



GENDER AND POLITICS

SERIES EDITORS: JOHANNA KANTOLA · SARAH CHILDS

Party Politics and the Implementation of Gender Quotas

Resisting Institutions



Edited by
Sabine Lang · Petra Meier · Birgit Sauer

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Gender and Politics

Series Editors

Johanna Kantola, University of Tampere, Tampere, Finland

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The Gender and Politics series celebrates its 12th anniversary at the 6th European Conference on Politics and Gender (ECPG) in July 2022 in Ljubljana, Slovenia, having published more than 50 volumes to date. The original idea for the book series was envisioned by the series editors Johanna Kantola and Judith Squires at the first ECPG in Belfast in 2009, and the series was officially launched at the Conference in Budapest in 2011. In 2014, Sarah Childs became the co-editor of the series, together with Johanna Kantola. Gender and Politics showcases the very best international writing. It publishes world class monographs and edited collections from scholars — junior and well established - working in politics, international relations and public policy, with specific reference to questions of gender. The titles that have come out over the past years make key contributions to debates on intersectionality and diversity, gender equality, social movements, Europeanization and institutionalism, governance and norms, policies, and political institutions. Set in European, US and Latin American contexts, these books provide rich new empirical findings and push forward boundaries of feminist and politics conceptual and theoretical research. The editors welcome the highest quality international research on these topics and beyond, and look for proposals on feminist political theory; on recent political transformations such as the economic crisis or the rise of the populist right; as well as proposals on continuing feminist dilemmas around participation and representation, specific gendered policy fields, and policy making mechanisms. The series can also include books published as a Palgrave pivot. For further information on the series and to submit a proposal for consideration, please get in touch with Executive Editor Ambra Finotello, ambra.finotello@palgrave.com.

This series is indexed by Scopus.

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ISSN 2662-5814

ISSN 2662-5822 (electronic)

Gender and Politics

ISBN 978-3-031-08930-5

ISBN 978-3-031-08931-2 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-08931-2>

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This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

We dedicate this book to those who are leading the political struggles to implement gender quotas across the globe. It is hard, and often unacknowledged, work, but central to a future of gender parity in political representation and to transforming societies towards more gender equality.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume builds on discussions within the *Gender Equality Policy in Practice (GEPP)* international research initiative. It is the first volume being published within GEPP's research stream on *political representation* that the three editors convene. We are profoundly indebted to many people who have supported this comparative assessment of how gender quotas are implemented across Europe. They have guided us through the many stages of conceiving this project, starting with its framing, then helping us see it through and being patient when things were not moving as fast as we wished. The COVID pandemic, of course, has intervened into all our lives and made carving out space for research and writing more difficult. But the more profound set of delays came as we realized how little empirical evidence our contributors could make use of when researching the implementation of quotas. As a result of several rounds of revisions and editorial asks, this volume presents truly new and well-grounded case studies of how quotas are put in practice in 17 European countries.

First and foremost, we want to acknowledge the patience and resilience of our contributors, following us on this path of investigation. We would like to thank the publishing team at Palgrave and the editors of the Politics and Gender series and their reviewers for seeing the value in this focus on implementation research. Along the way, we received substantial support from excellent editors, in particular, Fraser King and Lee Scheingold. Sezan Eyrich helped with getting the manuscript into formal shape,

and our deepest appreciation goes to Ildi Clarke who attended to all the myriad editorial details that turn chapters into a concise volume. The editors are grateful for receiving financial support from a number of institutions for this book: Sabine Lang acknowledges funding by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Commission and her Jean Monnet Chair; Petra Meier received research funds from the University of Antwerp; Birgit Sauer acknowledges financial assistance from the University of Vienna.

PRAISE FOR *PARTY POLITICS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER QUOTAS*

“With its focus on the often less detectable implementation processes, this book breaks new ground in quota research. It shows us why seemingly ambitious quota rules may turn out weak, while unambitious rules can be fortified by factors governing the implementation process. Through seventeen exciting case studies from the European continent, the book systematically scrutinizes the cultural, institutional and political factors of importance for the effectiveness of the contemporary trend to adopt gender quotas in political life. This book is a must for researchers as well as for policy-makers and women’s rights activists.”

—Drude Dahlerup, *Professor Emerita of Political Science, Stockholm University, Sweden*

“Cultural, institutional, and political factors shape parties’ active and passive resistance to gender quotas. In this must-read volume, top gender and politics scholars shed new light on European political parties’ implementation of gender quotas. The editors’ conclusion—that progressive gender regimes make implementation more effective—offers a powerful and timely reminder that simply adopting gender equality policies cannot ensure women’s political representation.”

—Jennifer M. Piscopo, *Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Research and Scholarship, Occidental College, Los Angeles, USA*

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Party Politics and the Implementation of Gender Quotas: Resisting Institutions

Sabine Lang, Petra Meier, and Birgit Sauer

1 GENDER QUOTAS IN ELECTORAL AND PARTY POLITICS

At the turn of the millennium, Europe figured as a global leader in women's political representation.¹ In 1995, the year of the World Conference on Women in Beijing, eight out of the top ten countries for women's descriptive representation in the single or lower houses of parliament were European (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020). Women in the Swedish

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Riksdag topped the list with 40.4% women, followed by all other Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany (the Seychelles and Argentina completed this top ten). A quarter century later, in 2020, this line-up looked drastically different. Sweden was the only European country left in that top ten, faring barely seven percentage points better than 25 years earlier, while Rwanda led with 61.3% women. The other leaders of the past had slid drastically down in the ranking.

It is not that any of the European countries saw its political representation of women decrease over the last quarter century. As Fig. 1 illustrates, all European Union (EU) member states are doing better in 2020 than in 1995, with Sweden coming closest to a perfect gender balance in political representation. However, not all of the countries doing well in 1995 are still among those with the best gender balance in political representation in Europe today. The number of women in the Dutch Second Chamber did not really move and that of the German Bundestag shows no substantial increase. A number of other countries, with historically very low numbers of women elected to the lower or single house, such as Spain, Belgium, Portugal, France, and Italy, are now among those with the highest numbers. Other countries saw their number of women in national legislatures increase more moderately. And Hungary, doing way better back in 1995 than many other countries, made hardly any progress and has the lowest political representation of women in Europe. As of 2020, about one third of EU member states have close to or more than 40% women in their lower or single house. Another third has less than 25%. The rest is somewhere in between. In sum, women's political representation has increased over the last quarter century, but many European countries remain far from gender parity.

Factors explaining the position of women in electoral politics have been amply studied since the 1990s (Childs & Lovenduski, 2013; Dahlerup, 2018; Dahlerup & Leyenaar, 2013; Lovenduski, 2005a), focusing on the macro, meso, and micro levels (Lovenduski & Norris, 1993), and particularly on electoral systems (Krook & Schwindt-Bayer, 2013; Tremblay, 2012). An important intervening factor in the evolution of women in electoral politics, though not the only and most effective one, are gender quotas, also called the fast track to equal representation of women and men (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2005; for gendered electoral financing as another instrument see Muriaas et al., 2021). There has been an ever-growing political interest in gender quotas since the 1980s, largely promoted by supra- and international organizations such as the European

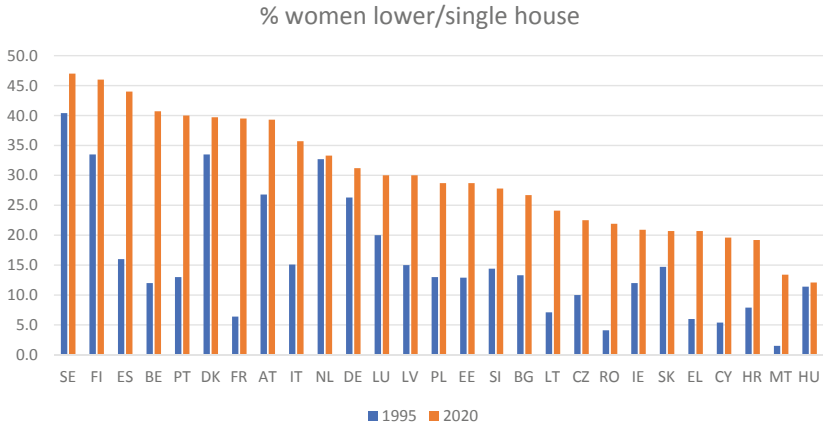


Fig. 1 Percentage of Women in Lower/Single House EU27 (1995 and 2020) (*Source* Inter-Parliamentary Union [2020]. Figure compiled by authors)

Union, the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank (Krook, 2006). This also goes for Europe, where the forerunner was Belgium, adopting legislative quotas for all levels of elections back in 1994. Since, ten other countries followed, France being the first in 2000, Ireland (so far) the last in 2012. The others are, in chronological order: Greece (2001), Serbia (2002), Italy, Slovenia (2004), Portugal (2006), Spain (2007), Poland (2011), and Croatia (2013). While most of the European countries adopted legislative quotas in the first decade of the twenty-first century, some updating them since (see chapters on Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Serbia, and Slovenia), party quotas go back as far as the 1970s. This is for instance the case in Belgium, France, Sweden, or Denmark (but the latter got abolished in 1996). In some cases, party quotas were the forerunners of legislative quotas, in some they co-exist, but most countries in Europe still have only party quotas. Of all the countries in Fig. 1., only Denmark, Estonia, Finland, and Latvia have no gender quotas at all in electoral politics.

Quotas have become one of the central topics in the field of gender and politics, with considerable emphasis being placed on the factors accounting for their adoption and potential effects (Celis et al., 2011; Dahlerup, 2006; Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2010; Fernandes et al., 2021;