

The gender gap in politics in the European Union countries: the risk of pinkwashing? An Overview

Abstract

Four main themes stand out to this research: the first is the *quantification* and *qualification* of the level of gender inequalities in the European governments: while it is common knowledge that inequality exists, it is important to define *how much* and *what kind* of inequalities we are seeking to address.

Secondly: does there exist a gendered double standard in European politics, or more specifically, do women involved in government require different qualifications or experience than men who are involved at the same level?

Third, the research wants to see whether or not the underrepresentation in European governments is responsible for women's policy preferences and interests being systematically overlooked (or the relationship between what is known as “Descriptive Representation” and “Substantive Representation”).

Fourth, it seems relevant to investigate a) what the effects of having more women in Government and in the Public Sector are, and b) what would the effects of having increased gender equality in European governments be?

The goal in the paper is to conduct a thorough overview of the state of affairs regarding Women's Representation and Gender Equality in Europe, as well as analyze the existing literature on the topic, and consider some of the methods and strategies which could be used to address the problem, trying to shift the perspective from the mere quantitative question (numbers used to pink-wash reality) towards a perspective that considers gender as a required method to improve the impact of politics on citizens.

Keywords: Women, elections, discrimination, stereotypes, politics

A problem of democracy?

Superficial arguments used to claim that the limited presence of elected women at any level of governments— international, national and local - has to do with representative democracy, which would be, for this reason, incomplete. However, it is highly possible that a woman can feel herself very well represented by a man, or rather: it is highly possible (and desirable) that who is elected can represent the citizens regardless of their sex - and that is why our type of democracy, even though the elected women are few, is still accomplished (Del Re, 2004 and 2008).

Furthermore, the request for greater participation of women in decision-making arenas is generally justified with the assumption that they, when in adequate numbers, would be able to change both the way and the contents of the politics. In this case as well as in the previous one, the assumption is quite doubtful and, moreover, never proved. Anyhow, if this were the case, every subjectivity would be flattened on the univocal definition of women as “forced bearers of radical changes”, endowed also with presumed “healing” powers, which is definitely not plausible (Galceran, 2011).

Although a problem of "numbers" of women in apical position do certainly exists, it is more a sign of the existence of a “question of justice”: women are half of the population and half of the population deserves to be not only adequately represented, but also

adequately representative.

Knowing that limiting the analysis to the computation of the female presence only reinforces what Lovenduski calls the “under-representation syndrome” (Lovenduski, 2001), according to which being a minority becomes the typical form of women's representation, rather than dealing with the effective political knot, it is nevertheless undeniable that the increase in the presence of women in decision-making arenas is desirable as a democratic action in itself, since more equality in numbers can – it is not said, but “can”- bring out new issues, never thought before, at the political level.

Compared to "where" they would have more chances to be elected, a commonly accepted idea indicates that it would be easier for a woman to be elected at local level rather than at national level, and that a local mandate would be a necessary step towards a possible national and/or international career.

Data collected by the Council of the Regions of Europe through various studies starting from 2005, however, lead to fading this idea: in almost half of the countries of the Union there are more women elected in the lower house than in the local municipalities (CCRE, 2005) and this leads to further reflections on the trajectories of power (“follow the money”) and on how the selection of candidates takes place - who are the gatekeepers, where the extreme personalization of politics that we have been witnessing for decades is taking us (Bellè, 2010).

All these elements play a fundamental role in the positioning of women in an arena in which the seats are forced in finite number and at the entry of an element corresponds the output of another. Of course, one can decide that institutional politics are not interesting and that the vision of a different world is built elsewhere. But the question of who decides on us, on our lives, on topics in front of which we cannot always just say “no” and turn on the other side, will always remain open: sooner or later we will need to think about how to change the rules - for all and especially for the most defenseless. It is however evident that on this ground many problems remain open and unresolved. The first, which involves the whole current democratic system, is linked to the form of the political representation. Are our national parliaments “inclusive” and “representative” of all the voters and of the society as a whole?

The Numbers Gap

By relating the data on the presence of women at the top of the state governments in different countries of the world from 1990 to 2015, the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) reports that the percentage has grown very little in 25 years, from 11.23 to 23, 65% (IPU and World Data Bank, 2018). Twenty-five years of policies, funds, projects, documents, charters, directives, roadmaps in support of gender equality

So, the problem of the gap in numbers is not just about women's right to equality and their contribution to the conduct of public affairs, but it is also about considering women as valuable resources to determine political and development priorities that produce benefit for the society and for the global community. It's a matter of mentality, not just of equality in numbers.

Though the European continent is often viewed, both internally and externally, as being on the forefront of women's liberation and social empowerment, it faces this issue in the way that the rest of the world does: Europe can even be considered to be “behind” other parts of the world, like South Asia, Southeast Asia, and South America, which began seeing their first female heads of government in nearly two decades before Margaret Thatcher's assumption of the role of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in 1979, the

first such case in any part of Europe.

The point is that, in spite of the fact that women are more present today than in the seventies in decision-making areas, inequality continues to reproduce, even when it does not worsen, by settling on positions of "unprecedented regression and calling into question what has been acquired in terms of rights and participation" (Farina, 2016). This is because, from the point of view of political science, the gender dimension has evidently never had a particular importance as a key to understand the local life (Sebastiani, 2011). There seems to be no interest in deconstructing the stereotypes that govern the scene: once represented the marginality, once stated that it is not fair to perpetuate this state of things, the mechanism stops. Somehow women are now in the picture, at least we have "nominated" them, and if they are few and cannot influence the change, maybe it is their fault.

The varying nature of European governments, and all of the elements that contribute to diversity among national governments in Europe, leads to a combination of factors which affect issues of gender equality and political representation. For example, European governments have different degrees of Bicameralism and Presidentialism, different election cycles, and fall on a wide spectrum of institutionally left-or-right leaning governmental formats. All these structural components, as well as the added consideration of social pressures, cultural norms, and historical context, contribute to the complex and multifaceted issue of "women's representation in government".

This issue has garnered academic attention in the past fifteen years and this is likely related to a noticeable increase in women's political participation (in the arenas of both voting and serving as elected officials), as well as socio-cultural phenomena which have brought much more academic attention to women's issues internationally.

So we can all agree on the fact that the existence of Gender Inequality in European Governments (and all other regions in the world), is a well-documented reality. But: just how big is it?

To gain a better understanding of the nature of the various issues regarding women's representation, we must first establish an understanding of the extent and nature of this inequality. Table 1 shows a comparison of the number of the current (2018) percentage of Members of Parliament who are women in each EU Member state.

The stark inequality within European Parliaments is evident: IPU in 2018 has taken into consideration the combined 41 Houses of Parliament across 28 Member States, and all but one (Belgium's Upper House, which is split evenly) have more men than women elected. A commonly used benchmark among scholars who study gender inequality is getting 40-60%, or getting within 10 percentage points of an even split either way. Of the 28 Member States, only 3 (Belgium, Finland, and Sweden) have at least one House of Parliament in which the percentage of woman parliamentarians exceeds the lower bound. Furthermore, 10 of the 41 Houses taken into consideration have 20% or less of the Parliamentarians being women, meaning that in nearly a quarter of the European Houses of Parliament, there are at least four male MP's for every one woman (IPU, 2018). This gap, which already seems excessive, increases sharply when the breakdown of women who have occupied the position of Head of Government from 1945 to 2015, is considered (Muller-Rommel, Kubbe and Vercesi, 2016).

These data indicate that the gender gap in executive positions in the EU is even wider: only 10 of the 28 Member States have ever had a woman Prime Minister, and the average percentage of woman Prime Ministers for those that did was 17.1%, and these percentages do not take into consideration the duration of the terms served by each Prime Minister, as it is just a comparison of how many male and female Prime Ministers there have been: if the term length is taken into consideration, this percentage would drop even more. Inter-European regional differences are evident, with a prevalence of women as executive heads

of government instead of Prime Ministers.

The nature of the gap: cultural or structural?

Among the empirical findings of the study of Müller- Rommel et al, one of the most relevant is the following: the absolute number of female prime ministers is higher in Central–Eastern Europe than in Western Europe (Müller- Rommel, Kubbe and Vercesi 2016).

This difference in executive representation between the East and West is due to a structural, rather than a cultural disparity, since more female prime ministers are to be found in semi-presidential than in parliamentary systems (22.5 and 14.8 per cent, respectively). Thus, the higher number of women in Prime Ministerial roles seems to be more a result of the presence of dual-executive systems than higher levels of gender equity in society.

Representative equality in the legislature also follows regional trends, though they do not mirror those observed by the trends in the executive branch: within the legislative branch, Northern and Western Europe largely have a higher percentage of women, Scandinavia standing out as the “model” of successful legislative representation: Finland and Sweden account for two of the three countries with legislative representation above the 40% threshold.

This regional trend, contrarily, seems to be the result of cultural, rather than structural differences: Alan Siaroff claims that more egalitarian societies, specifically those with early female political rights and leftist values and traditions as expressed through socialist welfare systems, have more women in parliament than other systems (Siaroff 2000). Scandinavia’s position on the forefront of women’s political representation is not new: as early as 1926, Alzada Comstock, an American writer studying women in European Parliaments, noted that “to find the group of women legislators of longest standing, one must go up beyond the Scandinavian countries, to the Finns, who live farther north than any other people in the world” (Comstock 1926).

Alongside regional patterns, there are party-based differences that can be observed. In their analysis of women in Prime Ministerial positions, Müller-Rommel, Kubbe and Vercesi found that there exist “remarkable differences regarding the party affiliation of female and male prime ministers: most unexpectedly [they] found a very high ratio of women prime ministers from centre-right parties” (Müller-Rommel, Kubbe and Vercesi 2016). Again, there is an opposite trend in the legislature (and in cabinets). As regard to this, Alan Siaroff writes that “the ideological composition of a [legislative] body does matter, in that left-wing parliaments tend to have more women, and even more in that left-wing or even centrist governments tend to contain more female ministers” (Siaroff 2000). However, equally between left-leaning and right-leaning governments, women were excluded from more “prestigious” committees in parliament (Pansardi and Vercesi 2016). Women’s committee assignments will be further discussed in the next paragraph, as well as the relationship between women’s in politics and the political spectrum.

Though the previously discussed evidence does show incongruences among the factors that affect women’s representation in legislative and executive roles, there are some indications that there is a relationship between legislative and executive representation. This connection, while not always prominent, is intuitive, being that most European governments are fused-power systems, with the executive branch necessarily reflecting the legislative.

Data about the percentage of “Women in Cabinet” as a function of “Women in Parliament”

examined by Siaroff, shows a general positive correlation between the two percentages: however, when the Scandinavian countries (4 of the 27 countries shown) are removed from “the picture”, the strength of this correlation drops significantly; still, a positive correlation exists (Siaroff 2000). Farida Jalalzai, a preeminent scholar of women’s representation, confirms this relationship and posits that higher legislative representation can lead to higher executive representation, claiming “women’s rise in legislative institutions in the 1990s may partly explain women’s gains in presidencies and prime-ministerships in the 2000s” (Jalalzai 2014).

The qualification Gap

Not only are women elected to both legislative and executive positions at a lower rate than men, but also those who are elected are held to a different standard than their male counterparts. Studies indicate that women who serve in government positions, particularly elective positions, are required to show more experience than men they are competing against (Sarlo and Zajczyk, 2012). Furthermore, women are denied access to party leadership and more prestigious parliamentary committee positions. These disparities serve as significant and influential barriers to access for women being active participants in the political system, and as roadblocks to fully integrating women into political participation, essentially by requiring that women work harder for smaller rewards.

One of the most obvious incongruities between men and women in European Governments is the relative level of experience each group is required to accumulate before being awarded Parliamentary leadership positions. Data about the level of professionalization among prime ministers – men and women- in ten different countries between 1979 and 2015, indicate that, while it is similarly difficult for both sexes to become Prime Minister with low degrees of political experience (with slightly less than a quarter (23%) of both male and female Prime Minister’s coming from this category), almost twice as many female Prime Ministers (38,5%) had high degrees of experience as compared to the men (19%). Additionally, while the number of men in this section is also low (1,6%), the number of women who became Prime Minister with no experience whatsoever is zero (Müller-Rommel, Kuppe and Vercesi 2016). This trend is mirrored by data that compares the duration spent by men and women in Parliament and Cabinet before becoming Prime Minister: while in both the case of Parliamentary and Cabinet positions, men have a higher range of experience, the middle 50% as well as the average duration are higher for women than men. According to Müller-Rommel and Vercesi, data confirm that women prime ministers have clearly stockpiled more experience in parliament and cabinet before entering office than their male counterparts. This confirms what is clear to almost every woman who decide to enter the political arena, i.e. that women need more credentials than men to reach the same political posts. (Müller-Rommel, Kuppe and Vercesi 2016).

In addition to the pressure of being held to a higher standard, women also deal with unfair treatment once elected to office. Specifically on the topic of committee assignments, women are systematically assigned to lower-prestige portfolios, or those which seem closer to their “natural” inclinations.

A case study regarding female MP’s in Italy says that “Italian female MPs tend to be appointed to committees dealing with stereotypical ‘feminine’ and ‘gender-neutral’ policy areas in higher proportion than their male counterparts” (Pansardi and Vercesi 2016). This is the case even of women who later assume the Prime Ministership: Müller-Rommel, Kuppe and Vercesi found that “all women prime ministers in Europe have gained ministerial experiences in medium- or low- prestige portfolios while most of their male

counterparts held high prestigious cabinet posts prior to becoming prime minister.” (Müller-Rommel, Kuppe and Vercesi 2016).

This trend has not changed over years of observation: part of Pansardi and Vercesi’s study (2016) include a longitudinal analysis over several decades in different countries, the results of which show that no significant change has occurred in the course of the six legislatures under scrutiny, and that differences in the assignment of committee seats continue to be reproduced along traditional gender lines.

In fact, this same trend can be seen as far back as Comstock’s 1926 observation of women in European Parliaments, wherein he notes that while a few women had been elected to the German Reichstag at that point, the “women members... have not been put on important committee.” (Comstock 1926).

The Policy Gap

Women’s underrepresentation in government leads to a series of other related questions: are women’s policy preferences underrepresented? Does an increase in the number of women in elected necessarily result in policies that are “better” for women? Is there even such a thing as “women’s issues”? The first step in addressing these questions is defining the terms “Descriptive Representation” and “Substantive Representation”. Descriptive representation refers to the number or percentage of a certain group who make up a respective legislature, cabinet, or office. Substantive representation refers to the interests of that group being adequately represented. These two forms of representation are neither mutually exclusive nor mutually guaranteed: in theory, there could be a legislature composed of 100% male parliamentarians who represent the interests of their electorates’ women extremely well, and conversely, there could be a legislature with 50/50 representation of men and women that does a bad job of representing women’s political views.

A 2009 study detailing the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation separates the factors that contribute to descriptive representation into macro, meso-, and micro-level categories (Wangnerud 2009).

Among the macro-level variables, the study lists: the year of female suffrage, religion, gender equality culture, electoral system, welfare state system, legal gender quotas, socioeconomics, contagion effects across countries. Among the meso-level variables there are party ideology, party organization and party gender quotas, then the presence of women’s movements, dynamics in specific elections. The micro-level variables are depending by the voter’s preferences and by the specific motivation that women candidates may have. This characterization shows that there are organizational and systematic elements which contribute to the election of women to offices, and among these are the electoral system and party ideology/organization. The structure of the electoral system can have a significant impact on the ease and ability of women to be elected to parliament in the first place: nations with proportional election systems, sometimes referred to as “quota” systems, have a higher degree of descriptive representations than those without.

In a 2003 study, Russell and O’Cinneide underline that the proportional election list systems used in Norway, Sweden, France, and Germany are a very effective tool for improving the numbers of women candidates (particularly through the success of 'zipping'), and avoid some of the legal and political difficulties thrown up by the automatic preference measures necessary to reduce inequality in single member constituency system (Russell and O’Cinneide 2003). This claim is confirmed and expanded upon by Siaroff,

who says that if from one side party list proportional representation aids in having more women in parliament, from the other side specialist recruitment patterns can aid in having more women in Cabinet (Siaroff 2000).

Even the ideological composition of a body does matter, in that left-wing parliaments tend to have more women, and even more in that left-wing or even centrist governments tend to contain more female ministers (Siaroff, 2000). Conversely, Müller-Rommel and Vercesi, who expected to find a similar trend among female Prime Ministers (though the sample size is significantly lower), found a “remarkable differences regarding the party affiliation of female and male prime ministers. Most unexpectedly we found a very high ratio of women prime ministers from centre-right parties” (Müller-Rommel and Vercesi, 2016).

This scenario is evocative of another issue that need to be considered: the substantive representation. The contrasting findings of Müller-Rommel and Vercesi and Siaroff bring attention to a question which seems obvious: which side of the political spectrum better “serves” women? While there are issues which, in the political sphere, are considered “women’s issues” (such as access to family planning, maternal leave, the gender pay gap, etc.), it is important to not characterize women as voters who only care about those specific issues, so this question is, in many ways, fundamentally flawed.

The media frequently characterizes female parliamentarians as homogeneous or always in accord, however the data shows that women, both voters and legislators, have views that fall all over the political spectrum. Referring back again to Comstock’s observations ninety years ago, even when there were very few female European parliamentarians to speak of, this was the case: “There is almost no tendency to act as a body; in fact, unified action is almost impossible. Take the Netherlands as an example; that country has had seven women, one from each of the seven political parties, in parliament at the same time. Action as women was clearly out of the question” (Comstock 1926). And this simply because women are definitely not a social group!

On the topic of those specific “women’s issues” mentioned before, the result that emerges from empirical research is that female politicians contribute to strengthening the position of women’s interests (Wangnerud 2009). However, studies with a broader scope exhibit different findings. A study published in 2018 exploring gender equality in policy congruence in twenty-one European democracies sought to quantify the effect of descriptive representation on substantive representation in regards to political issues not considered “women’s issues”, such as the free market, redistribution, the environment, lifestyles, immigration, multiculturalism and the role of religious principles in politics (Dingler et al. 2018). In addition to finding that, as a whole, parliamentary bodies tend to reflect women’s policy preferences better than those of men, the study makes the claim that their analyses show that the share of female office-holders does not have a clear effect on the degree to which parliaments mirror women’s preferences descriptive representation is not a necessary condition for substantive representation.

This claim is contrary to what the study calls “conventional wisdom”, held by many in the public. However, the study finds that there is one variable that does have a strong positive correlation with substantive representation: voter turnout. The study finds that the more women turn out to vote in parliamentary elections, the better parliaments reflect their preferred issue opinions (Dingler et. al 2018).

The Results Gap

As the election of women to elected offices, both legislative and executive, has increased around the world in the past several decades, we have been able to see some direct causal effects in the areas where they have attained higher levels of descriptive representation. In addition to Wangnerud's finding that women's issues are strengthened with a higher number of female politicians, and Dinger's findings that there is a minor increase in policy congruence, there are both political and institutional changes that come from a higher number of women in office. Institutionally, we see that more women in office leads to a positive feedback loop, wherein it becomes more socio-culturally acceptable to have women in leadership positions, and thus even more women are elected (Stockemer, 2008). This trend can be observed by looking at the percentage of women elected to the National Parliament since 1950 to 2007: Stockemer lists the countries that had a high number of female parliamentarians early on and have the highest number today, asserting that the ideal conditions for a high representation of women are a highly conducive electoral system, a high percentage of women in managerial positions, and a long-standing tradition of female political empowerment (Stockemer 2008).

In another study, Leyenaar describes what she refers to as the "incremental" and "fast tracks" to women's political integration: while the gradual integration of women in politics through an increase in resources could provide an 'incremental track' to gender equality, gender quota legislation could provide a 'fast track,' producing substantial increases in the number of women entering parliament" (Leyenaar 2008). This incremental track, combined with the effects of the socio-cultural positive feedback loop, contributes to more women in office leading to better overall representation.

Higher numbers of women in politics can lead to many short-term tangible benefits as well. Countries with higher descriptive representation have been noted as having political effects (such as increased public health spending, attention to issues like gender-based violence, and "family friendly" policies) as well as institutional effects (such as higher levels of overall responsiveness to citizens, more diverse and representative judiciaries, and higher social trust in government institutions). Dinger claims that "female officeholders have been found to transform institutional norms, political discourse and the policy agenda", and in Norway, a direct causal relationship between the presence of women in municipal councils and childcare coverage was found (United Nations, 2016). While there is no guarantee that increased election of women will continue to display these trends, it is undebatable that countries expanding women's political representation have seen positive impact.

Conclusion

As half of the world's population, women are an integral and irreplaceable part of human civilization. The trends of the past several decades of enfranchising women, expanding their political access, and encouraging their political participation has had widespread observable effects throughout the world. Governments, political organizations, and parties have moved to include women in democratic processes in which they were historically overlooked, and this positive trend seems like it will continue. Leyenaar summarizes the political benefit of expanding participation, stating that party leaders may become increasingly aware that a more representative composition of their parliamentary party can contribute to greater legitimacy, heightening people's inclination to accept the political decisions made. The data shows that Europe is on an upward trend when it comes to

women's representation and political participation: however, there are still many barriers, and we are left with many questions.

Considering the evidence demonstrated in this paper, we are left to ponder if the impact of having women in government is overwhelmingly positive, why are people (specifically European voters) reluctant to vote for them? What specific institutional/policy methods can be implemented to address the Gender Gap? And finally, can we, as individuals, do anything to address the barriers to access and opportunity that exist in Women's political involvement?

In playing the "game of equality" - and therefore of rights - the risk we run is to put all the responsibility for the "change" of politics on the shoulders of women - in good (salvific) and in evil (responsible). A decidedly too onerous situation that seems to respond to a concerned design of maintaining inequalities. In essence, if it is true that it is not politically correct to say no to a greater participation of women in decision-making arenas, it is also true that their presence may not actually be useful for maintaining the status quo. What is important for the system in substance is not to refuse their presence but to digest it and then to re-establish itself in a process of "resilience" (Genoa, 2016 in the sense of a "perverse" adaptation). The proof is that, despite the fact that women are more present than in the seventies in decision-making places, the disparity however continues to reproduce, when it does not even worsen by settling on positions of "unprecedented regression and called into question of what has been acquired in terms of rights and participation" (Farina, 2016). This is because, from the point of view of political science, the gender dimension has obviously never had a particular importance as a key to understanding local life (Sebastiani, 2011). The truth is that - maybe - there is no interest in deconstructing the stereotypes that govern the scene. Once the marginality is represented; when the injustice that perpetuates this state of affairs is translated into words, the mechanism stops. Women are somehow in the picture, and although they are few and fail to affect any possible change, it ends up being their fault.

Bibliography

Ballington, Julie. 2008. *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*, Lausanne: Inter-Parliamentary Union.

<http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/equality08-e.pdf>

Bellè, Elisa. 2010. *Genere della politica, politica del genere*, Napoli, Scriptaweb.

CCRE – *Conseil des Communes et Régions d'Europe, La Ville pour l'égalité*, Commission Européenne, Bruxelles 2005

Comstock, Alzada. 1926. "Women Members of European Parliaments." *The American Political Science Review* 20.2.

Del Re, Alisa. 2004. *Quando le donne governano le città genere e gestione locale del cambiamento in tre regioni italiane*, Milano, FrancoAngeli.

- Del Re, Alisa. 2008. *Produzione/riproduzione*, in *Lessico marxiano*, Roma, Manifestolibri
- Dingler, Sarah C., Corinna Kroeber and Jessica Fortin-Rittberger. 2018. "Do parliaments underrepresent women's policy preferences? Exploring gender equality in policy congruence in 21 European democracies." *Journal of European Public Policy* 1-20.
- Farina, Fatima- Domenico Carbone. 2016. *Oltre le quote. Sguardi plurimi delle elette*, Roma Maggioli.
- Galceran Monserrat. 2011. *Política hecha por/desde las mujeres*, in Del Re, A. (ed.), *Donne politica utopia*, Padova, Il Poligrafo.
- IPU- Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2017. *Democracy Through Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics*. <http://archive.ipu.org/english/home.htm>
- IPU - Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2018. *Women in National Parliaments*, <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>
- Jalalzai, Farida. 2014. "Gender, presidencies, and prime ministerships in Europe: Are women gaining ground?" *International Political Science Review* 35.5: 577 –594.
- Leyenaar, Monique. 2008. "Challenges to Women's Political Representation in Europe." *Signs* 34.1: 1-7.
- Lovenduski, Joni. 2005. *State feminism and political representation*, Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Müller-Rommel, Ferdinand and Michelangelo Vercesi. 2016. "Prime ministerial careers in the European Union: does gender make a difference?" *European Politics and Society* 18.2: 245-262.
- Pansardi, Pamela and Michelangelo Vercesi. 2016. "Party Gate-Keeping and Women's Appointment to Parliamentary Committees: Evidence from the Italian Case." *Parliamentary Affairs*: 62-83.
- Russell, Meg and Colm O'Cinneide. 2003. "Positive Action to Promote Women in Politics: Some European Comparisons." *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 52.3: 587-614 .
- Sarlo Assunta and Francesca Zajczyk. 2012. *Dove batte il cuore delle donne? Voto e partecipazione politica in Italia*, Bari. Laterza
- Sebastiani, Chiara. 2011. *I governi locali funzionamento e politiche territoriali di genere*, in Del Re A.- Longo V. and XXX., *I confini della cittadinanza. Genere, partecipazione politica e vita quotidiana*. Milano FrancoAngeli, p. 88-98.

Siaroff, Alan. 2000. "Women's Representation in Legislatures and Cabinets in Industrial Democracies." *International Political Science Review* 21.2: 197-215.

Stockemer, Daniel. 2008. "Why are there differences in the political representation of women in the 27 countries of the European Union?" *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 8.4: 476-493.

Sundström, Aksel, et al. 2015. *Women's Political Empowerment: A New Global Index, 1900-2012*. Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, V-Dem Institute.

The World Bank. 2018. *Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments*. April <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>

United Nations. 2016. *Women's Leadership and Political Participation*. Briefing. New York. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>

Wangnerud, Lena. 2009. "Women in Parliaments: Descriptive and Substantive Representation." *Annual Review of Political Science* 12: 51-69.