

From Presence to Impact: Assessing the Substantive Impact of Female Representation in the European Parliament's Committees

by

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Abstract

Over the past decades, the number of female representatives in the European Parliament has significantly increased. With a higher proportion of women than most of its member states' parliaments, the European Parliament is often seen as a leader in gender representation. This development is particularly noteworthy given the commitment that the parliament has made to gender mainstreaming. Since the European Parliament's committees perform the bulk of the legislative work, examining the impact of female representation within these committees is essential for understanding the inclusion of the gender perspective in broader legislative outcomes.

This study seeks to identify whether descriptive representation of women in the European Parliament leads to higher substantive representation of gender equality values and principles in legislation. Despite the increase in female representation, the effect of descriptive representation (share of women) on substantive representation (policy outcomes) has hardly been studied from the perspective of the European Parliament's committees. Therefore, a qualitative, comparative co-variational analysis, comparing the Committee on Human Rights (under the Committee of Foreign Affairs) and the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, was conducted. Various policy documents, covering the entire process from initial amendments to committee's opinions, and final law, are systematically coded and analysed through a content analysis.

The empirical findings show that while female representatives exert considerable influence in advocating for the gender perspective in the initial stages of proposing amendments, this influence diminishes at higher levels of the legislative process. The findings challenge the traditional explanations of a straightforward relation between descriptive and substantive representation, but do not completely dismiss the relation between the two. Rather, it indicates that there are various levels of substantive representation during the policy process. To enhance substantive representation and align with the European Union's commitment to gender mainstreaming, measures should be taken to ensure that the gender perspective better sustains throughout the policy making process. Future research should focus on identifying and addressing the constraints that prevent these amendments from being adopted in law.

Keywords: Descriptive representation, substantive representation, European Parliament, committees, gender equality

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And as a little six-year-old girl once wrote in a Dutch newspaper:

“When I grow up and there still hasn’t been a girl as prime minister, I’ll do it.”

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List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning	Page
AFCO	Committee on Constitutional Affairs	22
AFET	Committee on Foreign Affairs	23
CRMR	Critical Raw Materials Regulation	26
CSDDD	Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive	26
CSRD	Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive	26
DROI	Subcommittee on Human Rights	9
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality	7
ENVI	Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	9
EP	European Parliament	7
EPP	Group of the European People's Party	16
EU	European Union	7
FEMM	Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality	15
FLR	Forced Labour Regulation	26
GMN	Gender Mainstreaming Network	15
Greens/EFA	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	29
GSPR	Generalized Scheme of Tariff Preferences Regulation	26
GUE/NGL	The Left group in the European Parliament	30
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union	7
JTFR	Just Transition Fund Regulation	26
MEP	Member of the European Parliament	7
RRFR	Recovery and Resilience Facility Regulation	26
SANT	Subcommittee on Public Health	23
S&D	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	16

1. Introduction

Globally, the number of female representatives at various levels of government has significantly increased. According to data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the number of women in parliament has more than doubled since 1995, reaching a global average of 26.9% women in parliaments as of 2024 (IPU, 2024). Europe performs slightly above average with 31.0% women in parliaments. The European Parliament (EP) even surpasses the European Union's (EU) average, with 39.8% of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) currently being women (European Parliament, 2024).

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the IPU have developed a tool for European and national institutions to evaluate and track the degree of gender sensitivity within their parliamentary structures and processes (EIGE, 2024-a). According to their definition, a gender-sensitive parliament responds to “the needs and interests of both men and women in their structures, operations, methods and work” (IPU, 2011, p. 6). In this context, the concept of gender mainstreaming becomes particularly relevant. In 1995 the EU formally committed to gender mainstreaming as a strategy during the Beijing Platform for Action at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women. Accordingly, the European Parliament officially launched its gender mainstreaming policy in 2003 (Shreeves & Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke, 2021). The EP defines gender mainstreaming as: “the integration of the gender perspective into every stage of policy processes with a view to promoting equality between women and men” (European Parliament, n.d.-a).

The EP’s commitment to gender sensitivity is therefore not just a reflection of its internal values but also a critical component of its role in setting legislative benchmarks and standards across the EU. Thus, the EP is known as a pivotal arena for advancing women’s rights. The high number of female representatives in the EP contributes to the descriptive representation of women within the EU, particularly since the EP is the only EU institution directly elected by citizens (European Parliament, n.d.-b). Descriptive representation refers to parliamentarians reflecting the demographics of those they represent (McEvoy, 2016). Now that women are more frequently appointed to parliaments and the EP is approaching gender balance, attention should turn to the impact of this gender-balanced representation on legislative outcomes. Substantive representation, in this context, refers to the extent to which female representatives advocate for and implement policies that advance gender equality (Wängnerud, 2009; EIGE, 2024-b). Existing research suggests that higher descriptive representation of women should eventually lead to higher substantive representation (Mansbridge, 1999; Wängnerud, 2009). Hence, substantive representation appears essential for achieving true gender-sensitive parliaments, as per EIGE and IPU definition, which should actively respect and deliver on gender equality.

1.1. Research aims and question

Existing empirical research on the link between descriptive and substantive representation is dominated by single-country studies (Rayment & McCallion, 2023; Wängnerud, 2000). Moreover, little is known about the impact of descriptive representation on women’s substantive representation within the

European Parliament. The European Parliament provides a particularly interesting case for representation research, given its high average descriptive representation compared to its member states and its serious commitment to gender mainstreaming (European Parliament, 2022). Studies that did examine representation in the European Parliament focused on specific delegations (Cullen, 2018) or on descriptive representation (McEvoy, 2016; Rhodin Edlund, 2013), leaving out the relation with substantive representation. This work takes a different approach and examines the entire legislative process centred around the work done in the parliament's committees. The European Parliament maintains a specialised committee system that is responsible for most of the work of the European Parliament. MEPs often serve on several committees, in which they draft, amend, and endorse legislative proposals and reports stemming from both the Commission and the Council (European Parliament, n.d.-c). Despite the significant role these committees play in the legislative process, little representation research has been done related to their composition (Rhodin Edlund, 2013; Lühiste & Kenny, 2016) and accordingly their impact. This study thus contributes to the studies of representation and gender mainstreaming, specifically by tracing the complex, political process of policy making in the setting of the European Parliament in relation to descriptive and substantive representation of women. Therefore, the following research question will be answered:

Does female representation in the European Parliament's committees lead to substantive integration of gender equality values and principles in legislation?

1.2. Research approach

This study examines the impact of descriptive representation on substantive representation, applying a qualitative, co-variational case study comparing the committee on Human Rights (DROI) (represented by the committee on Foreign Affairs) and the committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) during the 2019-2024 parliamentary term. Descriptive representation, operationalized as the percentage of female committee members, and substantive representation, assessed through content analysis of policy documents and secondary sources like news articles and interviews, respectively form the independent and dependent variables. The cases – DROI and ENVI – were selected using maximum variation sampling, ensuring variation in the independent variable while controlling for the alternative factors – policy area and the presence of women's networks. The selected committees were analysed for their integration of gender perspectives, using qualitative coding to examine the presence and content of gender-related amendments. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how female representation in committees influences policy outcomes related to gender equality.

1.3. Theoretical and social relevance

Lehnert, Miller and Wonka (2007) define two dimensions of relevance: theoretical and social relevance. A study is theoretically relevant when it contributes to the existing body of research in the corresponding field (Lehnert et al., 2007, p. 25). While female representation has been extensively studied by scholars

over the past decades, the relevance of deepening the understanding of its concepts remains high due to the constantly evolving context. Additionally, descriptive and substantive representation of women have predominantly been studied within the context of single-country studies (Rayment & McCallion, 2023; Wängnerud, 2000) or specific delegations (Garboni, 2015), often overlooking the complexities within the European Parliament. Consequently, this study contributes to the academic discussion by adopting the understudied perspective of committees in the European Parliament.

The social relevance emerges from whether people are affected by the social phenomenon under study and whether the research makes a difference regarding a determined evaluative standard (Lehnert et al., 2007, p. 27). This study is socially relevant as it examines the impact of female representation within parliamentary committees, shedding light on how diversity can influence legislative outcomes. With the recent European elections in June 2024, and the rise of radical right parties throughout Europe, insight into the effect of female representation on legislative outcomes is increasingly relevant. Although citizens' perception of the EP as a second-order issue is unlikely to change overnight because of these research findings, it can contribute to enhancing the democratic legitimacy of the EU (Arnesen & Peters, 2017). By demonstrating how increased female representation within the European Parliament can lead to more diverse and effective legislative processes and outcomes, the study underscores the importance of gender diversity in strengthening democratic processes (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2013). A more empowered and effective EP, driven by diverse representation, can lead to a more democratic EU: "democracy depends on women's equal presence" (Franceschet & Piscopo, 2013, p.313).

1.4. Outline

Following this introduction, chapter two discusses the relevant literature, providing a comprehensive overview of existing research in the field. Then, chapter three presents the theoretical framework and the hypotheses derived from this framework. Chapter four provides a detailed explanation and justification of the research methodology used in the study. It covers the research approach, case selection, and the reliability and validity of the study. Consequently, chapter five presents the empirical findings of the study, following the policy making process within the committees. Chapter six discusses the findings in relation to the existing literature and addresses the limitations of the study. Finally, chapter seven concludes with a summary of the study's key insights and contributions and provides recommendations for future research.

2. Literature review

Theoretically this research draws upon a key debate in gender and representation studies, namely that of the interplay between descriptive and substantive representation (Celis & Childs, 2023; Wängnerud, 2009). Gender and representations studies have evolved significantly over the years, and so did the concepts of political representation (Celis & Childs, 2023). The following subsections will first provide a general overview of the gender and representation studies, building on the ideas of Pitkin (1967) and Phillips (1994). Subsequently, section 2.2. discusses the concepts of and the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation in more detail.

2.1. Representation research throughout the years

Today's politics and gender studies on representation stand on the shoulders of Hanna Pitkin's *The Concept of Representation* (1967) and Anne Phillips' *politics of presence theory* (1994). The relevance of these early studies on gender and representation is still ongoing (Celis & Childs, 2023). Pitkin conceptualizes representation as existing of four dimensions: formalistic representation, 'standing for' descriptive representation, 'standing for' symbolic representation, and representing as 'acting for'. The essence of representation, according to Pitkin, lies in this last form where representatives act on behalf of and in the interest of others (Pitkin, 1967). Pitkin's concept of substantive representation continues to be highly influential, emphasising the importance of acting in the interests of those represented, while addressing their needs (1967). Especially today, as the share of women in parliament rose over the years, this translated into a development from emphasis on descriptive representation towards substantive representation (Celis & Childs, 2023).

As Pitkin emphasised substantive representation, Phillips' focus is on the relevance of descriptive representation (Phillips, 1994). Democracy requires that all citizens should be entitled to effective participation and equality in voting. As an element of democracy, political equality requires equal representation, meaning that every member of society should be equally included within political institutions. Phillips' presents several arguments for increasing the number of women elected and attributes special emphasis on the argument of gender parity as justice (Phillips, 1994). This argument entails that women, and other marginalised groups, are structurally discriminated as they are "denied rights and opportunities that are currently available to men" (Phillips, 1994, p. 63). Therefore, Phillips' theory predicts that female interests are best represented by female politicians, suggesting a direct connection between the number of female politicians (descriptive representation) and them representing women's interests in parliament (substantive representation) (Wängnerud, 2009). Today, various authors (Mansbridge, 1999; Kroeber, 2018) and movements (e.g. Black Lives Matter) demonstrate that the concept of politics of presence not only applies on gender, but on all forms of underrepresentation (Phillips & Asenbaum, 2023).

Several scholars agree with the ideas of Pitkin and Phillips and acknowledge that descriptive representatives align better with the interests of the represented than the non-descriptive representatives

(Mansbridge, 1999; Wängnerud, 2009). The general idea in gender and representation studies is that women have specific interests arising from gender specific experiences. These women's interests, related to e.g. childbearing, gender-based violence and family life, could not be accurately represented by men and are often perceived as women's issues (Courtemanche & Green, 2017; Wängnerud, 2009). Today, the idea that women are a homogenous group sharing the same interests is rejected, because women's identities and experiences are influenced by various intersecting factors (Smooth, 2011; Celis & Mügge, 2018). However, women's interests – although in a new, more intersectional form – are still most often agreed on as dependent variable in research on substantive representation (Celis & Mügge, 2018).

2.2. Descriptive representation and its effect on substantive representation

2.2.1. Descriptive representation

Descriptive representation, conceptualized as the presence of female representatives in parliaments, has gained attention beyond gender and representation research (Verge et al., 2018, p.48; Wängnerud, 2009). Increasingly, we see a widespread recognition of the necessity for diverse representation across political and social spheres (Phillips & Asenbaum, 2023). Over the years, there has been a growing global emphasis on gender equality in parliaments and corporate boards. Sex quotas and increased scrutiny are means for raising awareness on and increasing descriptive representation (Aldrich & Daniel, 2019; Franceschet & Piscopo, 2013). Descriptive representation of women can simply be measured as the percentage of female parliamentarians (Celis & Childs, 2020, p.42; Wängnerud, 2009). This form of representation rests on the assumption that the representative and the represented share the same preferences and attitudes towards policy issues (McEvoy, 2016). Being represented descriptively is crucial for groups that have traditionally been marginalised in politics. The European Union and structures within its institutions for example, are historically established by men and often still influenced by gendered ideas, norms, and values (Mackay, 2008).

However, the conceptualization of descriptive representation today is more complex than may initially appear. In today's context, where society's understanding of gender is evolving and challenging the traditional binary classifications (female/male), it is essential to carefully examine the language used and how this might prescribe certain gender identities (Harder, 2023; Celis & Childs, 2023).

2.2.2. Substantive representation

Substantive representation describes the effects of women's presence in parliament (Wängnerud, 2009). For female parliamentarians to effectively represent their female constituents, they need to address their interests, needs and perspectives through their actions (Rayment & McCallion, 2023; Celis & Mügge, 2017). Substantive representation can be performed through a variety of actions: voting for proposals that address women's issues, speaking for women during parliamentary debates, submitting gender-sensitive legislation, and more qualitative by expanding the definition of what constitutes as the best interest of women (Celis, 2008).

The indicators used to measure substantive representation are dependent of the level of analysis that is taken by the researcher. These levels can vary from the micro level – focusing on individual representatives – to the macro level – the output of all representatives together (Kroeber, 2018). At the micro level substantive representation can be assessed by examining voting behaviour or evaluating speeches, interviews, and other statements of representatives on relevant claims (Bäck & Debus, 2019; Hinojosa, Carle & Woodall, 2018). In these examples substantive representation is assessed through a ‘claims-making’ approach (Severs, 2012). Siow (2023) conceptualizes substantive representation as descriptive representatives speaking *on behalf of* a certain group. Here, merely *speaking about* or *speaking against* a group is not considered as substantive representation. With his framework consisting of eight facets of speaking on behalf of a group, Siow provides an empirical method for measuring substantive representation (see Appendix I). At the macro level, substantive representation examines representation of women within the entire parliament. This could be measured by the number of proposals or amendments considerate of the gender-equality perspective. Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) take a similar, but slightly different approach, by arguing that substantive representation is about including women’s interests in the legislative process and policy outcomes. Therefore, they distinguish into process-oriented representation – introducing proposals or amendments, networking, or putting women’s issues on the agenda – and outcome-oriented representation – achieving transformative policy outcomes.

Substantive representation relates closely to gender mainstreaming, which according to EIGE “requires both integrating a gender perspective to the content of different policies and addressing the issue of representation of women and men in the given policy area” (EIGE, 2024-b). In this sense, substantive representation of women could be conceptualized as the influence of women’s presence in parliament on integrating the gender perspective in policy (Wängnerud, 2009; EIGE, 2024-b). This definition forms the base of this study.

2.2.3. The relationship between descriptive and substantive representation

Empirical research generally shows a positive effect of descriptive representation of women on substantive representation. In her study on the Swedish Riksdag, Wängnerud (2000) examines the representation of women’s interests in parliament. Building upon Phillips’ theory of the politics of presence, Wängnerud assesses whether female parliamentarians more often advocate for women’s concerns and gender equality than their male colleagues. Her findings show notable differences between the attitudes and actions of female and male parliamentarians. As also shown by other studies, women more often prioritise women’s interests and gender equality than their male colleagues (Mansbridge, 1999; Schwindt-Bayer, 2006), which then influences policy outcomes. An example is, how both Svaleryd (2009) and Bratton and Ray (2002) find a positive correlation in female’s descriptive representation and policy on childcare spending in Nordic countries. Accordingly, McEvoy (2016) shows similar outcomes for the relevance of descriptive representation, in the context of the European Parliament. McEvoy’s research, much like Wängnerud’s, examines the policy attitudes of voters and

candidates, highlighting significant gender-based differences on various policy issues. Through a comparative analysis of 27 EU member states in the context of the 2009 EP elections, McEvoy demonstrates that men and women often hold distinct views on key policy matters. She argues that a higher number of female representatives can lead to more progressive attitudes towards gender equality issues in parliament (McEvoy, 2016).

However, there also are more critical voices that question the extent to which this relationship holds. Various scholars argue for a more open and inter-relational way of looking at substantive representation (Mackay, 2008; Meier, 2008). Celis and Childs, for example, provide nuance on the claim that just the presence of women in parliaments is enough for change: “we need to accept that the presence of only some women or some feminists in our parliaments is not sufficient to represent all women” (2020, p.14). They argue that acknowledging women’s varied experiences and political attitudes, challenges the assumption that increasing the number of female representatives will directly lead to substantive representation of all women’s interests. Similarly, Dovi (2002) argues for *preferable descriptive representatives*. According to her simply increasing the number of women in parliament does not guarantee substantive representation, as shared experiences and objectives with the represented group determine its effectiveness. Additionally, Celis and Childs emphasise the necessity of an intersectional approach which considers the different and sometimes conflicting interests of various groups of women in political representation (Celis & Childs, 2020). These critiques highlight the complexities and challenges in achieving substantive representation of women as a diverse group in political institutions.

3. Theoretical Framework

Based on existing literature (as discussed in Chapter 2), it can be expected that descriptive representation of women has a positive effect on substantive representation of the gender-perspective. As the European Parliament (EP) is close to being gender-balanced and it is known for its commitment to gender mainstreaming, it could be expected that this relation between descriptive and substantive representation also holds in the EP. Yet, empirical evidence on substantive representation is lacking in the context of the EP and more specifically in its committees. Based on the theoretical relationship between descriptive and substantive representation, the following main hypothesis can be formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Descriptive representation of women in the European Parliament's committees leads to more substantive representation.

To explore this main hypothesis, we break it down into three more specific and manageable sub-hypotheses, covering the entire legislative process within committees: amendments, committee opinions, and final legislation. Following the ordinary legislative procedure, the Council and European Parliament work together as co-legislators (European Parliament, 2021). This thesis focuses on the European Parliament, thus only the process followed in the parliament will be explained. After the European Commission submits a legislative proposal to the European Parliament, the proposal is assigned to a relevant committee, which will serve as the responsible committee on this proposal. Within this committee, a rapporteur is appointed to lead the examination of the proposal. The draft report presented by the rapporteur of the responsible committee can then be amended by other committees through issuing an opinion. Each committee providing an opinion on the draft report first produces a draft opinion that includes all the proposed amendments from MEPs from that committee (European Parliament, 2021). This process reflects the priorities of the individual representatives and can thus reveal differences in the preferences between female and male representatives. Hypothesis 1a covers this initial stage in the policy making process.

Hypothesis 1a: Female representatives more often advocate for gender-equality principles than their male colleagues.

The theory behind substantive representation suggests that female representatives are more likely to introduce and support policies addressing women's issues and gender equality (Wängnerud, 2009). Therefore, if female representatives in the EP would indeed be more likely to advocate for women's concerns and gender equality, this would provide a basis for expecting greater substantive representation in the committees, which leads to hypothesis 1b.

Hypothesis 1b: Gender-balanced committees show a higher level of substantive representation, than committees with low descriptive representation.

Hypothesis 1b logically follows from hypothesis 1 and 1a. If female representatives indeed are more likely to advocate for gender equality (hypothesis 1a), then it is reasonable to expect that committees with a higher percentage of female representatives (gender-balanced committees) would present a higher level of substantive representation. Substantive representation at the committee level can be measured through the rate of amendments from the draft opinion that get adopted in the committee's final opinion. Moreover, the extent to which the implemented amendments remain true to the intended message also plays a role in substantive representation at committee level, as this is where the committees can express their priorities through negotiating their joint position. Finally, the opinion adopted by the committees is submitted to be approved by the plenary. Thus, the next logical step is to explore how these factors influence legislative outcomes. This leads to the formulation of hypothesis 1c.

Hypothesis 1c: Descriptive representation of women in the European Parliament's committees leads to more gender-sensitive legislation.

Hypothesis 1c builds on the previous hypotheses. If female representatives are more likely to advocate for gender equality (hypothesis 1a), and if gender-balanced committees more effectively perform substantive representation (hypothesis 1b), then it logically follows that higher descriptive representation of women in the European Parliament's committees should lead to more gender-sensitive legislation (hypothesis 1c). Collectively, these hypotheses aim to examine the relationship between the descriptive representation of women in the European Parliament's committees and their substantive impact on legislation at various levels of the policy process.

3.1. Alternative factors

However, it is plausible, that women and men do not significantly differ in advocating for gender equality values and principles. The empirical analysis therefore controls for the most important control variables found in the existing body of research: the presence of women's networks and the policy area. Furthermore, substantive representation can be influenced by several contextual factors, varying for the different levels of representation. Therefore, the researcher is also aware of the effect of party ideology, and particularly the coalition dynamics in the 2019-2024 term.

The presence of women's networks can positively affect the substantive representation of women (Celis, 2008). In the EP, the Gender Mainstreaming Network (GMN) consists of representatives from each parliamentary committee and delegation. The network is designed to integrate gender perspectives into committee work, fostering information exchange and best practice sharing (Shreeves & Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke, 2021). Likewise, the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities (FEMM) plays a significant role in implementing and monitoring gender mainstreaming practices within the EP. Amongst the tasks of FEMM is incorporating gender equality aspects in policy making of all policy sectors and thus also of other parliamentary committees (European Parliament, 2023). Therefore, FEMM issues opinions to other committees to influence their policy areas (Elomäki

& Ahrens, 2022). The presence of such networks and committees can interfere with the hypothesis that descriptive representation directly leads to substantive representation by providing an additional mechanism through which women's interests are promoted. These networks help promote women's interests by ensuring gender perspectives are considered, even in committees where women are underrepresented. Therefore, the impact of women in the EP is not just about their numbers but also about the support structures amplifying their influence.

Secondly, the policy focus of a committee can serve as a confounding factor in the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. Data from the IPU (2023) illustrate that women are well-represented in certain policy areas but underrepresented in others. For example, globally, female cabinet ministers are well represented in portfolios focusing on gender equality (84%), family and children affairs (68%), social affairs (38%-68%), and human rights (38%). In contrast, they are significantly underrepresented in portfolios focusing on defence (12%), trade (14%), and economic affairs (20%) (IPU, 2023). Other research indicates that women are more often overrepresented in 'soft' policy areas, such as those focusing on women's issues, law and justice, and social welfare issues like family, employment, and education. These areas are traditionally associated with gender-sensitive issues, where the presence of female representatives is crucial for substantive representation (Baekgaard & Kjaer, 2012). On the other hand, men are overrepresented in 'hard' policy areas such as foreign affairs, defence, trade, security, and the economic affairs (IPU, 2011). This disparity suggests that the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation varies depending on the policy area's traditional association with gendered issues (Goddard, 2019). Therefore, the policy area serves as a confounding factor because it possibly influences the level of descriptive representation, but also the level of substantive representation. The latter appears from different policy areas that potentially require distinct types of amendments. These amendments vary in importance, with some being more political and others more technical (Kreppel, 1999). Nevertheless, both are forms of substantive representation.

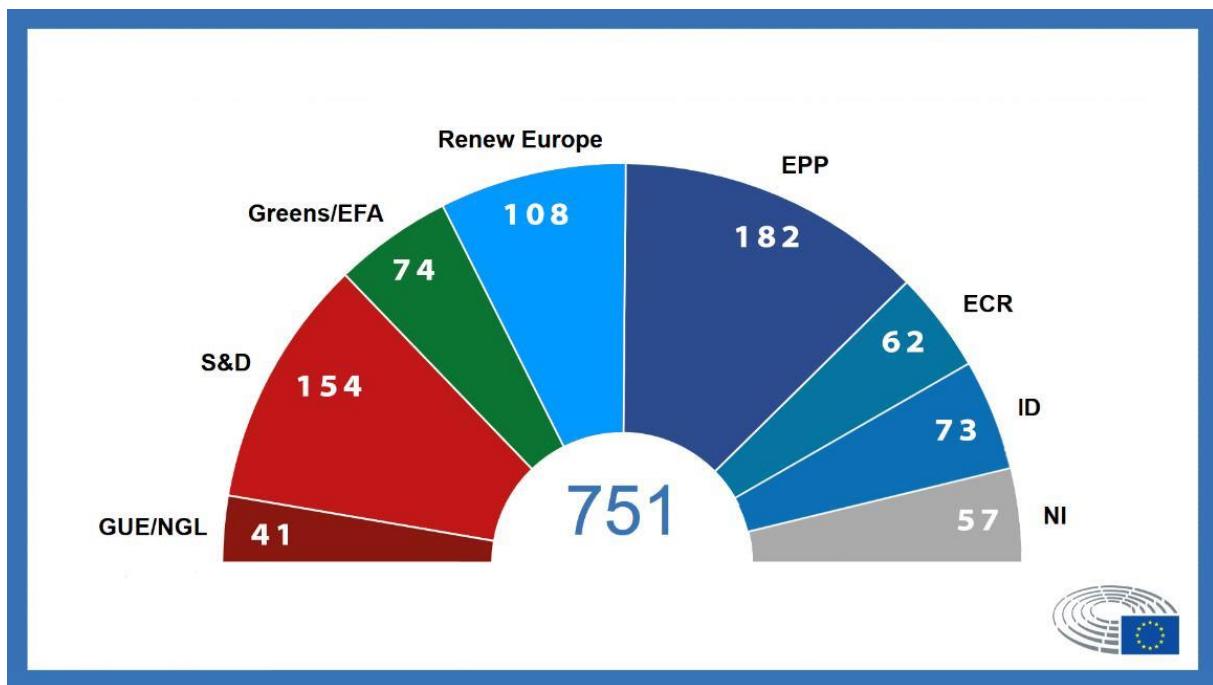
Various scholars named party ideology as another viable alternative explanation (Wängnerud, 2000; Celis, 2008). Party ideology and coalition dynamics, depending on the context and the policy area, can influence substantive representation both positively as negatively. MEPs in the EP typically belong to political party groups, which are alliances of MEPs from various national parties sharing similar political ideologies. According to Elomäki and Ahrens, not only committees, but also political groups are "gatekeepers for gender mainstreaming in the EP" (2022, p.323). The composition of committees in the EP reflects the overall political balance of the parliament. In the 2019-2024 term, the EP's political landscape was marked by a grand coalition composed of the centrist European's People's Party (EPP), the centre-left Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), and the liberal Renew Europe group (see figure 1). While this coalition promotes a certain stability in the legislative process, challenges in achieving consensus on certain topics, amongst which gender equality policies, remain because of the different ideological stances. Thus, often requiring distinct coalitions and negotiations on

various policy issues. Furthermore, party ideology might also influence descriptive representation, as political parties often control the selection of candidates (O'Brien, 2013).

In the context of the EP, the dual role of MEPs adds another layer of complexity. MEPs often must balance their obligations to their national political parties with their responsibilities to European Parliament party groups (Hix & Høyland, 2022, p. 63). Additionally, Hix & Hoyland (2022) denote that MEPs usually have two types of goals, office- or policy-related. MEPs may advance their office-related career goals by strategically aligning their policy positions and actions, to gain support from their colleagues. In addition to seeking office-related advancement, MEPs often aspire to make substantive contributions to policy development and implementation. This involves advocating for their personal policy preferences or the interests of their constituents (Hix & Høyland, 2022, p. 63; Pemstein et al., 2015). This dual allegiance can influence how MEPs individually prioritise and advocate for legislative outcomes, potentially impacting the direct translation of their descriptive representation in substantive representation on gender equality.

Figure 1

Results of the 2019 European Parliament elections



Note. (European Parliament, 2019).

4. Methodology

This chapter provides an outline of the research design and justifies methodological considerations. First the research strategy is discussed. Subsequently, the variables are operationalized, and the case selection is conducted. Finally, this chapter concludes by discussing the strategies undertaken to enhance the reliability and validity of the research.

4.1 Research strategy

The aim of this study was to examine the effect of descriptive representation on substantive representation in the context of the European Parliament, with an explicit focus on its parliamentary committees. Considering the objectives of this study, a small-N case study was found most appropriate. According to Blatter and Haverland (2012, p.24) the co-variational analysis, as an approach to qualitative small-N case studies, is appropriate for studies focusing on the effect of the independent variable. As this study focuses on the effect of descriptive representation (independent variable) on the level of substantive representation (dependent variable), the comparative co-variational analysis was considered most suitable. To observe the effects of variation in the levels of descriptive representation, two different parliamentary committees were compared during the 2019-2024 parliamentary term. This cross-sectional design allowed the researcher to delve into the specific dynamics of each committee, carefully examining if and how descriptive representation influences substantive representation.

4.2 Operationalization of variables

4.2.1 Independent and dependent variables

The dependent variable of this study is substantive representation. Scholars are divided on the best approach to measure substantive representation. To offer a thorough overview, and to not ignore the complexity of the policy making process in the European Parliament, this study focused on substantive representation through the entire legislative process in the committees, drawing on Franceschet and Piscopo's (2008) conceptualization of substantive representation. Furthermore, this approach also incorporates the measurement approaches akin to the micro- and macro-level perspectives as described by Kroeber (2018).

Tracing the entire process highlights different emphases on substantive representation at each stage of policy making within the committees. Substantive representation holds distinct meanings for the amendments issued by individual MEPs, the committee's opinion, and the final legislative outcomes. When focusing on the draft opinion, substantive representation can be operationalized as the number of amendments issued by female representatives and the differences in content between female and male representatives' amendments. In the next stage of the process committees adopt their final opinion. Here, substantive representation can be operationalized as the number of amendments considerate of the gender perspective. This operationalization relates closely to the macro-level of substantive representation (Kroeber, 2018). Finally, the operationalization of substantive representation in the final legislative act follows the concept of Franceschet and Piscopo's outcome-

oriented representation (2008). Which they explain as achieving transformative policy outcomes. In the scope of this research, policy outcomes are perceived transformative when a gender perspective is adopted into final legislation. The success of committees in achieving this is measured by the number of amendments adopted that consider the gender perspective.

The independent variable, descriptive representation, is per usual conceptualized as the extent to which a parliament mirrors the demographics of its constituents (McEvoy, 2016). As mentioned previously in section 2.2.1, today's context adds a layer of complexity towards conceptualizing descriptive representation. As information on MEPs' gender is sensitive and not always publicly available, this research considers the traditional binary classifications of female and male as these can be determined based on the member lists of the committees. Thus, following other scholars (Verge et al., 2018, p.48; Wängnerud, 2009), the independent variable is measured as the percentage of female committee members.

4.2.2 Control variables

The first control variable, the *policy area*, is operationalized as being a 'soft' or a 'hard' policy area. The terms 'soft' and 'hard' policy areas, similar to the classification as used by the IPU, provide a mechanism for classifying the focus of legislative subjects addressed within committees. Unlike terms such as 'feminine' and 'masculine', which may carry connotations of value judgements or gender stereotypes, 'soft' and 'hard' policy areas are less value-laden labels. Soft policy areas were characterised by a focus on gender-sensitive issues, such as women's rights, family and children affairs, social welfare, and human rights. Whereas hard policy areas were characterised as centring around topics such as defence, trade, economic affairs, foreign affairs, and security, which are traditionally less related to gender-sensitive concerns (Goddard, 2019). Finally, the presence of women's networks is measured as the number of opinions scheduled by the FEMM committee in each of the other committees.

It is important to mention that not all possible alternative factors can be controlled for in this research. For example, the specific content of the Committee on Human Rights and the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety differ, despite both being categorized as soft policy areas. The researcher acknowledges these limitations and has taken them into account.

Table 1*Summary of variables, their operationalization, and sources*

		Indicators	Data	Source
Independent variable	Descriptive representation	Percentage female representatives in parliamentary committees	Gender composition of committee members (female/male)	Member lists of committees
Dependent variable	Substantive representation	Number of amendments authored by female representatives	Draft opinions	Committee website
		Gender-perspective in final opinion	Opinions	Committee website
		Gender-perspective in final legislation	Final legislative act (adopted)	EUR-LEX
Alternative factors	Policy area	Classification as soft or hard policy area	Description of committee mandates and policy areas	IPU and committee websites
	Presence of women's networks	Presence of FEMM as absolute number of opinions	Opinions issued by FEMM	FEMM committee website

4.3 Case selection

According to Blatter and Haverland (2012) case selection for covariational analysis should meet two criteria. First, cases should vary as much as possible in the independent variable. Second, the cases should be similar regarding the control variables to control for other explanatory factors. This design is also known as ‘the most similar system design’. To meet the first criteria, the cases were selected by non-probability sampling, to be more specific by maximum variation sampling (Blatter and Haverland, 2012). This means that, for this study, at least one case had to be a committee with low descriptive representation of women and at least one case had to be a committee with high descriptive representation of women. Furthermore, to meet the second criteria, the alternative factors – policy area of the committee and presence of women’s networks – had to be similar.

The cases were selected out of the 24 standing (sub)committees of the EP in the 2019-2024 parliamentary term. Committees of inquiry and special temporary committees dealing with specific issues were excluded from selection, as they do not have a stable policy area and their temporary nature limits the availability and consistency of data. Furthermore, FEMM was also excluded as a case, as it serves a special role in monitoring and fostering gender mainstreaming in other committees, which would make it an outlier regarding the control variable of the presence in women’s networks.

The cases that were included in this study must differ maximal on the level of descriptive representation. Therefore, the level of descriptive representation was determined for all committees. The researcher created an Excel database including the name, sex (M/F), function, party group and country of origin of all MEPs serving as committee members (see Appendix II). The data for this database was obtained via the publicly available member lists of the committees (European Parliament, n.d.-d). The member lists did not state the MEPs’ sex, so the researcher made a judgement based on the pictures in the documents. Given the lack of explicit information, the researcher decided for this method to ensure a manageable approach for classifying each MEPs sex. This visual categorization, while not without potential bias¹, was necessary to facilitate the analysis within the constraints of the available data (Siegel, 2020). Based on this data, the percentage of women in each committee was calculated (Appendix III). Striking outliers are the Committee on Institutional Affairs (AFCO) – with only 14,3% women appointed – and the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) – with a vast 86,5% women appointed. The researcher decided to divide the committees based on whether they scored below or above the European Parliament’s average percentage of 39,8% female MEPs (European Parliament, 2024). This threshold was selected to create a clear distinction between committees, based on those with lower and higher levels of descriptive representation compared to the overall average.

Then the committees were controlled for the alternative factors that could potentially influence the dependent variable. Starting with the policy area, the committees were categorized as ‘soft’ or ‘hard’

¹ Bias that could occur because of the visual categorization is perception bias. Perception bias appears when the categorization of MEPs might be influenced by the researcher’s own assumptions and experiences (Siegel, 2020). The researcher was aware of this bias.

based on their primary policy focus (IPU, 2011). The policy focus of a committee was assessed to determine the extent to which it aligned with the soft and hard policy areas. The policy area was identified through a systematic content analysis of the general information about the committees as stated on European Parliament website (European Parliament, n.d.-d). For a justification of the categorization of the various committees for this study, I refer to Appendix IV.

Subsequently, the committees were controlled for the presence of women's networks. The presence of women's networks, particularly the FEMM committee, was controlled for by examining how many opinions FEMM issued for each committee. On the website of the FEMM committee I searched for the following document types in the legislature 2019-2024: *AD – Opinion* (53) and *AL – Opinion in the form of a letter* (8). The FEMM committee thus issued a total of 61 opinions, these were all subsequently processed into the Excel database containing information about the type of document, the date, and the committee to which the document was addressed.

The initial pre-selection of committees was based on their categorization within soft policy areas and the presence of the FEMM committee. Soft policy areas were chosen over hard policy areas because gender mainstreaming is expected to be more advanced in these domains, allowing for substantial data (Goddard, 2019). The final selection criteria involved identifying committees with low and high levels of descriptive representation. Based on these criteria, the subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) and the committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) were selected as cases (see Appendix V). Both committees are similar in the control variables, as they have limited presence of FEMM, and they are both operating within soft policy areas. More importantly, they differ significantly in the independent variable: DROI scores below the average with 34,5% female representation, while ENVI scores above the average with 51,1% female representation. Thus, these committees meet the two criteria specified by Blatter and Haverland (2012).

An important overarching principle for case selection is accessibility (Blatter & Haverland, 2012, p.102). Initially, the subcommittee on Public Health (SANT) was selected as case representing high female representation. However, since SANT has only been operating since early 2023, it lacked publicly accessible publications and documents on its website. Consequently, ENVI was selected as the next best option that met all the selection criteria.

4.4 Data selection and analysis

Three types of key policy documents, within the 2019-2024 parliamentary term, were examined for both DROI and ENVI: amendments (in draft opinions), opinions, and final legislative acts. These documents were selected because they trace the entire policy making process within the parliamentary committees. All policy documents included in this study are listed in Appendix VI. Since DROI is a subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and their documents are often published under AFET's name, AFET documents were used in the data selection process. The data selection process is described in more detail in Chapter 5.

Qualitative data analysis often concerns “taking apart the data and putting it back together” (Creswell & Creswell, 2022, p. 295). This study takes on a qualitative content analysis to determine how the selected committees put forward gender equality related issues and solutions in their policy documents. The documents were deductively coded, with use of atlas.ti., for terms relating to gender equality: gender, women, sex and equal. This coding involved analysing the language and substance of proposed amendments to determine whether they explicitly addressed equality issues, acknowledged persistent gender inequalities, or incorporated gender-sensitive language.

4.5 Reliability and validity

Various strategies were employed to ensure the reliability and the validity of this case study research. According to van Thiel, reliability is a combination of “the accuracy and the consistency with which the variables are measured” (2014, p.48). The accuracy was enhanced by ensuring established measurement though sticking to systematic coding with support of atlas.ti. The consistency, or repeatability, of this research is ensured by detailed documentation of the steps taken and the creation of an exhaustive case study database (Yin, 2009). The database encompassing all used and relevant data, was set-up at the start of the study and kept up to date throughout the study. This contributes to the reliability of the measurements and allows for reproduction of the research.

In terms of validity, one can make a distinction between internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to whether the study has effectively measured what it intended to measure. Therefore, it is essential that the theoretical concepts are accurately operationalized and that the presumed causal relationship between the independent and dependent variable truly exists (van Thiel, 2014). Because of the focus of small-N studies on a limited number of cases, it is easier to ensure that a measure reflects the true meaning of a concept (Blatter & Haverland, 2012, p.64). The internal validity of case studies can be enhanced by careful case selection (Blatter & Haverland, 2012, p.229). For example, by choosing a representative sample of European Parliament committees regarding their number of female representatives, I ensured that the operationalization of my variables closely aligned with the theoretical constructs. Moreover, an advantage of small-N case studies over large-N studies is the depth and thickness it provides. The detailed focus of this case study research on two committees increases the chances on correct causality. This higher level of depth and thickness do come at a prize, as they trade off with the generalizability of the findings (Blatter & Haverland, 2012, p.229). This brings us to the studies’ external validity.

External validity refers to the generalizability of the results to other contexts (van Thiel, 2014). The weak generalizability forms a limitation to the co-variational analysis, as the small number of cases does not allow generalizability outside the variables controlled for. One could increase the external validity by including a larger number of committees. However, as generalizability is not at the core of this research and time constraints did not allow analysis of more committees, the researcher did not take additional measures to enhance the external validity.

5. Empirical findings and analysis

This section traces the evolution of amendments from their initial proposal by individual MEPs within committees, to their inclusion in the final committee opinions, and their adoption (or omission) in the final legislation. A qualitative content analysis was conducted on various documents² related to seven legal acts. The empirical findings and analysis of these are discussed in section 5.2 and 5.3, following legislative process and examining both the micro and macro levels of substantive representation. Before delving into these stages, section 5.1. provides a brief context on the selected legal acts and the document selection process.

5.1. Selected legal acts

In this study, seven legal acts were selected for analysis. The selection process involved searching for documents issued under the ordinary legislative procedure (COD) from 09/06/2019 to 01/06/2024, covering the 2019-2024 term. For ENVI this search yielded 32 hits, while for AFET this resulted in nine hits. For AFET, documents were further filtered for references to human rights in the text, as we were interested in the work of DROI under AFET. This resulted in five relevant documents. Three legal acts were purposefully selected as both the Committee on Human Rights (DROI) under the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) issued amendments on these acts. This provided an unique opportunity to compare the influence and substantive representations of the different committees. The three documents concerned the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and the Critical Raw Materials Regulation (CRMR).

Additionally, two more legal acts were selected for each committee. For AFET these were the remaining relevant legal acts: the Generalized Scheme of Tariff Preferences Regulation (GSPR) and the Forced Labour Regulation (FLR). For ENVI, two documents were randomly selected from the remaining 29 hits: the Just Transition Fund Regulation (JTFR) and the Recovery and Resilience Facility Regulation (RRFR). For the selected opinions, the corresponding draft opinions with the amendments by the individual MEPs were also analysed, as were the adopted legislations.

5.1.1. Contextual background on selected legal acts

Starting with the three acts that received opinions from both AFET and ENVI. The *Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive* (CSRD) amends previous regulations governing the reporting of non-financial information in financial disclosure. These changes significantly broaden the scope and depth of sustainability reporting obligations for companies. As of 2024, large and listed companies are required to report on three areas: Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG). These rules ensure transparency for stakeholders and investors regarding the impact of companies' impact on people and the environment

² For each legal act the initially proposed amendments, the final opinions, the proposal by the Commission, and the final adopted legislation (if available) were analysed for both committees.

(European Commission, n.d.-a). This enhanced reporting aims to foster greater corporate accountability and progress towards gender equality in the business sector (European Parliament, 2022). The proposal for a *Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence* elaborates on how companies should perform due diligence regarding their impact on ESG factors and take measures to prevent, reduce, or eliminate their impact (European Commission, n.d.-b). In 2021, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), already published a framework and a set of recommendations on integrating a gender perspective into due diligence actions along agricultural supply chains (OECD-FAO, 2021). This emphasizes the importance of considering gender equality within the due diligence processes. The CSDDD process is still ongoing after two years of extensive negotiations and is expected to be adopted by June 2024. The *Critical Raw Materials Regulation* aims to enhance the internal market by guaranteeing the EU's access to a secure, resilient, and sustainable supply of critical raw materials (European Commission, n.d.-c). Integrating a gender perspective into this regulation involves ensuring equitable access to opportunities and benefits across genders in sectors related to critical raw materials.

The *Generalized Scheme of Tariff Preferences Regulation* (GSPR) aims to incentivise sustainable development and good governance in developing countries by providing preferential trade terms. The process of this regulation is still ongoing. Integrating a gender perspective into this regulation involves promoting gender equality through trade policies. The *Forced Labour Regulation* (FLR) seeks to eliminate products made with forced labour from the EU market. This regulation highlights the EU's commitment to human rights and fair labour practices. The process of this regulation is also still ongoing. Addressing gender equality in the FLR involves ensuring that women, who are disproportionately affected by forced labour, are protected and empowered through regulatory measures. The *Just Transition Fund Regulation* (JTFR) aims to support people and regions most affected by the EU's transition towards climate neutrality. This regulation emphasizes the need for a fair and inclusive transition and addresses both social and economic impacts (EUR-Lex, 2021). Incorporating a gender perspective in the JTFR is crucial to addressing pre-existing gender inequalities and ensuring that the transition actively promotes gender equality through targeted measures (European Commission, 2023). Finally, the *Recovery and Resilience Facility Regulation* (RRFR) provides financial support to EU countries to mitigate the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting gender equality in RRFR could involve ensuring that recovery measures benefit all genders equally.

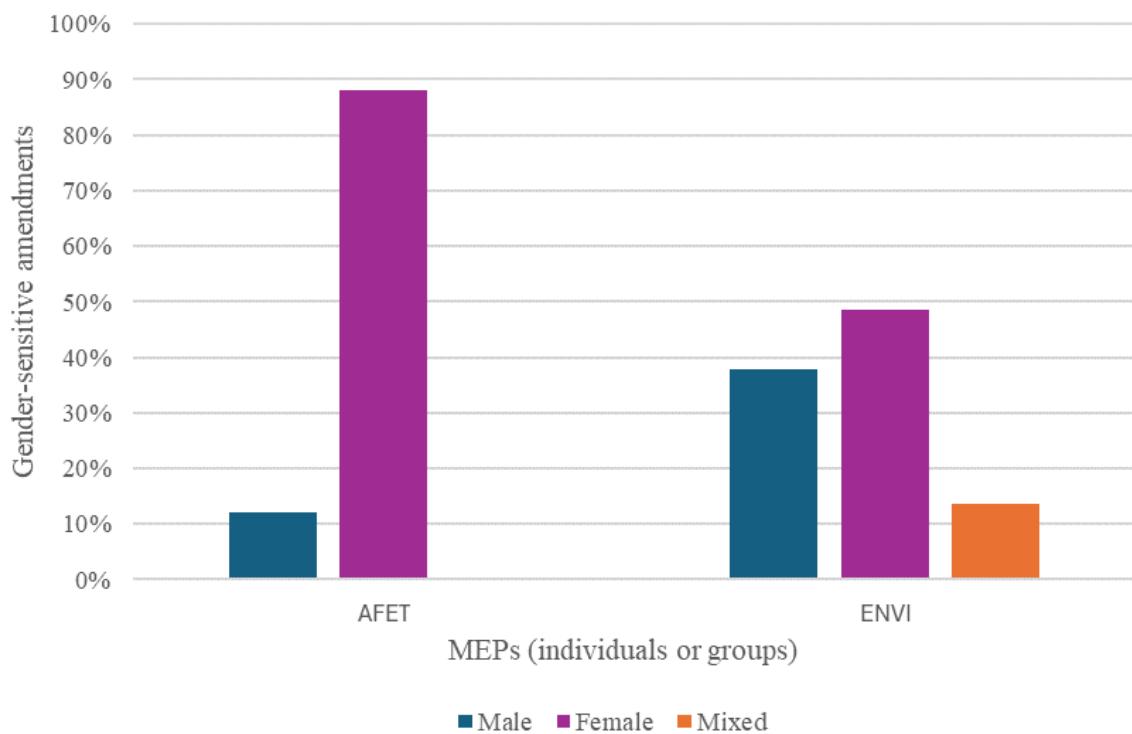
5.2. Gender-sensitive amendments by individual representatives

To identify the amendments related to gender (in)equality, words relating to the gender perspective – gender, women, sex, and equal – were searched for in the draft opinions. Based on this information, a distinction could be made between the amendments issued by female representatives and those issued by male representatives. In some cases, there was not a single MEP issuing an amendment, but multiple MEPs together issuing the same amendment. These amendments were labelled as 'mixed'. Figure 2

shows the distribution of gender-sensitive amendments made by ENVI and AFET. The percentage on the Y-axis represents the total number of gender-sensitive amendments submitted by each committee. Per committee the total amount of gender-sensitive amendments is broken down by the MEP's sex. As seen in the figure, female representatives more often issued amendments related to the gender perspective than their male colleagues in both AFET and ENVI. However, the differences between both committees are significant. While the issuing rate is more equally divided among male and female representatives in ENVI, the proportion of gender-sensitive amendments clearly leans towards the female representatives in AFET. With 88%, a convincing majority of gender-sensitive amendments in AFET's draft opinions are issued by women. By comparison, in ENVI this is only 48,6%, which is still a majority compared to men and mixed groups, but significantly less than in AFET.

Figure 2

The percentage of gender-sensitive amendments proposed by MEPs in AFET and ENVI



Note. This graph illustrates the number of gender-sensitive amendments proposed by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) across two committees. The y-axis represents the number of amendments (%), while the x-axis differentiates between female and male MEPs, and groups of mixed MEPs.

5.2.1. Who are the women and men behind the amendments?

The data reveals that in both committees the majority of gender-sensitive amendments is repeatedly introduced by the same representatives. Figure 3 depicts the percentage of gender-sensitive amendments proposed by each MEP in AFET. Each bar represents a MEP and their respective contribution to the

total of gender-sensitive amendments. Two female MEPs, Heidi Hautala and Marisa Matias, together account for approximately 64% of all the gender-sensitive amendments.

Heidi Hautala, for the Greens/EFA, is as top contributor responsible for 44% of the total gender-sensitive amendments. As the chair of the European Parliament Working Group on Responsible Business Conduct and ‘lead campaigner’ for the CSDDD, Hautala is known for her advocacy for human rights (Greens/EFA, 2024). In her work she often underscores the integration of the gender perspective as part of human rights and does so across various legal acts. Her amendments cover a broad scope, focusing on incorporating gender equality in corporate reporting (CSRD), stakeholder engagement (CSDDD), and the protection of vulnerable groups from forced labour (FLR). In her amendments she often highlights the intersection with other forms of discrimination: “*Companies should pay special attention to overlapping vulnerabilities and intersecting factors in stakeholder engagement, including by adopting a gender and culturally responsive approach at all times.*” (Appendix VII, A5)

Marisa Matias, member of the GUE/NGL, follows Heidi Hautala with 20% of the amendments issued. She issued amendments on CSDDD and FLR. In an interview for a Brazilian journal, she describes herself as an activist on many terrains, amongst which women rights (Tatiana Moura, 2018). In an amendment on CSDDD she emphasizes the importance of effective stakeholder engagement and focusses on vulnerable stakeholders: “*They can include, among others, women and girls*” (Appendix VII, A4). This focus on women and girls as vulnerable stakeholders is consistently also reflected in her amendments on FLR. In one of her amendments, she highlights that criminal law enforcement is insufficient in eliminating forced labour, especially of women and children: “*Rather, a broad multidisciplinary approach is needed that is grounded in adherence to human rights, encompassing the need for effective gender- and age- responsive measures.*” (Appendix VII, A18) These gender- and age-responsive measures should focus on the root causes of forced labour. This focus on root causes is consistent with the story she told about human trafficking in her interview with Tatiana Moura:

“*But if we realize afterwards that maybe if we work at the roots rather than the outcomes, that is to say, once we have more gender equality policies that anticipate, or prevent, in such cases, processes, regularized phenomena like human trafficking that harm women overall - then we may need not to work that much towards criminalizing practices and we even may prevent these practices from occurring.*” (Moura, 2018)

Marisa Matias’ legislative efforts thus reflect a consistent commitment to addressing women’s rights and gender equality. Her story, as told through her amendments, aligns seamlessly with her self-described activism. Both the amendments of Matias and Hautala show the importance of intersectionality of different forms of discrimination, all reflected in a comprehensive human rights approach. Matias, along with Hautala, underscores the importance of addressing these issues across

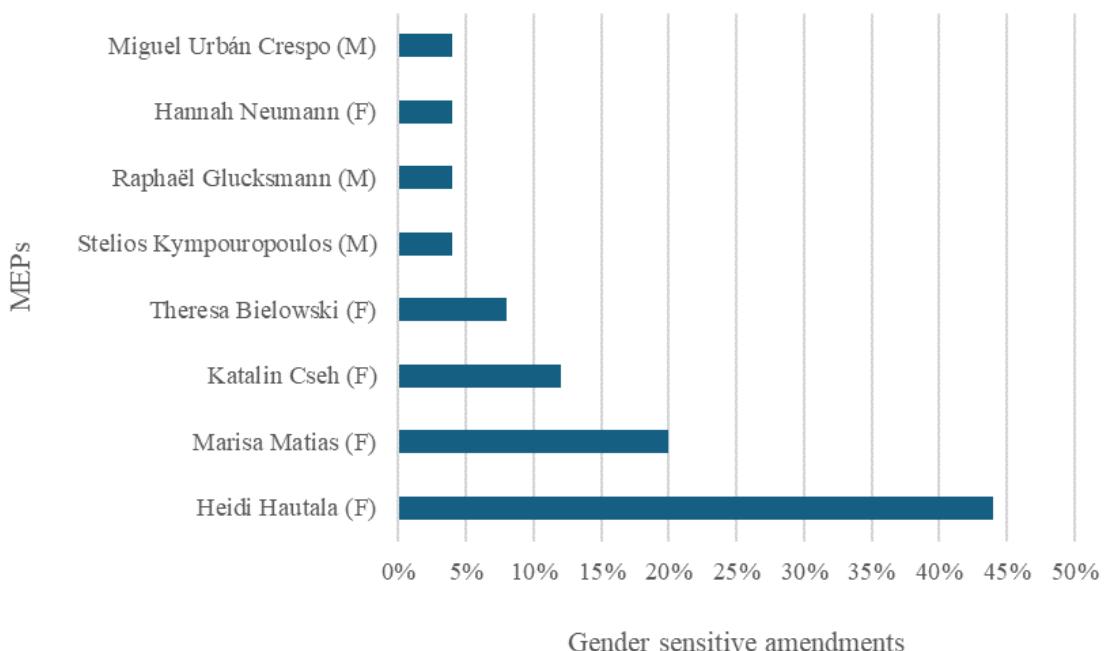
multiple legislative acts, such as CSRD, CSDDD, and FLR. In an interview for a Brazilian Journal, Matias voices her strategic approach:

“I also started to realize that many activist issues I worked with, like gender equality issues, women rights [...] it was way more useful to work over them in connection with matters associated to the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON), rather than within a specific Parliamentary Committee for women rights, because these issues are transversal. [...] I realized my activism in technical areas was more useful than those supposed activist areas in parliament.” (Moura, 2018)

Matias believes that addressing transversal issues through technical areas enhances her activism's impact. In contrast, the contributions of the male representatives are considerably smaller and more focused in scope compared to the female representatives' contributions. As shown in figure 3 the three male representatives issuing gender-sensitive amendments each contributed less than 5% of the total gender sensitive amendments. Raphaël Glucksmann and Miguel Urbán Crespo both explicitly focused on gender-based violence in their amendments (Appendix VII, A13 and A15). Stelios Kympouropoulos' approach is more similar to the comprehensive human rights approach of the female representatives, as he highlights intersectionality in equal opportunities: “*including equal opportunities for all – regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation*” (Appendix VII, A2).

Figure 3

Percentage of gender-sensitive amendments by MEPs in AFET



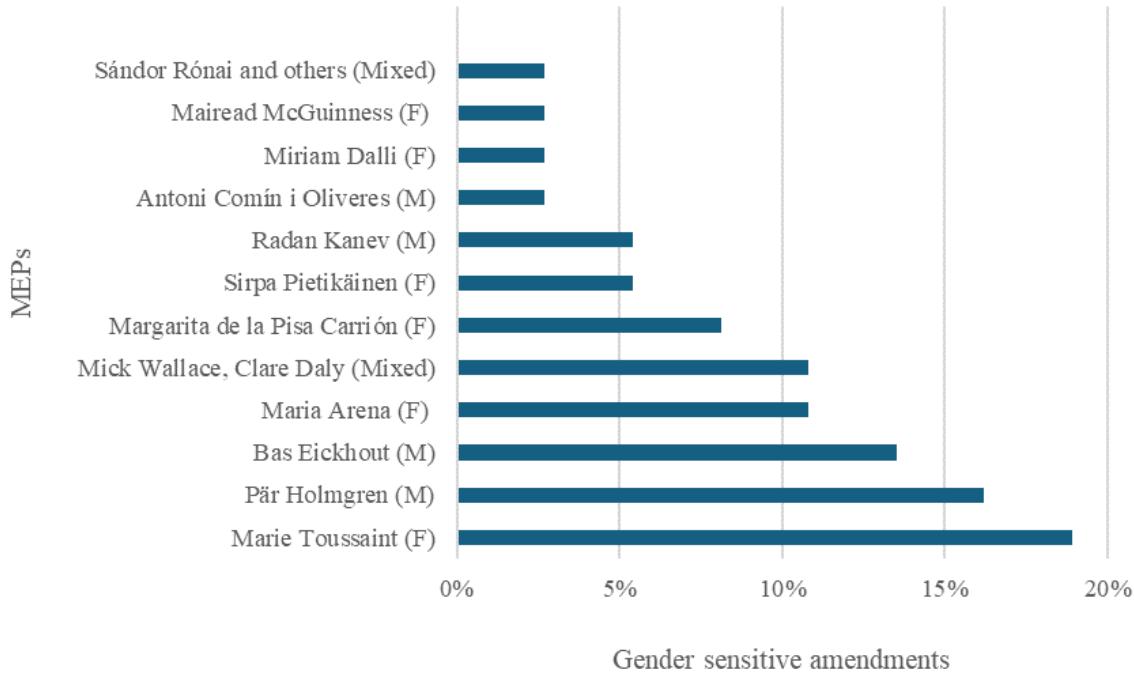
In ENVI the difference between female and male representatives is less clear-cut. While female representatives, like Marie Toussaint, contribute significantly to gender-sensitive amendments, male representatives also play a noteworthy role. Three MEPs together contributed to 48,6% of the gender-sensitive amendments issued on the five draft reports (see figure 4). In this case two of the three key representatives pushing for this perspective are men, indicating a more gender-balanced contribution in this committee. Marie Toussaint (F), Pär Holmgren (M) and Bas Eickhout (M) – all three members of the Greens/EFA - together are responsible for the majority of the gender sensitive amendments issued by ENVI. Marie Toussaint is responsible for 18,9% of the amendments, while Pär Holmgren (16,2%) and Bas Eickhout (13,5%) cover another 29,7% of the amendments.

Marie Toussaint is committed to contribute to social justice and issued amendments on the CSRD and the CSDDD. In most of her amendments, she explicitly adds ‘gender’ to the text proposed by the Commission. Furthermore, just as Heidi Hautala and Marisa Matias, Marie Toussaint mentions the gender perspective in relation to vulnerability: “*Companies should pay special attention to overlapping vulnerabilities and intersecting factors in stakeholder engagement, including by adopting a gender-responsive approach*” (Appendix VIII, E10). Furthermore, she incorporates a perspective that aligns with gender mainstreaming as she emphasizes to incorporate the “*gender perspective at all stages of the due diligence process*” (Appendix VIII, E7) in CSDDD.

Following Toussaint’s contributions, Pär Holmgren and Bas Eickhout together account for 31% of the gender-sensitive amendments. Holmgren’s amendments are focused exclusively on the Just Transition Fund Regulation. All amendments explicitly feature a gender perspective. Yet, most taking on the same shape: “*while pursuing an active gender balance and anti-discriminatory approach*” (Appendix VIII, E21, E24, E25 and E26). Bas Eickhout on its turn only issues amendments on the RRFR. Like Holmgren, his amendments mostly touch upon the same issue and take the same form: “*gender-balanced growth and job creation*” (Appendix VIII, E32, E34 and E35). Although male representatives in ENVI have a significant share in the amount of gender-sensitive amendments issued, their contributions lack the holistic approach seen in amendments issued by female representatives. Male representatives’ amendments often address gender issues in a narrower context, focusing on specific aspects such as gender-based violence. In contrast, female representatives’ amendments tend to address gender equality more comprehensively, considering broader social implications and intersections with other forms of discrimination.

Figure 4

Percentage of gender-sensitive amendments by MEPs in ENVI



Overall, the data shows that female representatives are pivotal in contributing to gender-sensitive amendments in both committees. In AFET female MEPs like Hautala and Matias play a dominant role in introducing gender-sensitive amendments. ENVI, on the other hand, shows a more balanced representation from female and male MEPs, yet women still more often contribute to gender-sensitive amendments than men. These findings support hypothesis 1a, saying that female representatives in committees are more likely to propose gender-sensitive amendments than their male colleagues.

5.3. Influence of female representatives on legislation

Section 5.2. showed how in general female representatives more often contribute to gender sensitive amendments than male representatives. Substantive representation however is not solely about the number of amendments issued, but also about whether they get adopted into the committee opinions and eventually in final legislation. Subsequently, attention should be paid to the extent to which the content of the amendments stays true to the original throughout the process. This brings us to the next aspect of the analysis: examining the influence of female representatives on the legislative process and the extent to which gender sensitive amendments are integrated into the final opinions of the committees (5.3.1) and the final legislation (section 5.3.2).

5.3.1. Substantive representation committee opinions

To analyse the impact of gender sensitive amendments made by various representatives, we compared the amendments proposed by MEPs with the final opinions issued by AFET and ENVI. Amendments were categorized as *yes*, *partly*, or *no* based on their inclusion in the final opinions³. The adopted amendments are those categorized as *yes* and *partly*. Table 2 presents the percentage of adopted amendments based on these categories and shows which percentage of these were proposed by female representatives. The analysis revealed that in AFET, 80% of the gender sensitive amendments initially proposed in the draft opinion were adopted in their final opinion. In contrast, for ENVI only 29,7% of these amendments were adopted in their final opinion (see table 2). Most of the amendments adopted in ENVI's final opinions are focused on the Just Transition Fund Regulation. Moreover, a majority of the amendments included in ENVI's final opinions come from male representatives (table 2).

Besides the adoption rate of the amendments, the content also tells a great deal about the substantive representation. As already briefly mentioned in section 5.2.1, female representatives tend to have a more holistic approach in their amendments compared to men. At the committee level the content of the amendments of AFET can be compared to those of ENVI. The amendments implemented by AFET all directly refer to gender or women. Most amendments highlight the intersectionality of different factors and focus on human rights in general. The amendments address multiple vulnerabilities such as gender, race or religion. Often, the amendments point out vulnerabilities and vulnerable groups where this was not done in the commission's proposal:

“Vulnerable and marginalised groups in a society, such as women, children, migrants (in particular if they are undocumented or with a precarious status or in the informal economy), ethnic minorities, lower castes, indigenous and tribal peoples, are particularly susceptible to be pressured into performing forced labour.” (Appendix VII, A16)

By explicitly pointing out vulnerabilities and vulnerable groups in legislation, AFET contributes to inclusive policy and fulfils its task in guaranteeing human rights in the EU. Through explicitly highlighting women and gender rights, AFET underscores the importance of advocating for these groups. Alongside the gender perspective, the committee is also considerate of cultural sensitivity in its amendments (Appendix VII, A5 and A8).

In contrast, the scope of ENVI's amendments tends to be narrower, primarily addressing gender equality in specific contexts such as employment. When they include gender, amendments typically refer to gender balance or a gender-responsive approach (Appendix VIII, E13, E21, E24, E25, E30 and E31). For example, one of the amendments adopted into the opinion to the JTFR states: “active inclusion of jobseekers, while respecting gender equality and pursuing gender balance, where possible” (Appendix

³ The categorizations were conceptualized as follows: Yes: the gender perspective was fully included as meant in the original draft opinion. Partly: the gender perspective was present but weakened in the final language compared to the draft opinion. No: the gender perspective was completely omitted.

VIII, E26 and E27). Although this amendment is adopted in the final opinion of ENVI on JTFR, its content is different to the two original amendments proposed by Mairead McGuinness (E27) and Pär Holmgren (E26). While the emphasis on gender equality retains, the amendment adopted in the final opinion introduces a conditionality (“where possible”), potentially weakening its impact. Moreover, compared to the proposed text by Holmgren, the final version lacks the specific focus on vulnerable groups and the anti-discriminatory approach.

Table 2

Amendments proposed and adopted into committee opinions

	Amendments proposed (%)	Amendments proposed by female MEPs (%)	Amendments adopted in the opinion (%)	Amendments adopted in opinion by female MEPs (%)
AFET	25 (100)	22 (88)	20 (80)	17 (85)
ENVI	37 (100)	18 (48,6)	11 (29,7)	4 (36,4)

In conclusion, while the data clearly indicates that female representatives are more likely to advocate in favour of the gender perspective (section 5.2), this does not necessarily mean that committees with high descriptive representation of women show a higher adoption rate for gender sensitive amendments in their opinions. The data shows that AFET, with significant contributions of female representatives, has a high adoption rate of gender sensitive amendments, whereas ENVI, despite having notable contributions from both male and female representatives, has a lower adoption rate. Hypothesis 1b – *Gender balanced committees show a higher level of substantive representation in their work, than committees with low descriptive representation* – thus cannot be confirmed based solely on the adoption rates.

5.3.2. Substantive representation in final legislation

Finally, the ultimate question to be answered is whether all these efforts eventually lead to more gender-sensitive legislation. To examine this, a similar strategy to the one in the previous section was employed. Here, we compare the final opinions of the committees with the final legislation for all adopted acts. The categories *yes*, *partly*, and *no* were again used for labelling the amendments⁴. For AFET, gender sensitive amendments remained on all five acts. For ENVI, amendments remained on the CSDDD, JTFR and RRFR. As mentioned in section 5.1, not all legal acts are yet in force. Therefore, the analysis was

⁴ The categorizations were conceptualized as follows: Yes: the gender perspective was fully included as meant in the committee’s opinion. Partly: the gender perspective was present but weakened in the final language compared to the committee’s opinion. No: the gender perspective was completely omitted.

performed solely on the directives that had entered into force: CSRD, CRMR, JTF and RRFR. Though this limits the analysis, both committees still had at least two legal acts each to examine.

The impact of the amendments on the final legislation was quantified by comparing the proposed amendments in the committees' opinions with the acceptance rate of gender-sensitive amendments from both committees. From all gender sensitive amendments⁵ issued by both committees, only two (Appendix VII, A3 & Appendix VIII, E17) were partly included in the final legislation. Compared to the draft amendments, this is only 6,7%. The amendments that were accepted initially addressed equality in general rather than being specifically gender focused. Moreover, as both amendments were only partly adopted in the final legislation, they lost some of their original content. For example, an amendment from ENVI aimed to add a stronger focus on inclusivity and reducing inequality concerning the just transition. In the opinion being people-centred and creating new opportunities were added additionally. However, in the final legislation, the language was simplified and much of the emphasis on reducing inequalities was lost (Appendix VIII, E17). This example illustrates how the original intent of gender-sensitive and equality focused amendments can be diluted through the legislative process. The final text lacks the focus on reducing inequalities and leaving no one behind, which were focal in the original amendment.

Upon analysing these findings, hypothesis 1c – *descriptive representation of women in the European Parliament leads to more gender-sensitive legislation* – can be rejected. The number of amendments adopted in final legislation is minimal, and even when amendments are accepted, they are weakened and do not retain the intended impact. Furthermore, the amendments that were adopted into the final legislation were not specifically gender-focused to begin with. These factors all contributed to the rejection of the hypothesis.

⁵ The amendments on the CSDDD, GSPR, and FLR are not taken into account here, because the acts are not officially adopted by the time of submitting this thesis.

6. Discussion of the results

This study aimed to unpack the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation in the European Parliament. In section 4.3 we established that the Human Rights committee (under AFET) has a lower level of descriptive representation of women compared to the committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). Based on the expectation that female representatives more often advocate for gender-equality than their male colleagues (hypothesis 1a), we subsequently expected gender-balanced committees (ENVI) to show a higher level of substantive representation than committees with low descriptive representation (AFET) (hypothesis 1b). Finally, higher descriptive representation of women in the European Parliament should then lead to more gender sensitive legislation (hypothesis 1c). The findings underscore the complexity of the legislative process in the European Parliament. While hypothesis 1a can be confirmed, as the results show that female representatives in both committees more often advocate in favour of the gender-perspective than their male colleagues, this does not lead to confirmation of hypothesis 1b and 1c.

As expected, female MEPs advocate for the gender perspective significantly more often than their male colleagues in both committees. These findings are consistent with the research of Wängnerud (2000) and McEvoy (2016), which both demonstrate that female representatives more frequently prioritise women's interests and gender equality compared to their male counterparts. Interestingly, the descriptive representation in AFET was lower compared to ENVI, yet the percentage of female representatives advocating for gender sensitive legislation was much higher in AFET compared to ENVI. According to Childs & Krook (2009), this high descriptive representation in ENVI might influence male representatives to engage in advocacy related to gender equality issues, resulting in more gender-balanced advocacy in this committee.

Another interesting finding is that female representatives have a different approach to promoting the gender perspective than their male colleagues. The data shows that male representatives tend to issue gender-sensitive amendments with a narrow scope or on a single legislative act, while female representatives generally assign their advocacy towards a broader scope and seek to ensure that gender issues are addressed across legislative contexts.

Hypothesis 1b could not be confirmed. Despite its low descriptive representation, the subcommittee on Human Rights under AFET adopted significantly more gender sensitive amendments than ENVI did. In addition, the content of the amendments differed between the two committees. This can be logically explained by the different policy areas that the committees focus on (Kreppel, 1999). ENVI takes on a narrower scope, concentrating primarily on environmental, public health, and food safety issues. Also, the amendments of ENVI containing a gender perspective often are more technical of nature. In contrast, AFET has a broader mandate that encompasses various aspects of human rights. Their amendments often are more political and transformative, compared to the amendments of ENVI (Kreppel, 1999). This distinction in policy areas may account for the opposite findings regarding

hypothesis 1b, as the narrower scope of ENVI allows for less targeted gender-sensitive amendments, whereas AFET's broader mandate results in a more extensive approach to human rights and gender issues.

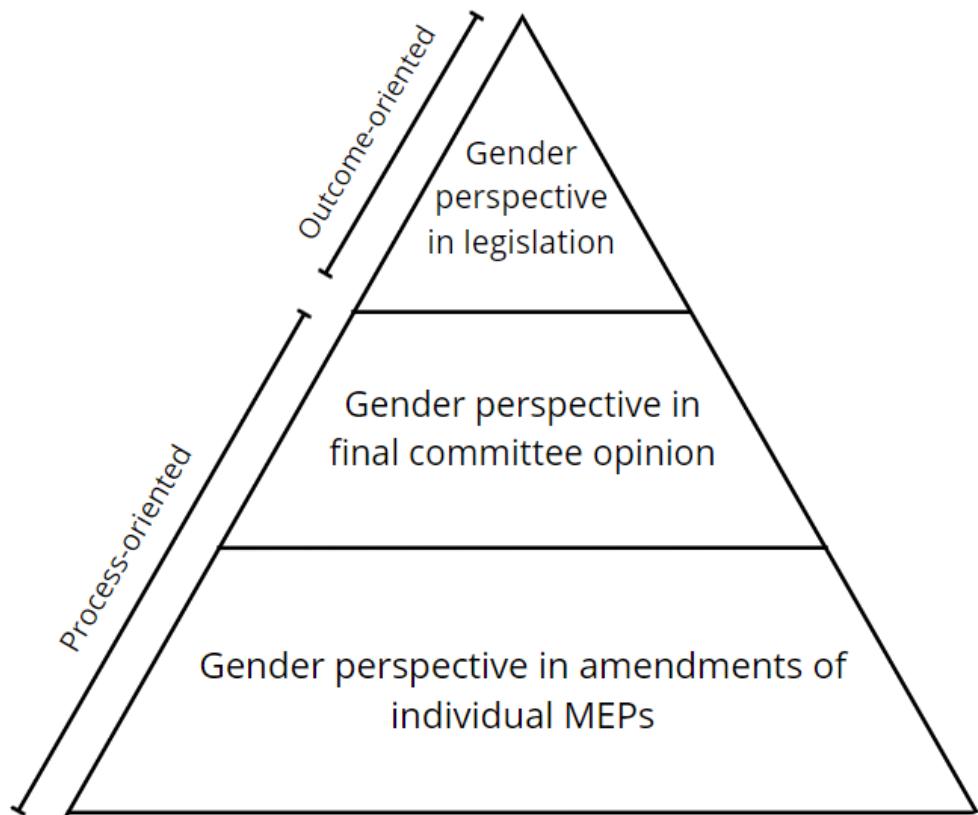
Subsequently, hypothesis 1c was also rejected due to the low adoption rate of gender-sensitive amendments into final legislation. The influence of female MEPs' advocacy appears to diminish as the policy process progresses from descriptive representation to actual legislation. Gender sensitive amendments, originally proposed with specific goals, often lose their impact as they move through the legislative process. This suggests that the adoption of these perspectives in legislative outcomes is influenced by multiple factors that extend beyond gender balance within committees. It is beyond the scope of this study to precisely identify these factors. Nevertheless, existing literature offers insights into several factors that affect the success of gender mainstreaming. Political negotiations, compromises, and the influence of various (external) stakeholders can result in watering down the specific provisions to make them more broadly acceptable (Kreppel, 1999). Furthermore, according to Kreppel (1999), several factors influence the eventual success⁶ of the amendments. Her findings show that the European Parliament is more successful in adopting amendments that are more technical instead of political in nature. In addition, research of Elomäki and Ahrens also shows that "gender mainstreaming lacks an institutionalised place in the committees' agendas" (2022, p. 334).

Following the approach of Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) female representatives thus play a significant role in advocating for the gender perspective in the legislative process, but adoption of this perspective in legislative outcomes – committees' opinions and final legislation – is shown to be less successful. This suggests that descriptive representation in the European Parliament does lead to substantive representation on the process level (committee work), but not necessarily on the outcome level (final legislation). These findings can be visualised as a pyramid of representation (figure 5). The pyramid's structure demonstrates the diminishing influence of female MEPs' advocacy as the policy process progresses from descriptive representation to actual legislation. The broad base indicates the presence of female MEPs (descriptive representation), as, according to the study's findings, female representatives are critical actors advocating for the gender-perspective through their amendments. As one moves up the pyramid, the layers narrow, symbolising the decreasing likelihood that gender perspectives will be included in subsequent stages (committee opinions and final legislation).

⁶ With success being whether an amendment of the EP eventually gets adopted into legislation.

Figure 5

Pyramid representing different levels of substantive representation in the European Parliament



7. Conclusion

This study examined the effect of descriptive representation on substantive representation in the context of the European Parliament, with a particular focus on parliamentary committees. The central research question to this research was:

Does female representation in the European Parliament's committees lead to substantive integration of gender equality values and principles in legislation?

Based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of various policy documents and secondary sources, it can be concluded that descriptive representation of women in the European Parliament does not lead to the substantive integration of gender equality values and principles in legislation. However, descriptive representation should not be entirely dismissed, as it does lead to substantive representation in early stages of the policy process. Female representatives serve as critical actors advocating for the gender perspective in their committee work, highlighting the different levels at which substantive representation occurs.

The study's focus on two committees provides in-depth analysis rather than comprehensive coverage of all committees. Future research should expand the scope of this research and include other parliamentary committees, with a particular focus on hard policy areas to provide a more comprehensive understanding of substantive representation in the European Parliament. Additionally, the limited number of regulations and directives in force constrained the analysis. This limitation potentially affected the analysis of the gender perspective in legislation, particularly for AFET where the criteria for data selection and the limited availability of documents in force restricted the scope of legislation examined. Despite these challenges, the decision to anyhow include the analysis of legal acts was made because it enabled the study to trace the entire process from committee work to legislation, providing valuable insights into the role of female representatives in the legislative process.

To align with the European Union's broader commitment to gender mainstreaming, which aims to integrate a gender perspective throughout all stages of the policy process (Shreeves & Hahnkamper-Vandenbulcke, 2021), additional measures are needed to ensure that gender-sensitive amendments maintain their intended impact throughout the legislative process. Therefore, it is recommended that future research focusses on the constraints that prevent these amendments from being adopted into law. Finally, the upcoming parliamentary term will bring new dynamics that might shift the role of female representatives and the integration of a gender perspective into legislation. Especially with the rise of radical right parties throughout Europe (Kantola et al., 2020), it is recommended to consequently monitor the developments regarding female representation and sustain and improve their influence.

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Appendix

I. Siow's claims-making approach to substantive representation

Table I

Facets of Substantive Representation through a 'claims-making' approach

Speaking on behalf of	Speaking against/about
1. Constitutes the group in a way that is not negative or hostile	Constitutes the group in a way that is negative or hostile
2. Constitutes the group as an end in itself	Constitutes the group solely as a means to an end (instrumentalizing)
3. Constitutes the group in relation to the structural factors which positions it as vulnerable	Constitutes problems as solely within racialized community (stigmatizing)
4. Constitutes the group's heterogeneity and in relation to a wide range of issues	Constitutes the group as homogenous or in relation to limited range of issues (homogenizing)
5. Constitutes the group on its own terms, including relevant civil society	Constitutes the group relying on stereotypes
6. Maintains agency	Fails to maintain agency
7. Makes an explicit request	Does not make an explicit request
8. Constitutes both the problem and the solution intersectionally	Constitutes either the problem or the solution in relation to single axis or structure

Note. (Siow, 2023).

II. Database

Table II

Example of database for data on committee members

Committee	Abbreviation	Name	Gender	Function	Party group	Country of origin
Foreign Affairs	AFET	David McALLISTER	M	Chair	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Germany
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Witold Jan WASZCZYKOWSKI	M	Vice-Chair	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Poland
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Urmas PAET	M	Vice-Chair	Renew Europe Group	Estonia
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Sergei STANISHEV	M	Vice-Chair	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	Bulgaria
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Željana ZOVKO	F	Vice-Chair	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Croatia
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Alviina ALAMETSÄ	F	Member	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	Finland
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Alexander ALEXANDROV YORDANOV	M	Member	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Bulgaria
Foreign Affairs	AFET	François ALFONSI	M	Member	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	France
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Maria ARENA	F	Member	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	Belgium
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Petras AUŠTREVIČIUS	M	Member	Renew Europe Group	Lithuania
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Traian BĂSESCU	M	Member	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Romania
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Anna BONFRISCO	F	Member	Identity and Democracy Group	Italy
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Krzysztof BREJZA	M	Member	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Poland
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Reinhard BÜTIKOFER	M	Member	Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	Germany
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Fabio Massimo CASTALDO	M	Member	Renew Europe Group	Italy
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Susanna CECCARDI	F	Member	Identity and Democracy Group	Italy
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Włodzimierz CIMOSZEWCZ	M	Member	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	Poland
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Katalin CSEH	F	Member	Renew Europe Group	Hungary
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Anna FOTYGA	F	Member	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Poland
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Michael GAHLER	M	Member	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Germany
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Kinga GÁL	F	Member	Non-attached Members	Hungary
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Giorgos GEORGIOU	M	Member	The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL	Cyprus
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Sunčana GLAVAK	F	Member	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Croatia
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Raphaël GLUCKSMANN	M	Member	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	France
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Klemen GROŠELJ	M	Member	Renew Europe Group	Slovenia
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Bernard GUETTA	M	Member	Identity and Democracy Group	France
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Márton GYÖNGYÖSI	M	Member	Non-attached Members	Hungary
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Balázs HIDVÉGHI	M	Member	Non-attached Members	Hungary
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Sandra KALNIETE	F	Member	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Latvia
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Karol KARSKI	M	Member	European Conservatives and Reformists Group	Poland
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Dietmar KÖSTER	M	Member	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	Germany
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Stelios KOULOGLOU	M	Member	The Left group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL	Greece
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Andrius KUBILIUS	M	Member	Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	Lithuania
Foreign Affairs	AFET	İlhan KYUCHYUK	M	Member	Renew Europe Group	Bulgaria
Foreign Affairs	AFET	Jean-Lin LACAPELLE	M	Member	Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	France

Note. Full database available on request. All the data used for the database comes from the committee member lists, available on the committee websites (European Parliament, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2024d, 2024e, 2024f, 2024g, 2024h, 2024i, 2024j, 2024k, 2024l, 2024m, 2024n, 2024o, 2024p, 2024q, 2024r, 2024s, 2024t, 2024u, 2024v, 2024w, 2024x).

III. Descriptive representation in the European Parliament

Table III

Independent variable

Committee	Abbreviation	F	Total	% F
Constitutional Affairs	AFCO	4	28	14,3%
SUB Security and Defence	SEDE	7	29	24,1%
Budgets	BUDG	10	40	25,0%
Foreign Affairs	AFET	21	79	26,6%
SUB Tax Matters	FISC	8	30	26,7%
Economic and Monetary Affairs	ECON	19	61	31,1%
Petitions	PETI	11	34	32,4%
SUB Human Rights	DROI	10	29	34,5%
Regional Development	REGI	15	43	34,9%
Legal Affairs	JURI	9	25	36,0%
Budgetary Control	CONT	11	30	36,7%
Transport and Tourism	TRAN	19	49	38,8%
Industry, Research and Energy	ITRE	30	77	39,0%
International Trade	INTA	17	43	39,5%
Agriculture and Rural Development	AGRI	19	48	39,6%
Development	DEVE	11	26	42,3%
Internal Market and Consumer Protection	IMCO	20	45	44,4%
Fisheries	PECH	13	28	46,4%
Culture and Education	CULT	15	30	50,0%
Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	ENVI	45	88	51,1%
Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	LIBE	37	68	54,4%
Employment and Social Affairs	EMPL	31	55	56,4%
SUB Public Health	SANT	18	29	62,1%
Women's Rights and Gender Equality	FEMM	32	37	86,5%

Note. Total = total amount of committee members; F = amount of female committee members; %F = percentage of female committee members. The calculations were the same for each committee: %F = F/Total. The data on which these calculations are based, was retrieved from the committee member lists (European Parliament, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2024d, 2024e, 2024f, 2024g, 2024h, 2024i, 2024j, 2024k, 2024l, 2024m, 2024n, 2024o, 2024p, 2024q, 2024r, 2024s, 2024t, 2024u, 2024v, 2024w, 2024x).

IV. Categorization of committees based on policy areas

Table IV

Justification of the categorization of policy areas based on the categories soft and hard

Committee	Category	Justification
Constitutional Affairs	Hard	This committee deals with the EU's institutional set-up, treaty modifications, and decision-making processes, impacting EU efficiency, democracy and transparency.
Security and Defence	Hard	Policies in this area are related to (inter)national security, defence strategies, and military operations, which are traditionally associated with male dominated fields.
Budgets	Hard	This committee is responsible for economic decision-making and financial management.
Foreign Affairs	Hard	This committee addresses the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy , often focusing on issues as international trade, security and global cooperation.
Tax Matters	Hard	This committee deals with taxation policies, which are often associated with economic decision-making and finance.
Economic and Monetary Affairs	Hard	This committee is categorized under the hard policy areas as its responsibilities relate to monetary policies, financial regulations, and economic governance.
Petitions	Hard	This committee addresses individual petitions and complaints about EU law implementation and enforcement.
Human Rights	Soft	This subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs committee focuses on promoting and protecting human rights, which include minority rights and gender equality.
Regional Development	Hard	This committee's policies are aimed at reducing disparities between the levels of development of different regions within the EU, typically focusing on socio-economical development.
Legal Affairs	Soft	This committee handles legal matters, including the interpretation and application of EU law.
Budgetary Control	Hard	This committee oversees the implementation of the EU budget, ensuring financial accountability and transparency.
Transport and Tourism	Hard	This committee addresses transport infrastructure, safety regulations and tourism policies, critical for economic development and mobility.
Industry, Research and Energy	Hard	This committee focuses on industrial policy, scientific research and energy policy, essential for economic growth and innovation.
International Trade	Hard	This committee deals with international trade agreements, trade policy and economic partnerships, essential for market integration and consumer protection.
Agriculture and Rural Development	Hard	This committee oversees agricultural policies and rural development, crucial for the agricultural sector.
Development	Soft	This could be considered a soft policy area, as it often involves issues related to social welfare, poverty alleviation, and international cooperation.
Internal Market and Consumer Protection	Hard	This committee could be best categorized under the hard policy areas. Internal market policies often deal with economic regulations, competition, and industry standards.
Fisheries	Hard	This committee addresses fisheries policies, marine conservation, and related economic activities, which are critical for maritime economies. This sector is more often characterized as masculine and thus a hard policy area.
Culture and Education	Soft	This committee focuses on cultural policies, educational systems and youth programs, which are labelled as social policies.
Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	Soft	This committee deals with environmental protection, public health promotion, and food safety regulations, which are critical for societal well-being and upholding health standards.
Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	Soft	This committee focuses on civil rights, justice, immigration, and home affairs. Issues often related to more social policies.
Employment and Social Affairs	Soft	This area addresses policies related to labour rights, social inclusion, which are often associated with social welfare and inclusivity.
Public Health	Soft	This area encompasses policies related to healthcare, public health promotion and disease prevention, social policies that are often more associated to women.
Women's Rights and Gender Equality	Soft	Gender equality and women's rights, are traditionally associated with concerns about social welfare and are characterised as soft policy areas.

Note. The categorizations are based on information retrieved from the website of the European Parliament (European Parliament, n.d.-d) and reports of the IPU (IPU, 2011).

V. Case selection

Table V

Case selection based on the control variables and the independent variable.

Committee	Abbreviation	Independent variable	Control variables	
			Female MEPs (%)	Policy area
Constitutional Affairs	AFCO	14,3%	Hard	1
SUB Security and Defence	SEDE	24,1%	Hard	0
Budgets	BUDG	25,0%	Hard	13
Foreign Affairs	AFET	26,6%	Hard	5
SUB Tax Matters	FISC	26,7%	Hard	0
Economic and Monetary Affairs	ECON	31,1%	Hard	2
Petitions	PETI	32,4%	Hard	1
SUB Human Rights	DROI	34,5%	Soft	1
Regional Development	REGI	34,9%	Hard	1
Legal Affairs	JURI	36,0%	Soft	2
Budgetary Control	CONT	36,7%	Hard	10
Transport and Tourism	TRAN	38,8%	Hard	1
Industry, Research and Energy	ITRE	39,0%	Hard	1
International Trade	INTA	39,5%	Hard	0
Agriculture and Rural Development	AGRI	39,6%	Hard	1
Development	DEVE	42,3%	Soft	1
Internal Market and Consumer Protection	IMCO	44,4%	Hard	2
Fisheries	PECH	46,4%	Hard	0
Culture and Education	CULT	50,0%	Soft	2
Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	ENVI	51,1%	Soft	2
Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	LIBE	54,4%	Soft	9
Employment and Social Affairs	EMPL	56,4%	Soft	8
SUB Public Health	SANT	62,1%	Soft	0

VI. Policy documents

Table V

Legislative acts for analysis

Policy Documents Analysed	Committee	Type of document	Status
Directive on Corporate Sustainability Reporting	AFET/ENVI	Directive	Adopted
Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence	AFET/ENVI	Directive	Ongoing
Critical Raw Materials Regulation	AFET/ENVI	Regulation	Adopted
Regulation on prohibiting products made with forced labour on the Union market	AFET	Regulation	Ongoing
Regulation on applying a generalised scheme of tariff preferences	AFET	Regulation	Ongoing
Regulation on establishing a Recovery and Resilience Facility	ENVI	Regulation	Adopted
Regulation establishing the Just Transition Fund	ENVI	Regulation	Adopted

Note. This table summarizes the legislative acts analysed, detailing the committee that provided their opinion, the type of document and whether the legislative act is in force (=adopted) or still in process (=ongoing).

VII. AFET Amendments

Table VII

Overview of the gender-sensitive amendments analysed for AFET

Amendment	MEP	Sex	Code	Reference
CSRD Amendment 56 Recital 25	Heidi Hautala	F	Gender	A1
CSRD Amendment 67 Recital 43	Stelios Kympouropoulos	M	Gender	A2
CSRD Amendment 92 Article 1.1 (4)	Heidi Hautala	F	Gender, equal	A3
CSDDD Amendment 298 Recital 16a (new)	Marisa Matias	F	Sex, gender, women	A4
CSDDD Amendment 337 Recital 46a (new)	Heidi Hautala	F	Gender	A5
CSDDD Amendment 351 Recital 59a (new)	Heidi Hautala	F	Gender	A6
CSDDD Amendment 419 Article 3.1 (n)	Katalin Cseh	F	Women	A7
CSDDD Amendment 423 Article 3.1 (n a) (new)	Katalin Cseh	F	Gender	A8
CSDDD Amendment 484 Article 8.3 (a)	Katalin Cseh	F	Women	A9
CSDDD Amendment 540 Article 9a (new)	Heidi Hautala	F	Gender	A10
CSDDD Amendment 542 Article 11.2 a (new)	Heidi Hautala	F	Gender	A11
CSDDD Amendment 546 Article 13.1	Heidi Hautala	F	Gender	A12
CSDDD Amendment 618 Annex I - Part I - indent 23 d (new)	Raphaël Glucksmann	M	Women	A13
GSPR Amendment 36 Recital 11 a (new)	Hannah Neumann	F	Gender	A14
GSPR Amendment 45 Article 2.1.11 (a) (new)	Miguel Urbán Crespo	M	Gender	A15
FLR Amendment 42 Recital 2	Marisa Matias	F	Women	A16
FLR Amendment 43 Recital 2	Heidi Hautala	F	Women	A17
FLR Amendment 45 Recital 2 a (new)	Marisa Matias	F	Women, gender	A18
FLR Amendment 51 Recital 4	Heidi Hautala	F	Women	A19
FLR Amendment 53 Recital 4 a (new)	Theresa Bielowski	F	Women, gender	A20
FLR Amendment 54 Recital 4 b (new)	Theresa Bielowski	F	Women	A21
FLR Amendment 94 Article 2.1.b	Heidi Hautala	F	Gender	A22
FLR Amendment 101 Article 2.1 (c a) (new)	Heidi Hautala	F	Gender	A23
FLR Amendment 102 Article 2.1 (c b)(new)	Marisa Matias	F	Gender	A24
FLR Amendment 175 Article 23.1 (a)	Marisa Matias	F	Women	A25

VIII. ENVI Amendments

Table VIII

Overview of the gender-sensitive amendments analysed for ENVI

Amendment	MEP	Sex	Code	Reference
CSRD Amendment 69 Recital 25	Marie Toussaint	F	Gender, equal	E1
CSRD Amendment 123 Recital 51	Margarita de la Pisa Carrión	F	Gender	E2
CSRD Amendment 270 Article 1.1 (4)	Margarita de la Pisa Carrión	F	Gender	E3
CSRD Amendment 292 Article 1.1 (5)	Margarita de la Pisa Carrión	F	Gender	E4
CSDDD Amendment 93 Recital 2	Maria Arena	F	Equal	E5
CSDDD Amendment 95 Recital 2 a (new)	Marie Toussaint	F	Equal	E6
CSDDD Amendment 98 Recital 4	Marie Toussaint	F	Gender	E7
CSDDD Amendment 102 Recital 5	Sirpa Pietikäinen	F	Women	E8
CSDDD Amendment 199 Recital 46 a (new)	Maria Arena	F	Gender	E9
CSDDD Amendment 200 Recital 46 a (new)	Marie Toussaint	F	Gender	E10
CSDDD Amendment 217 Recital 59 a (new)	Marie Toussaint	F	Gender	E11
CSDDD Amendment 461 Article 7.2 (e c) (new)	Antoni Comín i Oliveres	M	Gender	E12
CSDDD Amendment 590 Article 9 a (new)	Marie Toussaint	F	Gender	E13
CSDDD Amendment 610 Article 13.1	Marie Toussaint	F	Gender	E14
JTF Amendment 55 Recital 2	Mick Wallace, Clare Daly	Mixed	Equal	E15
JTF Amendment 65 Recital 3	Radan Kanev	M	Equal	E16
JTF Amendment 72 Recital 3	Sándor Rónai, Lukasz Kohut, Milan Brglez, Tudor Ciuhodaru, Eric Andrieu, Sylwia Spurek, István Ujhelyi, Jytte Guteland, Rovana Plumb, Sara Cerdas, María Arena, César Luena, Delara Burkhardt, Cristina Maestre Martín De Almagro, Nikos Androulakis, Javi López, Monika Beňová, Simona Bonafè, Alessandra Moretti, Nicolás González Casares	Mixed	Equal	E17

Note. Table continues on the next page.

Amendment	MEP	Sex	Code	Reference
JTF Amendment 74 Recital 3	Mick Wallace, Clare Daly	Mixed	Equal	E18
JTF Amendment 98 Recital 5	Mick Wallace, Clare Daly	Mixed	Equal	E19
JTF Amendment 170 Recital 10 a (new)	Radan Kanev	M	Equal	E20
JTF Amendment 174 Recital 11	Pär Homgren	M	Gender	E21
JTF Amendment 264 Article 2.1	Miriam Dalli	F	Equal	E22
JTF Amendment 271 Article 2.1	Mick Wallace, Clare Daly	Mixed	Equal	E23
JTF Amendment 421 Article 4.2.1 (h)	Pär Holmgren	M	Gender	E24
JTF Amendment 426 Article 4.2.1 (i)	Pär Holmgren	M	Gender	E25
JTF Amendment 428 Article 4.2.1 (j)	Pär Holmgren	M	Gender	E26
JTF Amendment 430 Article 4.2.1 (j)	Mairead McGuinness	F	Gender, equal	E27
JTF Amendment 565 Article 7.2 (c)	Pär Holmgren	M	Gender	E28
JTF Amendment 575 Article 7.2 (d)	Pär Holmgren	M	Gender	E29
RRFR Amendment 51 Recital 14	Bas Eickhout	M	Gender	E30
RRFR Amendment 121 Article 3.1	Bas Eickhout	M	Gender	E31
RRFR Amendment 213 Article 15.3 (c c) (new)	Bas Eickhout	M	Gender	E32
RRFR Amendment 228 Article 15.4 a (new)	Sirpa Pietikäinen	F	Gender, equal	E33
RRFR Amendment 256 Article 16.3 (d)	Bas Eickhout	M	Gender, equal	E34
RRFR Amendment 337 Annex II -2.1 (d)	Bas Eickhout	M	Gender, equal	E35
CRMR Amendment 210 Article 5.1 (c)	Maria Arena	F	Gender	E36
CRMR Amendment 682 Article 33.1 c (ii)	Maria Arena	F	Gender	E37