an *ex post* perspective were initially considered, but the documents were only discussed on an *ex post* basis. By using the search strings formulated under section 4.2, a

total of 485 documents for plenary debates were identified, 68 documents for the Committee of European Affairs, and 199 documents for the Committee of Social Affairs and Employment. One document could be analysed multiple times, depending on the topic of analysis.

4.2. Methods of Data Selection

The methods of data selection were twofold. First, a search string was created that aimed to find all paragraphs in which the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap, and the regulation of childcare were addressed. The identification of these three gender inequality indicators is in line with the research done by Tomlinson (2011). This search string was used on all the documents published in the ES process. The search string was as follows:

("gender" OR "women" OR "woman" OR "Netherlands" OR "Gap" OR "female" OR "employment" OR "part-time" OR "parttime" OR "job" OR "jobs" OR "pay" OR "wage" OR "childcare" OR "child" OR "children" OR "care" OR "childcare")

Although the search string is formulated in a Boolean format, the actual search was done by searching for one word at a time. Each finding was carefully considered and the relevant findings, including the belonging paragraphs, were gathered in an Excel-document. Each paragraph was labelled as either discussing the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap, or childcare policies. Each year was given a different tab in the Excel-document to make the information from each year easily accessible and comparable. An example from the JER of 2016 can be found in Table 2.

Page number	Paragraph	Theme
4	Addressing the gender gap. 17. A comprehensive approach to improve the work-life balance for both men and women, including through the provision of child and other dependents' care services, leave and flexible working arrangements, taking into account the better reconciliation of care and work, avoiding tax disincentives for second earners, and fostering a more equal distribution of family tasks among parents, is necessary to improve the labour market participation of women and to support growth. More visibility should be given to the gender pay and pension gap, and to gender differences in poverty and social exclusion, and more efforts should be made to reduce them. These measures are also of utmost importance for ensuring women have an adequate old age income in the future.	Gender employment gap / Gender pay gap / Childcare

Table 2: Example of data retrieval (Source: Council of the European Union, 2016a)

A second, more extensive, search string was used to analyse the minutes from the parliamentary debates and the committee debates, which was as follows:

(“Europees Semester” OR “Europese Semester”), (“Joint Employment Report” OR “Gezamenlijk verslag over de werkgelegenheid”), (“Nationaal hervormingsprogramma” OR “nationale hervormingsprogramma”), (“Landenspecifieke aanbevelingen” OR “landspecifieke aanbevelingen” OR “landenspecifieke aanbeveling” OR “landspecifieke aanbeveling”), (loonkloof OR “gelijke beloning” OR “gelijk loon”), (werkkloof), (“arbeidsparticipatie” AND “kloof”), (“Deeltijd” AND “kloof”), (“Arbeidsparticipatie” AND “vrouwen”), (“Arbeidsparticipatie” AND “vrouw”), (“Deeltijd” AND “vrouwen”), (“Deeltijd” AND “vrouw”), (“parttime” AND “vrouwen”), (“parttime” AND “vrouw”), (“Arbeidsparticipatie” AND “kinderopvang”), (“Deeltijd” AND “kinderopvang”), (“Kinderopvang” AND “vrouwen”), (“Kinderopvang” AND “vrouw”), (Kinderopvang” AND “parttime).

All relevant paragraphs were also gathered in an Excel-document and sorted based on keyword, date of publication, plenary or committee debate, title of document, title of piece in the document (if plenary), topic (general, gender pay gap, gender employment gap, or childcare policies), the party to which the person making the remark belonged, the remark, and a summary of the remark. In all cases, it was necessary that the chosen paragraphs in the analysed documents was linked to the ES process.

4.3. Data Analysis

The documents listed under section 4.1. are diagnostically analysed. The analysis of the data is divided into three sections. The first section of the analysis is dedicated to analysing the data retrieved from the five different EU documents. This is done by conducting a frame analysis, as discussed in the previous chapter. First, each paragraph that was found and categorized in one of the three categories (gender employment gap, gender pay gap, or childcare) was analysed again. In each paragraph, the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational elements of the frame were identified. An example of this can be found below, based on the analysis of the gender employment gap:

Year	Document	Diagnostic element	Prognostic element	Motivational element
2015	JER	“Sustaining women’s employment and helping men and women to reconcile work and family life” (p. 31)	“Access to affordable and quality childcare services, long-term care services and out-of-school care, flexible working arrangements as well as adequate leave policies continues to play a crucial role [...]” (p. 31)	Not present.

Table 3: Example of attribution of core framing elements to retrieved data (Source: Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 31)

As can be read in the next chapter, the data analysis led to two distinctive collective action frames that were used between 2011 and 2020. Once the frames were identified, the three core framing tasks and the four variable elements of each collective action frame were identified. A specific focus was given to the credibility and salience of the collective action frames, as well as the quantitative/qualitative and economic/social focus of each collective action frame (Benford & Snow, 2000; Dawson, 2018; Elomäki & Kantola, 2020; Preece, 2022; Snow et al., 2019; Vanhercke, 2020). Consequently, expectation one could be derived from this information. Expectation one stated that the EU has been unsuccessful in mobilizing the Dutch government to address issues of gender equality in employment policies, because of the diminished presence of policy suggestions on gender equality issues in documents published in the ES process. The dependent variable of this expectation is the mobilization of the Dutch government. The independent variable consists of the policy suggestions made on the gender employment gap, gender pay gap, and childcare regulation in employment policies. The indicator of the independent variable consists of the policy suggestions made by the EC on the gender employment gap, gender pay gap, and childcare regulation, discussed in the documents published in the ES process between 2011 and 2020 (JERs, CCs, Country Reports, and CSRs). The dependent variable is based on comments made on the three beforementioned policy suggestions by the Dutch government, discussed in the Dutch NRPs published between 2011 and 2020.

The second section is dedicated to comparing the collective action frames to the information retrieved from the Dutch NRPs, to examine which information was used in the Dutch NRPs and how this could be explained. From this information could also be concluded whether the Dutch government was effectively mobilized by the EU's collective action frames or not. Consequently, expectations two, three, and four could be derived from this information. Expectation two stated that the EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch

government if the EU uses all three core framing tasks in their collective action frame. Expectation three stated that the EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch government if the frame resonates with the Dutch government's beliefs, based on the credibility and salience of the collective action frame. Expectation four stated that the EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch government if the frame resonates with the Dutch welfare and employment regimes. In all expectations, the dependent variable of these expectations is the mobilization of the Dutch government. The independent variables consisted of the three core framing tasks of the collective action frames (expectation 2); the resonance of the collective action frames, e.g. the credibility and salience (expectation 3); and the welfare and employment regime of the Netherlands (expectation 4). In all expectations, the indicators of the independent variable consisted of the policy suggestions made by the EC on the gender employment gap, gender pay gap, and childcare policies, discussed in the documents published in the ES process between 2011 and 2020 (JERs, CCs, Country Reports, and CSRs). The dependent variable was indicated by comments made on the three beforementioned policy suggestions by the Dutch government, discussed in the Dutch NRPs published between 2011 and 2020.

The third section is focused on the mobilization effect of the EU's collective action frames on the Dutch parliament. Here, the data retrieved from the minutes of plenary debates, and the minutes of two committee debates of the Dutch parliament were analysed. From these documents can be seen if the politicians responded to this information, to which information the politicians responded, and whether these responses were in favour or against the arguments made in the Dutch NRPs and Country Reports. Consequently, expectation five could be derived from this section. Expectation five stated that the EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch parliament if the frame is discussed in plenary debates and/or in committee debates of the Dutch parliament. The dependent variable of this expectation is the

mobilization of the Dutch Parliament. The independent variable consists of the policy suggestions made by the EC on gender equality issues in employment policies, and of the responses to these policy suggestions by the Dutch government. The indicator of the independent variable consists of policy suggestions made by the EC on the gender employment gap, gender pay gap, and childcare policies, while the indicator of the dependent variable consists of comments made by the Dutch Parliament on one of these three topics. The sources used for the independent variable were the JERs, CCs, Country Reports, NRPs and CSRs published between 2011 and 2020. The sources used for the dependent variable were minutes of plenary debates, the Social Affairs and Employment Committee, and the European Affairs Committee, held between 2013 and 2020.

An overview of the methodology, including the expectations, the theories from which these expectations are derived, the dependent and independent variables, and the sources used, can be found in Appendix one.

4.4. Limitations

There are a few limitations regarding this research. A limitation of this research is the way in which gender is defined. Given the current debates surrounding gender and the increased focus on using the terms ‘male’, ‘female’, ‘men’ and ‘women’ correctly, it is important to give a clear explanation of how these terms are used in this thesis. In order to answer the research question, this thesis uses official EU and Dutch national documents and these documents do not specify how they define the terms ‘gender’, ‘men’ and ‘women’. Hence, it is assumed that the documents base the term ‘gender’, ‘men’, ‘women’ and equivalent terms on the sex of the person and does not consider how one identifies. Therefore, this thesis will follow the same definitions as the official documents used. Although a definition of ‘female’ that includes everybody that

identifies as a female would be more inclusive, it is impossible to do so since the analysis is not based on that information.

A second limitation of this research is that the mobilization effect measured in this research cannot necessarily be seen as a cause of the gender employment gap and the gender pay gap in the Netherlands. As Mariely López-Santana (2006) explained, “there is not a direct relationship between compliance, implementation, and policy effectiveness” (López-Santana, 2006, p. 495). Thus, even if the Netherlands complied with all the suggestions made by the EU, it could still result in ineffective policies. A third and final limitation of this research concerns the applicability of this research to other EU Member States. Although the EU has an extensive website with an abundance of documents available, not all publications are present on the website: for example, Table 1 gave an overview of the documents that were unavailable for this research. Furthermore, while the Dutch parliament publishes the minutes from their plenary and committee debates on their website, this may not be the case for other EU Member States. Thus, although this research could be applicable to other EU Member States in principle, it depends on the availability of online documents on the countries of interest.

5. Results

This chapter tests the expectations that derived from the literature review in chapter 3 and is divided into three sections. Section 5.1. identifies the three core framing tasks of the collective action frames, by conducting a frame analysis (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et al., 2019). Section 5.2. tests whether these collective action frames have mobilized the Dutch government. From the comments made by the Dutch government in this section, the variable elements of the collective action frames are also identified. Together with the identification of the three core framing tasks in section 5.1., an overview of each collective action frame is presented at the end of section 5.2. Finally, section 5.3. examines if the collective action frames succeeded in mobilizing the Dutch Parliament.

The findings of these sections contribute to testing the formulated expectations. Expectation one uses the findings from section 5.1; Expectations two and three use the findings from sections 5.1. and 5.2; Expectation four uses the findings from section 5.2. and 5.3; and expectation five uses the findings from section 5.1. and 5.3.

5.1. Collective Action Frame Identification

In order to test expectations one to four, it is necessary to identify the three core framing tasks in the collective action frames. This is done by looking at the ways in which the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap and childcare are addressed by the EU in the documents published through the ES. These frames could be recognized most clearly in the JERs. The JERs give a general overview of the current state of employment policies in all EU Member States, but also discuss the situations in some Member States in more detail. These documents have become the most extensive documents of all the documents published in the Semester process: the document published in 2011 was only 26 pages in total, compared to 2020 being 135 pages in total (Council of the European Union, 2011; European Commission, 2020c). As a

result, they go into great detail on the numerous problems identified by the EU: they not only discuss the problem in itself, but its relationship with and effect on other existing problems. Other important documents in the Semester process are the CCs, the Country Reports and the NRPs. The CCs mostly repeat some of the statements made in the JER in a more concise way. The Country Reports use the frames formulated in the JERs by applying them to specific Member States, such as the Netherlands. Finally, the NRPs mostly reply to the collective action frames posed by the EU and are therefore discussed more in-depth in section 5.2.

5.1.1. Collective Action Frame 1: Gender Employment Gap and Childcare

In the collective action frame on the gender employment gap and childcare, all three core framing asks could be identified. The **diagnostic** element of the collective action frame is the existence of the gender employment gap. The documents pay close attention to the causes of the gender employment gap, such as fiscal disincentives related to tax and benefit systems that withhold women to work (more hours), “labour market segregation and gender stereotypes” (Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 31), the combination of care for children or elderly that results in inactivity or part-time employment, and “the lack of available, accessible and quality formal care services” (European Commission, 2018b, p. 37). The EU discusses the consequences of its occurrence as well: for example, they claimed that the gender pay gap and the gender pension gap are caused by differences in working rates (Council of the European Union, 2016a). Attention is given to women in general, but differentiations between groups of women are also made. In that case, documents would specifically look at women with care responsibilities, migrant women and elderly women.

Consequently, the **prognostic** element of the frame is predominantly centred around increasing female labour market participation. This includes both inactivity and (in)voluntary part-time employment. This solution is accompanied with even more prognostic frames that should help achieve this. These prognostic elements included “flexible working arrangements”

and “adequate leave policies” related to childcare (European Commission, 2014a, p. 23); “reducing the gender pay gap” (Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 31); “a comprehensive integration of work-life balance considerations for both men and women” (European Commission, 2018b, p. 8); and examples of best practices from other Member States, such as measures to adjust tax and benefit systems in a way that makes it attractive for women to work more hours (European Commission, 2019b). At times, the Netherlands is taken as an example of good policymaking: in the JER from 2018, the Flexible Working Act was praised (European Commission, 2018b). Furthermore, the Netherlands was praised for increasing paternity leave in the JER from 2019 (European Commission, 2019b).

The most important prognostic element of this collective action frame, however, is the improvement of childcare policies, such as “the availability of high quality and affordable childcare” (Council of the European Union, 2015, p. 32) and policies that improve parental leave opportunities (Council of the European Union, 2015). This prognostic element kept on reoccurring throughout the years as one of the most important ways to increase female labour market participation. Childcare is hardly discussed as the diagnostic element of a frame and mostly as a prognostic element of other frames, including the frame on the gender employment gap. Hence, this research argues that childcare is embedded within this collective action frame and from here on only discusses within the collective action frame on the gender employment gap. It is important to note that childcare is also discussed as a measure to improve poverty and social exclusion, but these discussions are not directly related to gender equality and therefore not taken into consideration for this research.

The **motivational** element of the frame is to reach the goal of 75% of EU citizens between 20 and 64 years to be active in the labour market, as formulated in the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy (Council of the European Union, 2013). Although this general goal does not address the gender employment gap or include a specific employment target for women, it

is stated in the CC of 2013 that “facilitating the participation of women in the labour market will be essential to achieve the EU 2020 employment target” (Council of the European Union, 2013, p. 6). Other incentives to increase female labour market participation are “for enhancing the EUs growth potential and to meet demographic challenges” (Council of the European Union, 2014, p. 2).

Based on the overarching goal of reaching numerical targets in the Europe 2020 strategy, it can be argued that the collective action frame is a strategic process (Benford & Snow, 2000). Furthermore, the gender employment gap had an economic and quantitative focus: within the frame, women are primarily described as “untapped labour potential” (Council of the European Union, 2011a, p. 2), and a higher participation rate would boost the economy. Yet, some qualitative elements can be recognized in the explanation of the diagnostic element of the frame, such as the high part-time employment rates amongst women, or the relationship between women and caring. This, together with the many prognostic elements that are embedded in the frame, makes the frame feel very broad, but “inclusive and flexible” at the same time (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 618). Furthermore, the collective action frame is very credible based on its consistency, empirical credibility and the credibility of the frame makers. This is because the collective action frames stayed very consistent in the diagnostic and prognostic elements of the frame between 2011 and 2020. Furthermore, the JERs focused extensively on the empirical credibility of the frame, by including statistics, graphs and other numerical elements on which their claims are based. Finally, the collective action frames are created by official EU entities, such as the EC.

In all, the collective action frame of the gender employment gap and childcare includes a very clear diagnostic element, a number of prognostic elements, and one or two motivational elements. The frame is broad, inclusive and flexible, and has an economic and quantitative focus. Based on the three credibility indicators, there is no need to question the credibility of

the frame. The credibility and salience of the frame, as well as a complete overview of the collective action frame on the gender employment gap and childcare, can be found under section 5.2.1. in Table 4.

5.1.2. Collective Action Frame 2: Gender Pay Gap

As opposed to the first collective action frame, the collective action frame on the gender pay gap did not include all three core framing tasks. Most attention was given to the **diagnostic** element of the collective action frame and could predominantly be derived from the JERs from 2015 onwards. The identification of the problem often included causes of its occurrence, data and comparisons between Member States, and how its occurrence possible lead to other (gender-related) problems. The **prognostic** element of the collective action frame, however, was discussed much less frequent. As is common in the OMC framework, most solutions included the ways in which Member States addressed the gender pay gap and were addressed in the JERs from 2015, 2019, and 2020. In that way, other Member States can use these solutions as inspiration for their own national policies. Finally, no attention was given to the **motivational** element of the collective action frame, as the documents did not discuss why it was necessary and important to close the gender pay gap. Although the gender pay gap became a part of the European Pillar of Social Rights and was implemented into the ES from 2018 onwards, the motivational element was not further specified (European Commission, 2021).

Given the fact that the collective action frame is hardly discussed as a whole and incomplete, it is hard to comment on the variable elements of the collective action frame. Like with the collective action frame on the gender employment gap and childcare, the collective action frame is a strategic process that is based on the overarching goal of reaching numerical targets in the Europe 2020 strategy. There is a mix of the economic and social perspective present in the frame, as well as a mix of the quantitative and qualitative perspective. The JER from 2017 included a great example of how the EU uses this frame:

In addition to low full-time equivalent employment rates, women also suffer from a significant pay gap. This amounted to 16.6% in 2014 in the EU, with large variations across Member States [...]. There are various potential reasons behind the gender pay gap, such as differences in work experience, working time, type of job or sector of employment. For the EU as a whole labour market segregation is relatively high, reaching 25.3% for occupational segregation and 18.3% for sectoral segregation. Women tend to work in sectors that are relatively less well paid, are less represented in managerial positions, and are more represented than men in part-time work, which is less well remunerated than full time jobs per hour of work. Gender pay gaps in favour of men exist in almost all occupations. Moreover, other factors that cannot be directly measured by Eurostat data, such as discrimination, can contribute to the gender pay gap. Women's lower pay, shorter working time and shorter career duration have a negative impact on their overall earnings and pension entitlements. (European Commission, 2017, p. 46)

The gender pay gap is essentially a social problem with economic consequences. In the JERs, the EU provides focuses on both economic problems (e.g. differences in work experience and working time, both related to the gender employment gap) and social problems (e.g. less women in managerial positions, discrimination) related to the existence of the gender pay gap. Furthermore, the quantitative element of the frame is the focus on numbers and percentages, while the qualitative elements are the explanations that cause these percentages. While not addressed specifically in the ES documents, the fact that the EU primarily expresses and

monitors the gender pay gap in its unadjusted form gives the impression that the EU is more focused on the quantitative element (Eurostat: Data Browser, 2023c).

Based on the prognostic elements available, it can be argued that the frame is narrow, exclusive and rigid. Although the frames are created by credible frame makers (i.e. official EU entities such as the EC) and the empirical credibility of the frame is proven by the use of several graphs and other data in the JERs from 2015 onwards, the credibility of the frame also decreased due to some frame inconsistencies. One inconsistency can be recognized in the Country Report from 2020: the document speaks of “the relatively small hourly gender wage gap in the Netherlands”, but states in the same paragraph that “women also experience a [...] considerable pay gap”, with “an average wage gap of 39%” (European Commission, 2020a, p. 46). This contrasting use of language could jeopardize the necessity to address the issue by the Dutch government. Finally, although the increased length of the JER documents gives room to more collective action frames and more extensive discussions on them, the way the information is provided could come across as unorganized and chaotic.

Interestingly, the gender pay gap was more often perceived as a prognostic element in other collective action frames. The diagnostic elements of these frames were then centred around labour market segmentation, the gender employment gap, the gender pension gap, and even gender equality itself. While analysing these frames would be beyond the scope of this research, the reoccurrence of collective action frames within others shows the complexity of problems on gender equality, as frames also complement or contrast each other. More importantly, it shows that the EU perceives the gender pay gap as a genuine problem and could focus more on developing the collective action frame of the gender pay gap itself, thereby addressing other frames as well. A complete overview of the collective action frame on the gender pay gap can be found under section 5.2.2. in Table 3. This table includes the salience of the collective action frame, which is discussed further in section 5.2.2.

5.2. The Mobilization Effect: The Dutch Government

As the two collective action frames have now been identified, these frames can be sought for in the CSRs and the NRPs. The NRP discusses the CSRs of the previous Semester cycle, as well as the Country Report and the CCs of the current Semester cycle (The Council of the EU & the European Council, 2023). Hence, the NRPs, the CSRs, the CCs, and the Country Reports are the most important documents in seeing whether the Netherlands accepted the EU's recommendations.

5.2.1. Collective Action Frame 1: Gender Employment Gap and Childcare

The CSRs collected all findings of the documents published in one Semester year and formulates a number of recommendations at the end of each CSR document. Based on an analysis of these recommendations, the collective action frame of the gender employment gap and childcare was never used as an independent recommendation. Instead, the frame was partially embedded in a number of recommendations made in the CSRs of 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. The frame was most noticeable in a recommendation from the CSR of 2012, in which the EC specifically recommended to increase female labour market participation:

Enhance participation in the labour market, particularly of older people, women, and people with disabilities and migrants, including by further reducing tax disincentives for second-income earners, fostering labour market transitions, and addressing rigidities. (European Commission, 2012, p. 5)

As one can see, the point of the recommendation was not solely to address the gender employment gap. Instead, the goal was primarily to increase labour participation amongst marginalized groups, including women. Furthermore, although the tax solution is a prognostic

element of the collective action frame, suggestions on childcare regulation were not included in the recommendation.

The CSRs from 2011, 2013, and 2014 included recommendations that focused on increasing labour market participation as well, but these recommendations were mostly based on stimulating “untapped labour potential” (Council of the European Union, 2011a, p. 2). Childcare policies were not included in these recommendations either. Instead, the recommendations posed some general solutions, such as “to support the most vulnerable groups and help them to re-integrate within the labour market” (Council of the European Union, 2011a, p. 3) and the need to “address labour market rigidities” (European Commission, 2013, p. 6; European Commission, 2014b, p. 6). These broad suggestions left the option open to the Dutch government to pose more detailed solutions that fit their situation best.

When comparing these findings from the CSRs to the NRPs published between 2011 and 2020, it became clear that the Dutch government replied to every recommendation made in the CSR from the previous year. Consequently, the NRPs also commented on the recommendations made to increase labour participation. In their comments, the Dutch government showed how they applied the CSR recommendations, by listing the national policies that the Netherlands had created that were in line with these recommendations. For example, when the CSR of 2011 recommended to “enhance participation in the labour market by reducing fiscal-disincentives for second-income earners to work”, the NRP of 2012 commented that “the double tax credit for breadwinner families will be gradually phased out to make work more attractive for non-working partners” (Council of the European Union, 2011a, p. 3; *National Reform Programme*, 2012, p. 6). In fact, each time a recommendation was made that addressed an increase in labour participation, the Dutch government showed a tax-related solution in their NRPs.

While the CSR recommendations did not include specific solutions that focused on childcare regulation, the general formulation of their solutions created the possibility for the Dutch government to discuss their plans on childcare policy reforms on their own. Plans on childcare policy reforms were included in the NRPs of 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015, and discussed plans to cut the funding of formal childcare, as well as plans to reform and simplify the “child-related schemes” (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2014, 2015; *National Reform Programme*, 2012, 2013).

The Dutch government discussed the frame on their own initiative in the NRP of 2014, by discussing the “participation of women and non-working partners/secondary earners” without commenting on a CSR recommendation (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2014, p. 29). Here, they discussed the high part-time employment rates among women. While this is predominantly on a voluntary basis, the document acknowledged that women were more economically dependent compared to men. Therefore, in order to increase the economic independence of women, the Dutch government wishes to increase their labour participation (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2014).

The CSRs published between 2015 and 2020 lacked specific recommendations on increasing the female labour force. While the Country Reports continued to discuss the challenges surrounding women’s part-time employment in the Netherlands, the Dutch government merely summarized these findings and did not further comment on them. Instead, the Dutch government continued to discuss their progress on women’s labour participation and their financial independence by focusing on the goals formulated in the Europe 2020 Strategy. The NRPs of 2017 and 2020 included efforts that improved tax measures for women and the NRPs of 2018 and 2019 included the funding of projects that helped increase the economic independence of Dutch women (*National Reform Programme*, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020). The NRP of 2020 announced that the Dutch government planned on researching the high part-time

employment rates among women (*National Reform Programme*, 2020). Finally, measures regarding childcare policies were also included in the NRPs of 2018 and 2020 and included an increase of childcare benefit, an improvement of parental leave measures and “improving the affordability, accessibility and quality of childcare services” (*National Reform Programme*, 2018, 2020).

Based on the comparisons between the CSRs and the NRPs, it is difficult to comment extensively on the salience of frame due to the frame being underutilized in the CSR recommendations. By focusing on the prognostic elements of the frame, including the increase of female labour market participation and the improvement of tax disincentives, the experiential commensurability of the frame increased as both topics are relatable for the Dutch population. However, because the NRP of 2014 stated that part-time employment is highly voluntary amongst women in the Netherlands, it is possible that the frame lacks in centrality and narrative fidelity: it is possible that Dutch women do not want to increase their labour participation, and the Dutch government acknowledged this (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2014). This directly relates to expectation four: increasing female labour participation does not necessarily resonate with the Dutch welfare and employment regime.

With the addition of the collective action frame’s salience, an overview of the core framing tasks and the variable elements can be found in Table 4.

Frame element	Description
Diagnostic element	The existence of the gender employment gap and, as a result, increasing female labour participation
Prognostic element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The availability of high quality and affordable childcare; • Flexible working arrangements and adequate leave policies • Work-life balance; • Improving tax-benefit systems to make working more hours attractive for women
Motivational element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reach the goals formulated in the Europe 2020 strategy;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Enhancing the EUs growth potential and to meet demographic challenges” (Council of the European Union, 2014, p. 2)
Variable element: Economic or social perspective?	Economic, with a dominant perspective on increasing female labour participation.
Variable element: Quantitative or qualitative perspective?	Quantitative, as the percentage of female labour market participation should be increased.
Variable element: “Exclusive and rigid” OR “Inclusive and flexible”?	Inclusive and flexible.
Variable element: Broad or narrow definition of problem?	Broad.
Resonance: Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frame consistency: Diagnostic and prognostic elements of the frame stayed consistent • Frame credibility: The claims made in the frame were accompanied by numerical evidence, such as graphs and percentages • Credibility of the frame or claimsmakers: The frame was created by official EU entities, such as the EC
Resonance: Saliency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centrality: Possibly lacking due to the high voluntary part-time employment rate in the Netherlands • Experiential commensurability: Female labour market participation and tax disincentives are relatable topics for the Dutch population • Narrative fidelity: Possibly lacking due to the high voluntary part-time employment rate in the Netherlands

Table 4: Overview of collective action frame on the gender employment gap and childcare in the EU (2011-2020)

5.2.2. Collective Action Frame 2: Gender Pay Gap

It was difficult to analyse the use of the collective action frame on the gender pay gap, as there were only a few instances in which the gender pay gap was discussed. The Country Report in 2015 related the gender pay gap to the high part-time employment rate amongst women in the Netherlands (European Commission, 2015). In 2016, the CC included a comment on increasing the visibility of the gender pay gap (Council of the European Union, 2016b). Furthermore, the Country Report in 2016 included a footnote that stated the following:

The Netherlands has one of the highest gender gaps in pensions in the EU (46%) and the second highest overall earnings gap (49.1%). This last indicator shows that the average number of hours paid per month to women in the Netherlands is by far the lowest in the EU. As a result, 47% of all women aged 20-65 are not economically independent. (European Commission, 2016, p. 43)

In 2018, the Country Report stated that “income inequality is relatively low” (European Commission, 2018a, p. 7). In the same report, a large earnings gap of 47.5% is blamed on “differences in work intensity” (European Commission, 2018a, p. 33). This is repeated in the Country Report of 2019. The CC of 2020 pointed towards the lack of measures to increase pay transparency in the majority of the Member States. Finally, in the Country Report of 2020, the report stated that the Netherlands had a “relatively small hourly gender wage gap”, the report later makes a contradicting statement by claiming that the country had “an average wage gap of 39%” (European Commission, 2020a, p. 46).

While these findings show that some comments were made on the gender pay gap in the Country Reports and CCs, the gender pay gap has not been addressed in any of the recommendations made in the CSRs published between 2011 and 2020. The gender pay gap has also not been addressed in any of the NRPs either: although topics as wages and wage-setting procedures (2014, 2015) and the promotion of female economic independence (2017, 2019, 2020) were discussed, only the NRP in 2020 came close to discussing the gender pay gap by replying to a finding from the Country Report of 2020:

The country report also states that the share of *women in part-time employment* in the Netherlands is relatively high, which also creates a *corresponding earnings gap and pension gap*. Women in the Netherlands consequently have a

relatively low level of *economic independence*. (*National Reform Programme*, 2020, p. 17. Stress added)

As the frame was not used in the CSRs and the NRPs between 2011 and 2020, it is not possible to comment on the salience of the frame. An overview of the core framing tasks and the variable elements can be found in Table 5.

Frame element	Description
Diagnostic element	The existence of the gender pay gap/gender earnings gap
Prognostic element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-life balance • Strengthening pay transparency
Motivational element	Not present.
Variable element: Economic or social perspective?	Both economic and social.
Variable element: Quantitative or qualitative perspective?	Both quantitative and qualitative.
Variable element: “Exclusive and rigid” OR “Inclusive and flexible”?	Exclusive and rigid.
Variable element: Broad or narrow definition of problem?	Narrow.
Resonance: Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frame consistency: Some inconsistencies could be recognized (European Commission, 2020a) • Empirical credibility: Use of data and graphs strengthens the credibility of the collective action frame • Credibility of the frame or claimsmakers: The frame was created by official EU entities, such as the EC
Resonance: Salience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to comment on the centrality, experiential commensurability and narrative fidelity, due to a lack of findings.

Table 5: Overview of collective action frame on the gender pay gap in the EU (2011-2020)

5.3. The Mobilization Effect: The Dutch Parliament

As section 5.2. showed how the two frames were used and discussed by the EC and the Dutch Government, it is important to see whether these discussions also reached the Dutch Parliament.

For this section, minutes from plenary debates, the Social Affairs and Employment Committee, and the European Affairs Committee were analysed. As the documents from 2011 and 2012 were unavailable, only the documents published between 2013 and 2020 were analysed. In analysing these documents, it was important that the comments made on the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap, or childcare policies were made in relation to the ES process. The results showed, however, that the issues were either discussed outside of the ES process, or that it was impossible to see a connection with the ES. Together, the findings of this section are used to test expectation five.

5.3.1. Discussions in Plenary Debates

The gender employment gap was discussed a number of times in plenary debates. However, this was not caused by CSR recommendations or NRP discussions: while the CSRs of 2013 and 2014 included recommendations on increasing labour participation, these recommendations were not discussed in plenary debates (European Commission, 2013, 2014b). Instead, the gender employment gap was discussed a number of times from 2018 onwards. Although the term ‘gender employment gap’ (Dutch: ‘werkkloof’) was not stated specifically in any of the documents, related terms were. In the minutes of 2018 and 2019, there were a number of occasions in which a connection with the EU could be made, but not with the ES specifically. On 19 April 2018, for example, the position of women in the labour market was a topic of discussion in the plenary debate. The debate was centred on women being predominantly involved in part-time labour. Although a member of the SP made the comparison with other European countries, the debate did not use findings from any of the documents published in the ES process. Instead, only other Dutch entities were referenced, such as the SCP and the ‘Centraal Planbureau’ (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018b). On 26 September 2018, a member of the Party for the Animals referenced to the EC recommendation concerning maternity leave, but this recommendation was not made in relation to the ES process (Tweede

Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018c). On 27 and 28 November 2019, a member of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy and a member of D66 discuss the same McKinsey report on the role of women in the Dutch labour shortages as the one referenced in the Country Report from 2019 (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2019b; Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2019c; European Commission, 2019a). These findings show that the topic was discussed a number of times in plenary debates. However, these debates were not held because of CSR recommendations, nor did the members of parliament use information from any of the documents published in the ES.

Furthermore, while the findings showed that childcare regulations and childcare subsidies was a discussion point in the Dutch parliament between 2013 and 2020, it was very unclear whether the debates were held because of the ES. Nevertheless, the topic was widely discussed, and a number of plenary meetings discussed childcare as their only topic. The findings showed that the fact that Dutch parents are subsidised if they want to bring their child(ren) to formal childcare, is primarily seen as an instrument to boost female labour market participation. Throughout the years, there were some attempts at making childcare free to all because of the benefits to the child's development, but this did not succeed in the time period analysed in this research.

Finally, the gender pay gap was not discussed in relation to any of the documents published in the ES process. However, there were a number of interesting debates on the gender pay gap. The largest debate was based on the implementation of a law to address equal pay for women and men (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016b). Furthermore, on International Women's Day in 2016, a member of the Labour Party discussed the gender pay gap in the Netherlands and asked the Minister for commentary on the matter (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016a).

5.3.2. Discussions in the Committee of European Affairs

The committee of European Affairs did not discuss anything related to childcare or the gender pay gap. Female labour market participation is only discussed once in relation to the Europact, but this not related to the ES. This also means that the CSR recommendations of 2013 and 2014 were not discussed in this committee (European Commission 2013, 2014b). This can be explained based on a comment made by a member of the Labour Party, who stated on 6 March 2013 that the contents of the ES were discussed in other committees (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2013).

Instead, the minutes of this committee included some discussions concerning the process and workings of the Semester from 2011 to 2013. The recommendations from the CSRs were touched upon, but only to ask whether these recommendations were binding or taken seriously by the Dutch Government. Other discussions related to the ES were based on the fear of the EU overstepping their competences, which was mostly seen as meddling by a number of parties in committee debates held in 2011 and 2012 (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2011b, 2012b). In 2017, however, a member of the Social Party asked about the discussions on the addition of a social character to the ES. This addition most likely referred to the European Pillar of Social Rights, that would be standardized in the ES process from 2018 onwards (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017). In all of these discussions, the responses of the member of the Government remained the same: they always answered that learning from other countries is positive and desirable, yet the competencies on social policies belonged solely to the Member States.

5.3.3. Discussions in the Committee of Social Affairs and Employment

The committee of Social Affairs and Employment discussed both collective action frames a number of times. There were two occasions in which the gender employment gap was discussed in the context of the ES. On 3 March 2011, members of the D66 party and the Green Left party

were having an extensive discussion with the minister of Social Affairs and Employment. Especially the member of the Green Left party criticised the government's stance on how to apply the EU's recommendations in the Semester process and recommended to differentiate more: the Netherlands was already performing well on the female labour market participation rates, but not on related problems, such as the financial independence of women. The minister, member of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, showed his reluctance in using the European recommendations more, by answering the following:

I do not plan to differentiate within groups. I do not think that is wise. We all have the insight that there are many reasons to increase the labour market participation of women, elderly, people from marginalized groups and people partially fit for work as much as possible. No Europe or European goals are necessary to achieve this. (Translated from Dutch) (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2011a, p. 10)

Furthermore, a member of the Christian Democratic Appeal questioned in 2012 what lessons the Secretary of State learns from the recommendations made in the CSRs, as he believed the recommendations to be too abstract (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2012a).

No discussions were held on childcare in the context of the ES, but there were occasions in which ministers praised the quality of the formal childcare sector in the Netherlands. In 2012, for example, the minister of Social Affairs and Employment, member of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, defended the international position of the Netherlands (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2012c). The minister praised the many childcare spots and the financial support given to the formal childcare sector, that helped facilitate the high labour participation in the country. To support his claims, comparisons between other OECD and

European countries were also made (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2012c). Furthermore, the minister of Social Affairs and Employment, member of the Labour Party, praised the Netherlands in 2015 for belonging to the best countries in Europe in terms of labour participation and the ability to combine work and care. The high quality and affordability of the formal childcare should therefore be maintained (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015a).

The gender pay gap was also discussed on a number of occasions. On 18 June 2014, a question was asked about the suggestions that the EC had made on closing the gender pay gap. However, based on the discussion and the lack of a reference to the ES, the question is not asked because of any documents published in the ES process (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2014). On 17 November 2016, the gender pay gap is discussed, in which a report on the Global Gender Gap and an Action plan on labour market discrimination are referenced. The ES, however, is not (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2016c). On 12 December 2018, the Social Party briefly touches upon the existence of the gender pay gap and the bill that they submitted on the matter, but no reference was made to the ES (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2019a). The most interesting discussion that touched upon both the gender pay gap and the ES, however, occurred on 7 March 2018. On this day, the EU-Action plan 2017-2019 is discussed. While the ES is not discussed specifically, details on the Action Plan shows that the gender pay gap is monitored through the ES. Interestingly, the minister comments on the importance of closing the gender pay gap, while also emphasizing the supportive role that the EU should have in this manner and points towards national measures taken to address the gender pay gap (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018a).

Some general comments were made on the ES process itself, which mostly concerned the ability of the EU to comment on social aspects in general. In 2011, for example, a member of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy commented on the social policy suggestions that the EU is able to make in the ES and finds it an "intervention in the policy space of the

Member States” (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2011a, p. 4). In 2015, Minister Asscher from the Labour Party explained an EC road map to stimulate female labour market participation, but emphasized that it is important to closely monitor the subsidiarity of the comments made by the EC on the matter (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2015b).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses the findings from chapter five and provides an answer to the research question: To what extent has the EU been successful in mobilizing the Dutch government and Dutch parliament to address gender equality issues in employment policies, and how can this be explained? The answer to this research question was sought for by analysing whether the frames that the EU posed were accepted or commented upon in the NRPs, and by analysing whether the documents published in the ES were discussed in plenary debates, the European Affairs committee and the Social Affairs and Employment committee. A total of five expectations were formulated. They are answered in this section, before answering the overall research question.

The frame analysis identified two collective action frames from the five EU documents that were analysed: a frame that tackled the gender employment gap, and a frame that tackled the gender pay gap. Childcare was predominantly used as a prognostic element of the collective action frame on the gender employment gap. Through strategic processes, the EU created these frames to mobilize the Dutch government and Dutch parliament in accepting the problems and solutions that they posed in the documents created in the ES process. With this, the EU hoped to create policy change on the Dutch national level.

The mobilization effect of the Dutch government was based on an analysis of all documents published in the ES process. Its effect became most evident from a comparison between the CSRs and the NRPs; the Dutch government was expected to comment on all the recommendations made in the CSRs and stated the ways in which they have reacted, or planned to react, on the recommendations. The mobilization effect of the Dutch parliament, on the other hand, was based on discussions that they held about the documents published in the ES process. These discussions were held in plenary debates, or two committee debates.

Based on the literature review in chapter two, expectations were formulated that could help explain the degree of mobilization. Expectation one stated that the EU has been unsuccessful in mobilizing the Dutch government to address issues of gender equality in employment policies, because of the diminished presence of policy suggestions on gender equality issues in documents published in the ES process. While Ivan-Ungureanu and Marcu (2006) found a diminished presence of gender equality suggestions in the EES, this research found that it depended on the analysed documents. The frames were most prominent in the JERs and the entire frame identification process could be done solely by analysing these documents. As the JERs grew in length each year, the policy suggestions related to gender only became more prominent. However, this did not influence the mobilization effect, as the NRPs only replied directly to recommendations made in the CSRs. A decrease in the utilization of recommendations for the gender employment gap were recognized, as they were only made in the CSRs of 2012, 2013, and 2014. A decrease could not be recognized in case of the gender pay gap, as no recommendations were made with this frame. Therefore, this expectation is only partially correct.

Expectation two stated that the EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch government if the EU uses all three core framing tasks in their collective action frame. The research showed that the frame of the gender pay gap lacked the motivational element. While all three core framing tasks were present in the collective action frame that focused on increasing female labour market participation, the Dutch government only responded to the suggestions when the frame was used for a recommendation in the CSR, or when they discussed the progress of the Netherlands in the Europe 2020 Strategy. This contradicts the findings from Benford & Snow (2000) to some extent, as they stated that the presence of the three core framing tasks was necessary for mobilization. As a result, expectation two is incorrect.

Expectation three stated that the EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch government if the frame resonates with the Dutch government's beliefs, based on the credibility and salience of the collective action frame. While the credibility was high in both collective action frames, there were some issues regarding the salience of collective action frames. In case of the gender pay gap, a lack of comments from both the Dutch government and parliament made it impossible to comment on the salience of this frame. In case of the gender employment gap and childcare, a possible friction between the centrality and narrative fidelity of the frame could be recognized. This was based on the high rates of part-time female employment in the Netherlands (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2014). As there were problems with the resonance of both collective action frames and this could have affected the degree of mobilization, expectation three is incorrect.

Expectation four stated that the EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch government if the frame resonates with the Dutch welfare and employment regimes. Kantola (201) stated that the Netherlands has a conservative welfare state, and this research found that the employment regime is based on high female part-time employment rates. Since this expectation predominantly focuses on employment, it is hard to apply the frame of the gender pay gap to this expectation. In case of the frame on the gender employment gap and childcare, it can be argued that the JERs were at times rather critical of the high female part-time employment rate in the Netherlands. Yet, when the frame on the gender employment gap and childcare was applied in a recommendation in the CSR, it only addressed female labour market participation and did not follow up on the critical notes written in the JERs. However, since the frame was applied in CSR recommendations, the Dutch government replied to it in their NRPs and was therefore mobilized. As a result, expectation four is partially correct, but only based on the CSR that used the collective action frame in its recommendations.

Expectation five stated that the EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch parliament if the frame is discussed in plenary debates and/or in committee debates of the Dutch parliament. The two committees analysed for this research were the Social Affairs and Employment Committee and the European Affairs Committee. The analysis showed that the publication of these documents and its content were no topic of debate in these entities. If any of the documents were stated in the minutes, the comments were mostly based on confusions regarding the ES process, and the intrusiveness of the EU because of their recommendations on other topics. These findings also underscore issues of democratic legitimacy in the EES process, at least for the Netherlands specifically (López-Santana, 2006; Kreilinger, 2018). Since the Dutch parliament was not mobilized, expectation five is incorrect.

In all, it can be concluded that the EU has failed to mobilize the Dutch government in addressing the gender employment gap, the gender pay gap, and childcare policies. The inability of the EU in mobilizing the Dutch government and Dutch parliament to address the gender equality indicators in Dutch employment policies can be attributed to three causes. Firstly, both collective action frames were underutilized by the EU. While a collective action frame on the gender employment gap is recognizable, the ES process was more concerned with the prognostic element of the frame: increasing female labour market participation. Although each JER discussed this topic in great length and the CRs followed up on this, the CSRs only included the topic within a general recommendation on increasing labour market participation between 2011 and 2014. The implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights into the ES in 2018 would have been a good opportunity for the EU to re-introduce the topic, but instead turned out to be another missed opportunity.

Secondly, both collective action frames were underdeveloped in some way. The frame on the gender pay gap missed a clear motivational element and due to the underutilization of the frame, it was not possible to distinguish the salience of the frame. While the incomplete

frame is increasingly used in the JERs from 2015 onwards, the CSRs did not use the frame in one of its recommendations, and, consequently, the NRPs fail to discuss the topic further. Frame contradictions and other inconsistencies were also recognized: the use of several terms that relate to gender and wages, such as the gender pay gap, the gender earnings gap, and differentiating between an “hourly gender wage gap” and an “average gender wage gap” as was done in the 2020 CR, can lead to seemingly contradictory conclusions and confusion amongst the readers (European Commission, 2020a, p. 46). The frame on the gender employment gap, on the other hand, was mostly focused on (increasing) female labour market participation when included in one of the CSR recommendations, and did not address childcare policies any further.

Thirdly, from the analysis became clear that the EU had chosen to focus on more prominent problems that the Netherlands faced. This is hardly surprising: compared to other EU countries, the Netherlands continued to be one of the top performers on the gender employment gap. The Netherlands had already reached the goal of 75% overall labour participation, as formulated in the Europe 2020 Strategy, in 2011 (Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, 2011) The country increased their personal goal to 80%, but reached that goal as well in 2016 (Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, 2011; National Reform Programme, 2017). Although part-time employment amongst Dutch women was already standard practice in 2011, it only became an issue for the Netherlands from an economic perspective when the labour market grew tight and was addressed as such in their NRP of 2020 (National Reform Programme, 2020).

Future research could focus on other social policies that the EU has commented upon in the past: topics as pensions, wage setting and housing were also discussed in the documents, but were beyond the scope of this research to include in the analysis. Hence, it would be interesting to see whether the EU has successfully created collective action frames for these

social problems and has been able to mobilize the Netherlands. Furthermore, the documents published in the ES process after 2020 could also be analysed, to see whether the social element has become more prominent. Finally, future research could examine ways to involve the Dutch parliament more into the EES process, thereby improving the democratic legitimacy of the process.

7. Bibliography

- Al 23 jaar op rij meer vrouwen dan mannen in hoger onderwijs.* (2023, March 8). Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2023/10/al-23-jaar-op-rij-meer-vrouwen-dan-mannen-in-hoger-onderwijs>
- Ahrens, P. (2019). The birth, life and death of policy instruments: 35 years of EU gender equality policy programmes. *West European Politics*, 42(1), 45-66.
- Arbeidsdeelname; kerncijfers.* (2022, November 29). CBS StatLine. Retrieved May 25, 2023. <https://mvstat.cbs.nl/#/MVstat/nl/dataset/26041NED/table?dl=72F6B>.
- Benford, R.D. & Snow, D.A. (2000). Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 611-639.
- Berger, L. (2023). *Ik werk al (ik krijg er alleen niet voor betaald)*. De Correspondent.
- Council of Europe. (n.d.). *What is gender mainstreaming?*
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>
- Council of the European Union. (2011a). *Council Recommendation of 12 July 2011 on the National Reform Programme 2011 of the Netherlands and delivering a Council opinion on the updated Stability Programme of the Netherlands, 2011-2015*. Brussels.
- Council of the European Union. (2011b). *Joint Employment Report*. Brussels.
- Council of the European Union. (2013). *The Annual Growth Survey and the Joint Employment Report in the context of the European Semester: political guidance on employment and social policies – Council Conclusions*. Brussels.
- Council of the European Union. (2014). *Council conclusions on the 2014 Annual Growth Survey and Joint Employment Report: political guidance on employment and social policies*. Brussels.
- Council of the European Union. (2015). *Joint Employment Report 2015*. Brussels.
- Council of the European Union. (2016a). *Joint Employment Report 2016*. Brussels.

- Council of the European Union. (2016b). *The 2016 Annual Growth Survey and Joint Employment Report: Political guidance on employment and social policies – Council Conclusions (7 March 2016)*. Brussels.
- Dawson, M. (2018). New Governance and the Displacement of Social Europe: the case of the European Semester. *European Constitutional Law Review*, 14(1), 191-209.
- De la Porte, C. & Pochet, P. (2012). Why and how (still) study the Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC)? *Journal of European Social Policy*, 22(3), 336-349.
- De Ruijter, J.M.P., Van Doorne-Huiskes, A. Schippers, J.J. (2003). Size and Causes of the Occupational Gender Wage-gap in the Netherlands. *European Sociological Review*, 19(4), 345-360.
- De Ruiter, R. (2010). EU soft law and the functioning of representative democracy: the use of methods of open co-ordination by Dutch and British parliaments. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 17(6), 874-890.
- De Ruiter, R. (2012). Full Disclosure? The Open Method of Coordination, parliamentary debates and media coverage. *European Union Politics*, 14(1), 95-114.
- De Ruiter, R. (2014). Public Parliamentary Activities and Open Methods of Coordination. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 20(1), 62-77.
- De Witte, R. (2022, November 10). *Mirjam verdiende 1000 euro per maand minder dan haar jongere, minder ervaren mannelijke collega*. Linda.
<https://www.linda.nl/nieuws/entertainment/mirjam-salaris-1000-euro-minder-per-maand-dan-mannelijke-collega/>
- Duina, F. & Raunio, T. (2007). The open method of co-ordination and national parliaments: further marginalization or new opportunities? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 14(4), 489-506.
- Elomäki, A. & Kantola, J. (2020). European Social Partners as Gender Equality Actors in EU

Social and Economic Governance. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 58(4), 999-1015.

EUR-Lex. (n.d.). *Open method of coordination*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/open-method-of-coordination.html>

EUR-Lex. (2010). *EUROPE 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52010DC2020>

EUR-Lex. (2016). *Consolidated version of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union – Article 148 (ex Article 128 TEC)*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12016E148>

EUR-Lex. (2017a). *European Employment Strategy (EES)*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=LEGISSUM:european_employment_strategy

EUR-Lex. (2017b). *Open method of coordination*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/open-method-of-coordination.html>

EUR-Lex. (2022). *Division of competences within the European Union*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/division-of-competences-within-the-european-union.html>

European Commission. (n.d.a.). *Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion*. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1&langId=en>

European Commission. (n.d.b.). *EU action for equal pay*. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/eu-action-equal-pay_en

European Commission. (n.d.c.). *The European Semester explained: An explanation of the EU's economic governance*. https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/european-semester/framework/european-semester-explained_en

European Commission. (2012). *Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on the Netherlands' 2012 national reform programme and delivering a Council opinion on the Netherlands' stability programme for 2012-2015*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2013). *Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on the Netherlands' 2013 national reform programme and delivering a Council opinion on the Netherlands' stability programme for 2012-2017*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2014a). *Draft Joint Employment Report From the Commission and the Council. Accompanying the Communication from the Commission and the Annual Growth Survey 2015*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2014b). *Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on the Netherlands' 2014 national reform programme and delivering a Council opinion on the Netherlands' 2014 stability programme*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2015). *Country Report The Netherlands 2015 Including an In-Depth Review of the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2016). *Country Report The Netherlands 2016 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2017). *Joint Employment Report 2017*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2018a). *Country Report The Netherlands 2018 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2018b). *Joint Employment Report 2018*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2019a). *Country Report The Netherlands 2019 Including an In-Depth Review on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2019b). *Joint Employment Report 2019*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2020a). *Commission Staff Working Document – Country Report The Netherlands 2020*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2020b, March 5). *Gender Equality Strategy: Striving for a Union of Equality*. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_358

European Commission. (2020c). *Joint Employment Report 2020*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2021) *The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan*.

<https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/european-pillar-of-social-rights/en/>

European Commission. (2022). *Commission welcomes Member States' targets for a more social Europe by 2030*.

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10299>

European Institute of Gender Equality. (n.d.). *How closing the gender labour market activity and pay gap leads to economic growth*. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/economic-and-financial-affairs/economic-benefits-gender-equality/activity-pay>

European Parliament. (2023, April 04). *Understanding the gender pay gap: definition and causes*.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20200109STO69925/understanding-the-gender-pay-gap-definition-and-causes>

Eurostat. (2021, March 5). *Women remain outnumbered in management*.

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20210305-2>

Eurostat: Data Browser. (2023a). *Employment rate by sex*.

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tesem010/default/table?lang=en>.

Retrieved 25 May 2023.

Eurostat: Data Browser. (2023b). *Gender employment gap*.

- <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TESEM060/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=aefb3ecf-3dcc-4009-b77e-9a7c76e73159>. Retrieved 25 May 2023.
- Eurostat: Data Browser. (2023c). *Gender pay gap in unadjusted form*.
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/SDG_05_20/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=6f069419-fcb7-47a2-bdda-c22acca36a0e. Retrieved 25 May 2023.
- Fransen, E., Plantenga, J., Vlasblom, J.D. (2012). Why do women still earn less than men? Decomposing the Dutch gender gap, 1996-2006. *Applied Economics*, 44, 4343-4354.
- General Secretariat of the Council. (2023). *Infographic – European Semester*.
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/european-semester/>
- Geurts, Lize. (2021, September 29). *Pensioenuitkering vrouwen gemiddeld 40 procent lager dan van mannen*. NRC. <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2021/09/29/pensioenuitkering-vrouwen-gemiddeld-veertig-procent-lager-dan-van-mannen-a4060064?t=1698858275>
- Government of the Netherlands. (n.d.). *Women's labour force participation*.
<https://www.government.nl/topics/gender-equality/womens-labour-force-participation>
- Gratis kinderopvang wordt twee jaar uitgesteld, kabinet bezuinigt voor het eerst in jaren*. (2023, April 26). NOS, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2472924-gratis-kinderopvang-wordt-twee-jaar-uitgesteld-kabinet-bezuinigt-voor-het-eerst-in-jaren>
- Hallerberg, M., Marzinotto, B. & Wolff, G.B. (2018). Explaining the evolving role of national parliaments under the European Semester. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(2), 250-267.
- Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History. (2021, December 2022). *Gender pay gap in the Netherlands*. <https://institute-genderequality.org/news-publications/labor-and-care/womens-labor-participation/gender-pay-gap-in-the-netherlands/>
- International Labour Organization. (2021). *Gender gap in labour force participation rates*.

<https://www.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Employment/barriers-women#global-gap/gap-labour-force>

Ivan-Ungureanu, C. & Marcu, M. (2006). The Lisbon Strategy. *Romanian Journal of Economic Forecasting*, 3(1), 74-83. https://ipe.ro/rjef/rjef1_06/rjef1_06_6.pdf

Janta, B. (2014). *Caring for children in Europe: How childcare, parental leave and flexible working arrangements interact in Europe*. RAND corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR554.html.

Kantola, J. (2010). *Gender and the European Union*. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Klein, C. (2022, August 13). 'Achilleshiel van maatschappij', zes oorzaken van personeelstekort. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2440392-achilleshiel-van-maatschappij-zes-oorzaken-van-personeelstekort>

Klimaat, kinderopvang, hoger minimumloon: de plannen uit coalitieakkoord. (2021, December 15). NOS, <https://nos.nl/collectie/13884/artikel/2409601-klimaat-kinderopvang-hoger-minimumloon-de-plannen-uit-coalitieakkoord>

Kreilinger, V. (2018). Scrutinizing the European Semester in national parliaments: what are the drivers of parliamentary involvement? *Journal of European Integration*, 40(3), 325-340.

López-Santana, M. (2006). The domestic implications of European soft law: framing and transmitting change in employment policy. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13(4), 481-499.

Maatsch, A. (2017). Effectiveness of the European Semester: Explaining Domestic Consent and Contestation. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 70, 691-709.

Man-vrouwloonverschil weer iets verder afgenomen. (2022, November 14). Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2022/46/man-vrouwloonverschil-weer-iets-verder-afgenomen>

Mees, A. (2023, March 27). *Vrouw meer werken, man meer zorgen? Overheid begint Campagne*, NOS. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2469098-vrouw-meer-werken-man-meer-zorgen-overheid-begint-campagne>

Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation. (2011). *National Reform Programme 2011 The Netherlands*. The Hague. https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2011-european-semester-national-plans-netherlands_en

Ministry of Economic Affairs. (2014). *National Reform Programme 2014 The Netherlands*. The Hague. https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2014-european-semester-national-plans-netherlands_en

Ministry of Economic Affairs. (2015). *National Reform Programme 2015 The Netherlands*. The Hague. https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2015-european-semester-national-plans-netherlands_en

National Reform Programme 2012. (2012). https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2012-european-semester-national-plans_en?prefLang=nl

National Reform Programme 2013 The Netherlands. (2013). https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2013-european-semester-national-plans-netherlands_en

National Reform Programme 2017. (2017). https://commission.europa.eu/content/2017-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stabilityconvergence-programmes_en?prefLang=nl

National Reform Programme 2018. (2018). https://commission.europa.eu/content/2018-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stabilityconvergence-programmes_en?prefLang=nl

National Reform Programme 2019. (2019). <https://commission.europa.eu/content/2019->

[european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stabilityconvergence-programmes_en](#)

National Reform Programme 2020. (2020). https://commission.europa.eu/content/2020-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stabilityconvergence-programmes_en?prefLang=nl

O'Connor, J.S. (2005). Employment-anchored social policy, gender equality and the open method of coordination in the European Union. *European Societies*, 7(1), 27-52.

OECD. (2019). *Part-time and Partly Equal: Gender and Work in the Netherlands*, OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/204235cf-en>

Preece, D.V. (2022). Creating and Dismantling Social Europe. In L. Rienner (Ed.), *Dismantling Social Europe* (pp. 43-63). Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Smismans, S. (2004). *EU Employment Policy: Decentralisation or Centralisation through the Open Method of Coordination?* (EUI Working Paper LAW No. 2004/1).

<https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=641117074119119071082019083094082024016073027027075062101004092022079120102113124011096100063045053098009093084109109019098123007025002022120089083108029072026005053124007104075118006102018002119015095024096069088126093080124009084104097105066&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE>

Smith, N. (2023, April 4). *Neoliberalism: Political and Social Science*. Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/neoliberalism>.

Snow, D.A., Vliegthart, R., Ketelaars, P. (2019). The framing perspective on social movements: Its conceptual roots and architecture. In D.A. Snow, S.A. Soule, H. Kriesi, & H.J. McCammon (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* (pp. 392-410). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

The Council of the EU & the European Council. (2023). *How the European Semester Works*.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/european-semester/how-european-semester-works/#timeline>

The World Bank. (2022, December 6). *Part time employment, female (% of total female employment) – Netherlands*.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.PART.FE.ZS?locations=NL>

Tholoniati, L. (2010). The Career of the Open Method of Coordination: Lessons from a ‘Soft’ EU Instrument. *West European Politics*, 33(1), 93-117.

Tijdens, K.G. & van Klaveren, M. (2011). De loonkloof tussen mannen en vrouwen: Een review van het onderzoek in Nederland. (AIAS working paper, Nr. 114). University of Amsterdam.

Tomlinson, J. (2011). Gender equality and the state: a review of objectives, policies and progress in the European Union. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(18), 3755-3774.

Trubek, D. & Trubek, L. (2007). New Governance and Legal Regulation: Complementary, Rivalry or Transformation. *Columbia Journal of European Law*, 13(3), 539-64.

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2011a, March 22). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg, gehouden op 3 maart 2011, inzake de Raad Werkgelegenheid en Sociaal Beleid*.

Tweede Kamer.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2011Z03631&did=2011D12048>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2011b, July 19). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg, gehouden op 16 juni 2011, inzake Raad Algemene Zaken d.d. 21 juni 2011*. Tweede Kamer.

Tweede Kamer.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2011Z11051&did=2011D36748>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2012a, July 24). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg, gehouden op 20 juni 2012, inzake Raad Werkgelegenheid en Sociaal Beleid van 21 en 22 juni 2012 (Luxemburg)*. Tweede Kamer.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2012Z09831&did=2012D29511>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2012b, August 1). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg, gehouden op 21 juni 2012, inzake Raad Algemene Zaken d.d. 26 juni 2012*. Tweede Kamer.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2012Z12210&did=2012D30963>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2012c, March 8). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg, gehouden op 8 maart 2012, inzake de Kinderopvang*. Tweede Kamer.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2011Z20216&did=2012D11701>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2013, April 17). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg, gehouden op 6 maart 2013, over de Raad Algemene Zaken d.d. 11 maart 2013*.

Tweede Kamer.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2013Z02157&did=2013D11604>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2014, August 14). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg, gehouden op 18 juni 2014, over de Raad Werkgelegenheid en Sociaal Beleid d.d. 19 juni 2014*. Tweede Kamer.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2014Z10934&did=2014D23978>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2015a, March 12). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg,*

gehouden op 5 februari 2015, over Kinderopvang. Tweede Kamer.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2014Z20855&did=2015D05368>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2015b, November 25). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg, gehouden op 30 september 2015, over Arbeid en zorg.* Tweede Kamer.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2015Z15254&did=2015D38641>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2016a, March 8). *Tweede Kamer, 61^e vergadering.* Tweede Kamer.

https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/detail/2015-2016/61

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2016b, April 21). *Tweede Kamer, 80^e vergadering.*

Tweede Kamer.

https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/detail/2015-2016/80

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2016c, November 30). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg, gehouden op 17 november 2016, over Arbeidsmarktdiscriminatie.* Tweede Kamer.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2016Z20353&did=2016D45224>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2017, December 1). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg, gehouden op 16 november 2017, over de Nederlandse inzet voor een Europese sociale top op 17 november 2017.* Tweede Kamer.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2017Z15278&did=2017D33578>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2018a, April 5). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg,*

gehouden op 7 maart 2018, over de Formele Raad Werkgelegenheid en Sociaal Beleid van 15 maart 2018. Tweede Kamer.

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2018Z03354&did=2018D19044>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2018b, April 19). *Tweede Kamer, 76^e vergadering.*

Tweede Kamer.

https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/detail/2017-2018/76

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2018c, September 26). *Tweede Kamer, 5^e vergadering.*

Tweede Kamer.

https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/detail/2018-2019/5

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2019a, December 24). *Verslag van een algemeen overleg, gehouden op 12 december 2018, over Arbeidsmarktdiscriminatie. Tweede Kamer.*

<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/commissieverslagen/detail?id=2018Z21789&did=2018D60397>

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2019b, November 27). *Tweede Kamer, 29^e vergadering.*

Tweede Kamer.

https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/detail/2019-2020/29

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. (2019c, November 28). *Tweede Kamer, 30^e vergadering.*

Tweede Kamer.

https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/detail/2019-2020/30

Vanhercke, B. (2020). Chapter 5: From the Lisbon strategy to the European Pillar of Social Rights: the many lives of the Social open Method of Coordination. In: Vanhercke, B., Ghailani D., Spasova, S. and Pochet, P. (eds.): *Social Policy in the European Union 1999-2019: the long and winding road* (pp. 99-113). European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) and European Social Observatory (OSE).

Visser, J., Wilthagen, T., Beltzer, R. and Koot-Van Der Putte, E. (2009). The Netherlands:

From atypicality to typicality. In S. Sciarra, P. Davies, M. Freedland (Eds.),

Employment Policy and the Regulation of Part-time work in the European Union: A

Comparative Analysis (pp 190-223). Cambridge University Press.

Women Inc. (2022, November 8). *Equal Pay Helpdesk*.

<https://www.womeninc.nl/actueel/equal-pay-helpdesk>

Yerkes, M.A. (2011). *Transforming the Dutch Welfare State: Social Risks and Corporatist*

Reform. Bristol University Press, Policy Press.

Appendix 1: Overview of Expectations and Methodology

Theory	Expectation	Independent variable of expectation	Dependent variable of expectation	Indicator independent variable	Indicator dependent variable	Source
The presence of gender equality suggestions has decreased in the EES due to changing programs and goals (Ivan-Ungureanu & Marcu, 2006)	The EU has been unsuccessful in mobilizing the Dutch government to address issues of gender equality in employment policies, because of the diminished presence of policy suggestions on gender equality issues in documents published in the ES process.	Policy suggestions on gender equality issues in employment policies	The mobilization of the Dutch government	Policy suggestions made by the EC on the following three topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender employment gap - Gender pay gap - Childcare policies 	Comments on the policy suggestions made by the EC in the Dutch NRPs, on the following three topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender employment gap - Gender pay gap - Childcare policies 	European Commission documents (2011-2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JER - Council Conclusions - Country Reports - NRPs - CSRs
The presence of the three core framing tasks is essential for the mobilization effect (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et al., 2019)	The EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch government if the EU uses all three core framing tasks in their collective action frame.	Three core framing tasks of the collective action frame <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diagnostic framing - Prognostic framing - Motivational framing 	The mobilization of the Dutch government	Policy suggestions made by the EC on the following three topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender employment gap - Gender pay gap - Childcare policies 	Comments on the policy suggestions made by the EC in the Dutch NRPs, on the following three topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender employment gap - Gender pay gap - Childcare policies 	European Commission documents (2011-2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JER - Council Conclusions - Country Reports - NRPs - CSRs
The degree of resonance of the collective action frame affects the degree of mobilization (Benford & Snow, 2000)	The EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch government if the frame resonates with the Dutch government's beliefs, based on the resonance (credibility and salience) of the collective action frame.	Resonance of the collective action frame <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Credibility - Salience 	The mobilization of the Dutch government	Policy suggestions made by the EC on the following three topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender employment gap - Gender pay gap - Childcare policies 	Comments on the policy suggestions made by the EC in the Dutch NRPs, on the following three topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender employment gap - Gender pay gap - Childcare policies 	European Commission documents (2011-2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JER - Council Conclusions - Country Reports - NRPs - CSRs
The welfare and employment regime affect the willingness to accept policy suggestions on gender equality issues (Tomlinson, 2011; Kantola, 2010)	The EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch government if the frame resonates with the Dutch welfare and employment regime.	Welfare and employment regime of the Netherlands	The mobilization of the Dutch government	Policy suggestions made by the EC on the following three topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender employment gap - Gender pay gap - Childcare policies 	Comments on the policy suggestions made by the EC in the Dutch NRPs, on the following three topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender employment gap - Gender pay gap - Childcare policies 	European Commission documents (2011-2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JER - Council Conclusions - Country Reports - NRPs - CSRs

<p>The involvement of national parliaments in the EES is important for compliance and democratic legitimacy (López-Santana, 2006; Krelinger, 2018).</p>	<p>The EU's collective action frame is effective in mobilizing the Dutch parliament if the frame is discussed in plenary debates and/or in committee debates of the Dutch parliament.</p>	<p>Policy suggestions on gender equality issues, made by the EC, and the reactions upon them by the Dutch government</p>	<p>The mobilization of the Dutch Parliament</p>	<p>Policy suggestions made by the EC, and the reactions upon them by the Dutch government, based on the following three topics: - Gender employment gap - Gender pay gap - Childcare policies</p>	<p>Reactions made by Dutch members of parliament on the policy suggestions made by the EC and the responses upon them by the Dutch government, based on the following three topics: - Gender employment gap - Gender pay gap - Childcare policies</p>	<p>European Commission documents (2011-2020) - JER - Council Conclusions - Country Reports - NRPs - CSRs</p> <p>Minutes of the Dutch parliament (2013-2020): - Plenary debates - Social Affairs and Employment Committee - European Affairs Committee</p>
---	---	--	---	--	--	---