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So close but still too far away from power? Unveiling women's careers in the European Parliament

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Abstract:
Since its constitution in 1979, the composition of the European Parliament (EP) has changed considerably. One notable evolution is the progressive but steady increase in the number of female MEPs: between 1979 and 2019 this number has risen from 15.2percent to 39.5percent. Therefore, the EP is defined in the literature as one of the most feminized Parliaments in Europe. But we find a gap in the literature when it comes to career chances of specifically female MEPs. Studying female MEPs in top positions in the European Parliament between 1994 and 2021, we raise the question to which extent women are granted access to rapporteurships and committee chairs in the EP over time. Leading questions are: Did the number of women in top positions change over time accordingly with the increase of their overall number in Parliament? And do group membership, member state affiliation, political experience and time influence the chances of women of women over time?
To answer this, a unique dataset has been created which covers all MEPs in top positions in the EP including their pre and post EP offices as well as the political career within the EP itself. Top positions studied in this paper are committee chairs and rapporteurs (N = 3654 MEPs). The paper analyses the access to these positions based on four explanatory levels: party, country, individual political experience and time. The results of the multivariate regression and survival analysis show that there is even a slight overrepresentation of female rapporteurs. More generally, we find no statistically significant difference between men and women when it comes to the allocation to committee chairs but female MEPs from larger member states are more likely to get one than women from smaller member states.

****** VERY FIRST DRAFT – DATA COLLECTION STILL IN PROGRESS*****

Introduction

Since its constitution in 1979, the European Parliament (EP) has changed considerably. Starting in 1986 with the Single European Act, the cooperation procedure between the European Parliament and the Council has been established. Since 2009, the EP is an equal player with the Council in the so called "ordinary legislative procedure" and therefore has veto power. Yet, while the legislative power as well as the number of MEPs (through the accession of new member states) increased over time, it has been found that the number of committee chairs, EP vice-presidents and rapporteurs did not grow accordingly (Kreppel 2004). As an unsurprising result, the internal competition to these positions became much more intense over time (Kreppel 2004). In the meantime, a second evolution was taking place in terms of the composition of the EP. The number of female MEPs rose progressively and steadily: between 1979 and 2019 this number has risen from 15.2percent to 39.5percent. In comparison with the national Parliaments of the 27 EU member states, the 9th EP is with 39.5percent on the 10th best place (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2021). In this wake, our research goal is precisely to study how the empowerment of female MEPs in the supranational institution also triggered a greater access of women to influential positions.

For that goal, in line with the increasing legislative power of the European Parliament, we will analyse women since 1979 in two influential positions which directly influence the decision-making process. Firstly, **committee chairs** participate in the trilogues as well (Rule 74 (1) Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament 9th term). Additionally, they shape the committee agenda which gives them also a direct policy-seeking influence. Committee chairs are positions which are considered as springboards for other highly prestigious political offices at both the EU and the national level and are seen as a very popular position by the MEPs themselves (Chiru 2020: 614). Secondly, **rapporteurs** who are seen as very prominent EP representatives and are the most influential members of the EP (Schädler and Brandsma 2021; Chiou *et al.* 2020). This can be put down to the fact that in the first reading stage of the OLP "early agreements" are adopted which result in negotiations of the legislation in so-called trilogues. In trilogues, the rotating Presidency of the Council and the rapporteur negotiate a deal "that must subsequently be approved by their respective institutions." (Delreux and Laloux 2018: 300). This happens before the first plenary discussion in the EP takes place making the rapporteur the one with the most influence over the text of a bill (Chiru 2020: 614). The rapporteurship changes with every new proposal that has to be discussed. Besides, the task of a rapporteur is to collect information and to negotiate a consensus within the committee about a proposal. This consensus is defended by him/her in the trilogues and in the EP plenary (Chiou *et al.* 2020: 235).

As we will demonstrate, studies about committee chairs and rapporteurs lack two important aspects. First, the time scope of analysis is often limited to a few legislative terms and, therefore, can hardly provide a broader understanding in the allocation of influential positions in the EP over time. Second, women never have been a specific focus of analysis in this scholarship, where gender is sometimes completely ignored (Obholzer *et al.* 2019; Chiou *et al.* 2020; Mamadouh and Raunio 2003) or used as a mere control variable without explicit goal to explain gender differences in the EP (Hurka *et al.* 2015; Schädler and Brandsma 2021; Chiru 2020). We assume that by using gender as the independent variable (including its interactive effects with other key variables), the findings about the allocation of rapporteurs and committee chairs will be different.

Therefore, an analysis of rapporteurs and committee chairs from a gender perspective will allow us to reveal developments and differences of the allocation of these influential positions to female MEPs over time. Our empirical analysis is based on four different analytical levels: party, country, individual political experience and time level. Based on various models, we seek to establish the effects of gender (and gender interactive with these four levels of analysis) upon the probability of accessing top positions in the EP. For that goal, we created a dataset of all MEPs from 1979 to 2019 with their pre- and post-political (legislative and executive) offices within the EP and in domestic politics (regional and national electoral arenas). An analysis of rapporteurs (all reports in general, and those under the codecision procedure more specifically) and committee chairs from a gender perspective will allow us to reveal developments and differences of the appointment of women to these seats over time.

At first, we will present the theoretical framework about top positions and women and we will show that women have been overseen in former analysis. Then, we will present our methodological approach and analyse the data first descriptively and then with a multivariate analysis. Lastly, we will discuss our findings and give prospects for future analysis.

1. Theoretical framework

As many other legislative assemblies, the European Parliament is an institution that offers various opportunities for MEPs to access positions of influence. Following each legislative term, the various parliamentary positions are distributed to MEPs according to specific internal regulations (Krehbiel 1991: 2). This process is fundamental as it "defines a set of privileged groups, subgroups of parliamentarians with specific powers, and a set of procedures that specify the power of these subgroups with respect to the functions that legislatures perform" (Strøm

1998: 23). In this respect, the scholarship devoted to the EP has provided some specific attention to "rapporteurs" and "committee chairs".

Experience and seniority seem to be important requirements to become a rapporteur (Chiou *et al.* 2020; Schädler and Brandsma 2021; Hurka *et al.* 2015), but also being close with the national delegation (Obholzer *et al.* 2019) as they control the nomination of rapporteur (Mamadouh and Raunio 2003). Some reveal a link between rapporteurship and committee chair and conclude that being a committee chair or a vice chair is an important condition to also become a rapporteur (Schädler and Brandsma 2021; Hurka *et al.* 2015) whereas others found the opposite: a rapporteurship increases the likelihood to become a committee chair (Treib and Schlipphak 2019). Others find out the shifts in the requirements: analysing committee chairs from a long-term perspective, it has been found that it is not any longer seniority which matters to become a committee chair but leadership skills and the knowledge of the legislative process (Chiru 2020).

Despite the respective merits of this scholarship, gender "is seldom considered in relation to the EP's composition, for instance in terms of political qualifications" (Beauvallet and Michon 2013: 175). Almost ten years later, the same gap has been revealed by Kantola and Miller who conclude that studies of women's leadership in the EP remain rare (Kantola and Miller 2022). The studies about rapporteurs and committee chairs in the EP have not at all focused on female MEPs specifically. Either gender has not been mentioned at all (Obholzer *et al.* 2019; Chiou *et al.* 2020; Mamadouh and Raunio 2003) or no gender differences have been found when gender was used as a control variable (Hurka *et al.* 2015; Schädler and Brandsma 2021; Chiru 2020).

In sum, women in the EP are mostly considered as a control variable or not even looked closer at. We criticize this lack. In times where the promotion of women in all areas in our everyday life is discussed, their promotion within the EP is overseen by the literature. This is even more important, as we already know that marginalized groups are less represented in top positions in national legislatures (Fernandes *et al.* forthcoming). Therefore, it can be assumed that marginalized groups (as women) may be more systematically excluded from top positions in the European Parliament.

Studying women in top positions in the European Parliament, we posit that institutions are locations of power and can be understood as "a stable, recurring pattern of behaviour" and are a social phenomenon consisting – besides formal political structures and organizations – of informal structures, rules, values, routines and conventions" (Kantola and Lombardo 2017: 93; 95). In addition, institutions determine who is representative and how, where and when decisions are made (Childs and Lovenduski 2013: 500). We already know that women's

underrepresentation and/or exclusion from powerful positions "is underpinned by a set of practices, discourses and images that are associated with political institutions" (Lovenduski 2005: 50). These practices are assumed to work via demonstration in which actors understand how they are supposed to behave through observing the routinized actions of others and then recreating those actions (Lowndes and Roberts 2013: 57). This assumption comes quickly to a limit when we look at women in Parliaments. As Joni Lovenduski describes, Parliaments can be understood as masculine because men have not only founded but also dominated these institutions for decades in modern politics (if not centuries) and therefore it institutionalizes the norms and behaviour of men who founded them and internalized the culture of masculinity. As some types of masculine behaviour are favoured, produced and reproduced in political institutions, this leads in turn to gender inequalities: women's underrepresentation and their near exclusion from powerful positions can be put down to the practices of political institutions (Lovenduski 2005: 48–50).

In this wake, we seek to analyse how the allocation of positions of influence in the EP, by using the feminist institutionalism approach (Verge and de la Fuente 2014: 68) to explain how gender relations interplay with the specific EP's institutional structure of opportunity, which results in specific distribution of power within the institution (Holmes 2020). As discussed above, the literature has hardly tackled the question of gender in the allocation of positions in the EP. Yet, by comparative standards we also know that the European Parliament today's composition is amongst the most balanced legislative assembly in terms of gender representation with 39.3percent (source). It is the result of an incremental evolution over the last four decades, though: in 1979, female MEPs represented hardly 15.2percent of the assembly and, before the first direct elections, the supranational assembly – composed of delegation of representatives from all national parliaments – was even more dominated by males in its very early days. In this context, political practices and political culture of the EP has been mostly developed *by* and *for* male MEPs given the overwhelming under-representation of female MEPs until more recently. As (Bjarnegård 2013: 3) puts forward: "The desire to be in power is one of the maxims in political life. Male reluctance to give up power is thus rational and partly understandable, given that practices that conserve and reproduce male dominance are institutionalized and taken for granted in all spheres of society". It can be expected that if top positions have been allocated mainly with male MEPs in the past, and possibly the increasing power of the EPs top positions along with the increase of female MEPs who may tend to aim more strongly to get into these positions as well and create a new dimension of concurrence and also threaten the male

parliamentary dominance. In the section, we present our hypotheses that would explain such differences at distinct levels of analysis.

2. Hypotheses

Because of the specificities of the EP, we expect to see differences in female MEPs' access to positions of influence along four main explanatory levels: party level, country level, experience of individual MEPs level and time level.

Party level

Formally, rapporteurs and committee chairs are elected by the respective committee (Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament Rule 213(1) for committee chairs and Rules 48(3) and 51 for rapporteurs). But in practice, it is up to the party groups to nominate MEPs to these positions. Every parliamentary group gets a certain number of points according to the proportionality in the EP using the d'Hondt method (Kreppel 2004; Mamadouh and Raunio 2003; Chiru 2020). With these points, parties can already calculate their chances to allocate a top position or not. The group which has the most points starts to select its most preferred position, which in practice means that the two largest groups have predominant choices, allocating their preferred positions, until the third group has the largest number of points and can take the lead (Kreppel 2004: 181). For the committee chairs, it is the national parties that choose their preferred committees based on their size in the EPG. They nominate one of their MEPs for a chair of a certain committee. This leads to a high competitiveness especially for the most powerful committees between EPGs before the chair positions are allocated and within the same EPG after the chairmanship is secured (Chiru 2020: 615). In addition, reports for the rapporteurs can be divided into more powerful or less powerful reports according to the European decision-making procedures. For example, in the 8th EP term, the two most powerful types of reports[1] have been mostly concentrated in the Christian and Social Democratic groups (Schädler and Brandsma 2021: 707). Therefore, we expect that any gender effects observed in the allocation of seats depend upon the type of EPGs to which female MEPs are associated with.

> **Hypothesis 1:** We expect an interaction between the size of the EPG and gender. Women who belong to one of the two most influential EPGs (Social Democrats and Christian Democrats) have a higher

[1] Reports which are part of the Ordinary Legislative Procedure: OLP reports and OLP reports with trilogues.

chance to get into a top position than women who belong to one of the smaller EPGs.

Country level

Country membership can be decisive for women's allocation especially as committee chairs as it is the national parties who decide. Countries which are characterized by a women friendly political culture may promote female MEPs more than others as the leaders of the national parties are influenced by this political culture. Reversely, national parties influenced by a less women-friendly environment may allocate women more rarely as committee chairs.

Consisting of 27 member states (28 in our case selection including the UK until 2019), the European Parliament brings together MEPs from very different political cultures. Classifying the member states as women (less-)friendly political culture is, however, a difficult task as we face 27 different cultures. Picking up only one or two particular parameters seems not to do justice to the diversity observed across the member states. Hence, using for example the existence of gender quotas on the member state level for the election of the EP as a proxy indicator may make sense as a gender quota is the result of politics that is to some extent women friendly. But, this point of view is too narrowed as the Nordic countries for example, which are known for their unprecedented gender equality, have no gender quotas at all but the highest number of female MEPs. As an alternative proxy indicator, we provisionally rely upon the Gender Inequality Index (GII) by the United Nations Development Programme, because it covers not only the percentages of women in the national Parliaments but also women's labour force participation rate, their educational level, the adolescent birth rate and maternal mortality ratio. The higher the score on the GII, the larger is the inequality between women and men (United Nations Development Programme 2022). All EU member states are categorized in "very high human development" the highest category possible. The GII shows, however, substantial variance across the 28 member states. Among the 6 best placed are Ireland (rank 2 worldwide), Germany (rank 6), Sweden (rank 7), the Netherlands (rank 8), Denmark (rank 10) and Finland (rank 11). The lowest ranks are found for Portugal (rank 38), Slovakia (rank 39), Hungary (rank 40), Croatia (rank 43), Romania (rank 49) and Bulgaria (rank 56). This already shows a gap between the Nordic countries and Eastern European countries. We assume that female MEPs from countries with one of the highest scores in the GII are not only supported in their member state but also more promoted in the EP itself.

> **Hypothesis 2a**: Female MEPs from a more women-friendly culture are more likely to be promoted to a top position than female MEPs from more conservative member states.

Secondly, not only the political culture of the respective country may be decisive for the chance of a top position. Further, country origin and type of report matter. For instance, reports that go to negotiation in trilogues are rarely distributed to MEPs from newer member states which joined the EU in 2004 (Schädler and Brandsma 2021: 698; Hurka *et al.* 2015; Hurka and Kaeding 2012). This imbalance between the member states is crucial as Poland for example is with 52 MEPs the fifth-biggest member state in the EU. As a result, a high number of MEPs but fewer reports may disadvantage female MEPs. The same applies for other Eastern European countries in general as the rare chances for a rapporteurship can make it even harder for women from these member states to become a rapporteur.

> **Hypothesis 2b**: Women MEPs from member states that joined the EU 2004 or later get more rarely rapporteurships for the OLP procedure than women from the other member states.

Career experience & orientation at the individual level

A political career can be seen as a ladder that needs to be climbed up which requires continuous engagement and time. Becoming a politician needs time and requires a long-term commitment – national studies have shown that it takes many years of voluntary work within the party until someone gets a mandate at the national level and the way to become a politician often takes a whole professional life (Wessels 1997; Best and Gaxie 2004). As this ladder should be the same for all politicians, studies have shown that women need to bring much more experience and need to prove themselves much more than their male counterparts – for the same position (Paxton and Hughes 2007: 91).

For the European Parliament, a large proportion of the MEPs focus on a political career on the European level which leads also to a long-term political commitment (Dodeigne *et al.* 2021). In total, for the entire 1979-2019 period, the authors have identified that "European-oriented" MEPs emerged and stabilized in the third legislative terms (1989-1994), in proportion extremely similar to MEPs with "political dead-end" career. These two career patterns are the dominant career orientations in the EP, and each pattern oscillate between one quarter and one third of all MEPs (both patterns having increased in the most recent terms). Over the same period, there is a decline – albeit very slight – in the proportion of MEPs with "domestic" and "mixed" career orientations. While the latter two career patterns were still covering 28 percent

of MEPs serving in the EP in the early 1990s, they dropped to 15 percent in the 2014-2019 legislative term. Finally, MEPs whose career path cannot be classified (i.e. censored data) were been relatively constant over time (between 17.4 and 27 percent, with the evident exception of the first term). In line with Schlesinger's (1966) seminal work on the careers of U.S. Congresswomen and Congressmen, an established literature posited that ambitious candidates – fuelled by their so-called progressive ambition – aim to move up to 'higher' positions. In this respect, some scholars have found that MEPs with European orientation are very active in the EP's work: they have the highest attendance rate and table more motions than the other MEPs (Van Geffen 2016). Fuelled by a European ambition, this type of MEPs seeks to commit to the EP and access positions of influence. As a result, we can also posit that not all female MEPs have the same chances, but that their career orientation in the parliament also matter.

> **Hypothesis 3a:** We expect that female MEPs with European orientation are more likely to be allocated positions of influence in comparison to other patterns, especially female MEPs with domestic orientation and political deadend career patterns.

On top of the career orientation, we can, furthermore, hypothesize that parliamentary experience of MEPs serving in the EP matters. Some MEPs might have European ambition, but others are simply more experienced. As MEPs serve longer in the EP, they start to learn and master the rules of the game, which makes it more likely for them to aim and get for certain positions (Fernandes *et al.* forthcoming). Hence, various studies have found that greater seniority improves a MEP's likelihood to access Rapporteur (Daniel 2013, 2015), Committee assignments and Committee chairs (Corbet et al. 2005, Chiru 2020), group coordinators (Daniel and Thierse 2018), or codecision reports (Hermansen 2018a). Therefore, we expect that duration in the EP and previous political experience matter and can be seen as a qualification for a top position. As a result, we hypothesize that female MEPs with greater seniority will be favoured over other female colleagues.

> **Hypothesis 3b:** We expect that previous political experience either in another top position or in the equivalent in a national/regional parliament are an advantage to get a top position. The same applies to political experience at the European level.

Time level

Time can be seen as an important factor when it comes to women's political career. Not only incumbency and a lack of political experience are obstacles for women in politics but also male dominance and the gendered practices within in the institution itself (Kantola and Miller 2022; Kantola and Rolandsen Agustín 2019). As the number of female MEPs increased strongly over time, we also assume that more women in the European Parliament lead to a change of mentality and therefore reduce the male dominance which make it more difficult for women to get a top position.

> Hypothesis 4: The rising number of female MEPs leads to a change of mentality and change of practices in the European Parliament which results in a higher number of women in top positions.

3. Method and results

For the empirical analysis, we created an original dataset of 3654 MEPs having served as rapporteurs and/or committee chairs between 1979 and 2019. Information about these two positions of influenced is based upon existing data of MEPs between 1979 to 2011 covering biographical information of MEPs experience in the EP, gender and EPG as well as the position of committee chairs (Høyland *et al.* 2009). From 2011 onwards, the data for committee chairs have been collected via information provided by the European Parliament and external sources as Euractiv (Euractiv 2014). The rapporteurship has been collected for all MEPs since 1979 via manual coding of political offices based on information published by the European Parliament or via biographies available online. Besides, the dataset also includes information about executive and legislative political offices on the national and regional level before and after their time in the EP. For MEPs' bio and career orientation, we rely on the dataset from the 'Evovl'EP project' (Dodeigne et al. 2022) which covers all regional, national, and European positions that MEPs served over their entire career (before, during and after the EP).

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics independent variables are presented in table 1. Our dependent variable (access to positions of influence) is presented on figures 1 and 2. On figure 1, we compare the percentage of female MEPs serving in the EP by legislative term, the percentage of female MEPs being allocated a committee chair, the percentage of female MEPs who were rapporteurs (all types since 1979), the percentage of female MEPs who were rapporteurs (only under codecision procedure since 1994). On figure 2, we present the difference that exists between

the ratio of female MEPs serving in the EP and the ratio of female having been allocated to a position of influence. When the differential is negative, this indicates that female MEPs are underrepresented in positions of influence, in comparison to their actual weight in the assembly. And vice-and-versa for a positive differential.

In addition, the descriptive statistics show how the number of women allocated to top positions in comparison with their total number in Parliament has developed over time. The red line in figure 1 shows the overall percentage of female MEPs per legislative term and can be understood as a benchmark. As this number is rising over time, so are the rapporteurships and committee chairs held by women. In case of reports for the codecision procedure, the number of female MEPs is even higher than their actual weight in the Parliament. For example, in the sixth legislative term, the number of female MEPs lies at 29.9percent but the number of female rapporteurs is 41.5percent high. Since the fifth legislative term (1999-2004), female MEPs are overrepresented in rapporteurships as the number of female rapporteurs is higher than their total number in Parliament (Figure 1 and 2). Therefore, we can conclude that women have the same – if not even higher in most cases – likelihood to get allocated to top positions proportionally to their total number in Parliament over time. The notorious exception is, however, committee chair for which sub-allocation to female MEPs is observed.

Figure. 1 Evolution of percent of female MEPs, female Rapporteurs, and female committee chair

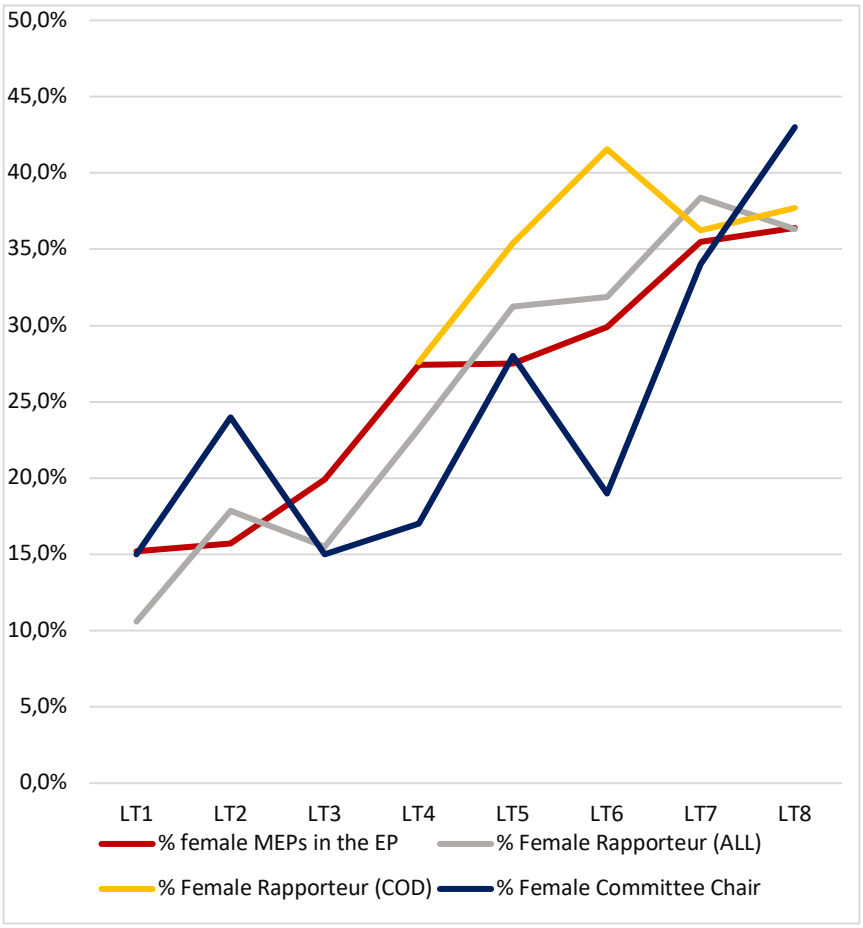

Figure 2 makes this finding even clearer and also reveals the differences between rapporteurships and committee chairs. The blue dotted line is the benchmark for a distribution to top positions in line with the ratio of female MEPs. Since the establishment of the codecision procedure in 1994, women have been proportionally overrepresented as rapporteurs. The same applies for other types of reports since 1999. In contrast, women have been allocated less often as committee chairs between the third (1989-1994) and the seventh term (2009-2014). and are therefore twice underrepresented: firstly, in general as we have not reached 50percent of female MEPs in the EP so far and secondly, as committee chairs and, therefore, in this top position. But since 2009, an over-representation as committee chair can be observed. The difference between their number in Parliament and their number as committee chairs presents a difference of about 10percent (for the fourth and the sixth term) which is a lot. Compared to the total number of women in the EP which was 28percent in 1994 (LT4) and 30percent in 2004 (LT6) this means that women not only are far from parity in the institution as a whole but even less represented in the top position of a committee chair (between 18percent and 20percent in these

two terms) which results in a general low power for women in the EP in that time. Even if this finding can be counterbalanced with an over proportionally allocation as rapporteurs over time, the position as a committee chair is nevertheless more powerful and influential than the rapporteur. Since 2014 the descriptive statistics show a shift in which women are overrepresented in both top positions. Time seems to be an important factor when it comes to the allocation of top positions for women. The steady increase of women in the EP over time has led at some point to an increase of female rapporteurs and committee chairs and to even an over-representation in some cases. Based on the descriptive statistics it can be assumed that the rising number of female MEPs has led to a shift of mentality and change of practices which is shown by the over-representation of women in top positions especially since 2014. Therefore, hypothesis 4 can be verified although further tests are necessary to find out if this finding can really be put down to mentality and practice change in the institution.

Figure 2. Differences observed in the evolution of female rapporteurs and female committee chair vis-à-vis their effective representation weight in the EP

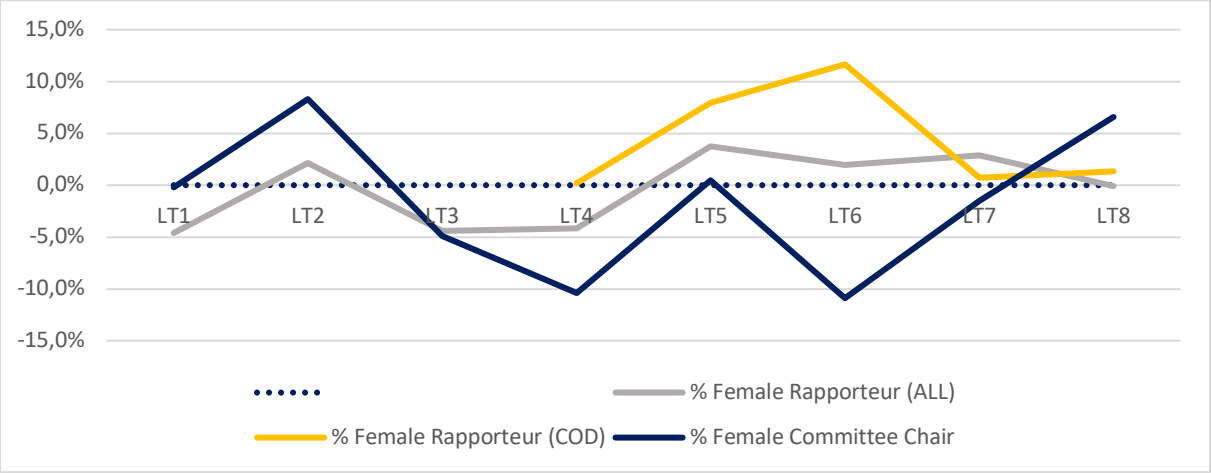

Table 1. Presentation of the descriptive stats for the independent variables

Independent variables	Operationalization	Descriptive stats
Individual MEP factors		
Gender	Binary variable	1579 male MEPs (ref.) 698 female MEPs
Age (1st office in the EP)	Continuous variable (in years, before log. transf.)	Min-Max: 21-88, Mean: 47.9, std: 10.1
XP in the EP	Continuous variable (in months, before log. transf.)	Median: 59, Mean: 93.8, std: 64.4
Career orientation	Categorical variable	European (ref) N=912 Mixed N=385 Domestic N=439 Political deadend N=1544 Censoring N=357
Committee chair	Binary variable	Never rapporteur (ref.)= 3423 At least once, n= 214
Rapporteurship (all procedures)	Binary variable	Never rapporteur (ref.)= 1185 At least once, n= 2452
Rapporteurship (codecision)	Binary variable	Never rapporteur (ref.)= 2553 At least once, n= 1084
EPG leader	Binary variable	Never rapporteur (ref.)=3613 At least once, n=24
EP leadership	Binary variable	Never rapporteur (ref.)= 3569 At least once, n= 68
Meso & macro factors		
Membership after 2004	Binary variable	Before 2004 (ref.)= 2999 After 2004, n= 638
EPGs	Categorical variable	Conservatives (ref) N=182 EPP N=685 Eurosceptics N=134 Greens/EFA N=158 GUE/NGL N=159 Liberals N=212 Non-inscrit/Technical N=110 Socialists N=637
EPGs cat	Categorical variable	Influential (ref) N=2107 Pivotal N=1199 Marginal N=331
Gender Index of inequality (lower is more equalitarian)	Continuous variable	Min-Max: 0.49-2.76, Mean: 0.88, std: 0.51
National delegation size (percent)	Continuous variable	Min-Max: 0.37-15.1, Mean: 7.7, std: 5.35
Legislative terms	Binary variable	Dummy for each legislative term in which MEPs served

Multivariate analysis

Because of our binary dependent variable (access to position of influence or not), we use logistic regressions. Furthermore, given the nested structure of the dataset (MEPs are nested by member states and EPGs), and our research objective to assess the effects of various dimensions across Member states and EPGs, we specify a multilevel model with a varying intercept (i.e. likelihood of access varies by MEPs across member states and EPGs). Our model has, therefore, a level-I structure covering 3,637 MEPs and a level-II structure made of 172 EPGs-Country groups. Variables located at level-II of EPGs and Countries can take different values. The models are replicated for the three types of access covered in this study, namely: access to committee chair, allocation of rapporteurship (all procedures), allocation of rapporteurship (under codecision procedure). We also run additional models by legislative terms as well as use different subsets of our dataset (e.g. MEPs before 2004 and after 2004) for robustness checks. The results that we discuss here are systematically consistent with these robustness checks.

We start with table 2 that presents the results for explaining access to a committee chair. For the sake of parsimony, we present mostly the results of the full model (model 10), but present details when divergences are observed across models. First, we observe that most variables related to our main covariates of interest are statistically significant. At the individual-level variables, we observe that MEPs that are part of the influential and pivotal party groups are substantially more likely to access a committee chair (all other things being equal, the probabilities of respectively 20.8 percent and 18.8 percent), in comparison with MEPs from mere marginal groups (probability of 6.7 percent). Then, the results indicate that MEPs with European orientation will be substantially favoured over MEPs with political deadend in the EP (the probability to be allocated a chair is twice larger for the former group vis-à-vis the latter group). Likewise, the MEPs' seniority in the EP dramatically increases their success to become a committee chair (see figure 3). At the country-level, we observe that the size of the national delegations has a positive and significant effect. In other words, the larger the delegation, the greater the chance of being allocated a chair – albeit with limited effects (hardly a few points of percentages more in terms of probability). Even though MEPs from Member States that join from the 2004 enlargement and onwards are systematically associated with a negative coefficient, we observe no statistically significant differences reducing their chance of access.

Having discussed the general effects of these variables, we now turn to our main result: the impact of gender and, more particularly, the impact of gender in interaction with our individual,

party and country-level factors. In other words, do female MEPs present greater or lower probability to ever be allocated a committee chair? In a nutshell, the response is that gender makes no statistically significant differences – all other things being equal. Indeed, the coefficient for the variable gender is always negative (indicating that female MEPs have lower chance of success in achieving top positions), but it is never statistically significant. This is a first important result – although not particular new as previous studies had the same kind of findings. The originality of our paper is precisely to assess how gender improve or undermine female MEPs' probability to get a chair, when interacting with EPG-level (H1), country-level (H2a and H2b) and individual-level covariates (H3a and H3b).

In this respect, the second main result is that none of the five interactive terms used to test those five hypotheses are significant – with the only exception of the interaction between gender and the Gender Inequality Index (H2a), albeit not significant in the full model (model 10). Given that both gender and Gender Inequality Index have negative coefficient, the positive coefficient of the interactive term (Gender X Gender Inequality Index) indicates that female MEPs do have a varying probability to obtain a position of chair according to the varying scores of the Gender Inequality Index. However, the results are going in the opposite direction of H2. Women are more likely to be selected from countries with higher gender inequality, with a probability being almost four times higher in the most unequal countries in comparison to the more equal countries (respectively 7.9 and 2.2 percent). Yet, the results should not be overstated at this stage of the paper, because the scores of the Gender Inequality Index does not provide scores over a long period of time, creating a contemporary temporal bias with a covariate that is presently not time-varying. We need to pay further attention to the use of an indicator that can account for the entire period of analysis (1979-2019), based on current datasets and/or country expert interviews.

Table 2. Multilevel logistic regressions upon access to committee chair

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**	**Model 5**	**Model 6**	**Model 7**	**Model 8**	**Model 9**	**Model 10**
Gender	0.24	-0.07	-0.67*	-0.17	-1.52	0.16	-0.45	-0.66*	0.15	-0.52
	(0.37)	(0.19)	(0.40)	(0.22)	(1.40)	(0.24)	(3.28)	(0.40)	(0.24)	(0.55)
Gender Inequality Index			-0.43					-0.31	-0.06	-0.35
			(0.36)					(0.32)	(0.27)	(0.33)
EPG (Ref=Influential groups)										
Marginal groups				-2.93***				-3.00***	-2.99***	-2.99***
				(1.02)				(1.01)	(1.01)	(1.01)
Pivotal groups				-0.45**				-0.33*	-0.32*	-0.33*
				(0.21)				(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.17)

EP Seniority (log. of months served)					0.75***			0.60***	0.59***	0.60***
					(0.21)			(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)
EPG (Ref=European Orientation)										
Censoring pattern						-0.95*		0.32	-0.02	0.32
						(0.55)		(0.47)	(0.60)	(0.47)
Domestic orientation						-0.52		-0.19	0.01	-0.20
						(0.33)		(0.34)	(0.36)	(0.34)
Mixed orientation						0.08		0.10	0.18	0.10
						(0.23)		(0.21)	(0.23)	(0.21)
Political deadend						-0.90***		-0.63**	-0.45	-0.63**
						(0.27)		(0.28)	(0.30)	(0.28)
Age (log. of age at first office)							0.96**	0.98**	0.97**	0.98**
							(0.44)	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)
Size of the national delegation	0.05**	0.04**	0.04**	0.04**	0.03*	0.04**	0.04**	0.04**	0.04**	0.05**
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Post 2004 Membership	-0.16	-0.32	-0.01	-0.23	-0.10	-0.16	-0.14	-0.16	-0.13	-0.03
	(0.35)	(0.41)	(0.47)	(0.34)	(0.35)	(0.35)	(0.35)	(0.44)	(0.43)	(0.50)
Interactive terms										
Gender X Size of the national delegation	-0.03									-0.03
	(0.03)									(0.04)
Gender X Post 2004 Membership		0.56								-0.54
		(0.60)								(0.96)
Gender X Gender Inequality Index			0.79*					0.73*		0.92
			(0.43)					(0.42)		(0.58)
Gender X Marginal EPG				-14.79 (114.49)						
Gender X Pivotal EPG				0.38						
				(0.38)						
Gender X EP Seniority					0.31					
					(0.29)					
Gender X Censoring pattern						1.00			0.73	
						(0.76)			(0.77)	
Gender X Domestic orientation						-1.31			-1.40	
						(1.07)			(1.08)	
Gender X Mixed orientation						-0.29			-0.29	
						(0.49)			(0.49)	
Gender X Political deadend						-0.93			-0.94	
						(0.59)			(0.59)	
Gender X Age							0.12			
							(0.85)			
Constant	-4.57***	-4.50***	-4.23***	-4.15***	-6.99***	-3.72***	-8.31***	-9.50***	-9.66***	-9.53***
	(0.28)	(0.27)	(0.34)	(0.26)	(0.80)	(0.33)	(1.74)	(1.94)	(1.94)	(1.95)
EPGs Country Fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislative terms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations Level I	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637
Observations Level II	172	172	172	172	172	172	172	172	172	172
Log Likelihood	-715.29	-715.17	-713.82	-701.28	-705.32	-701.22	-712.12	-683.01	-681.29	-682.75
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,458.58	1,458.34	1,457.65	1,436.56	1,440.64	1,444.44	1,454.24	1,412.02	1,414.57	1,415.50

Bayesian Inf. Crit.	1,545.36	1,545.13	1,550.63	1,541.94	1,533.62	1,574.61	1,547.21	1,554.58	1,575.73	1,570.46

*Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*

Figure 3. Impact of MEPs' seniority in the EP on the probability to be allocated committee chair

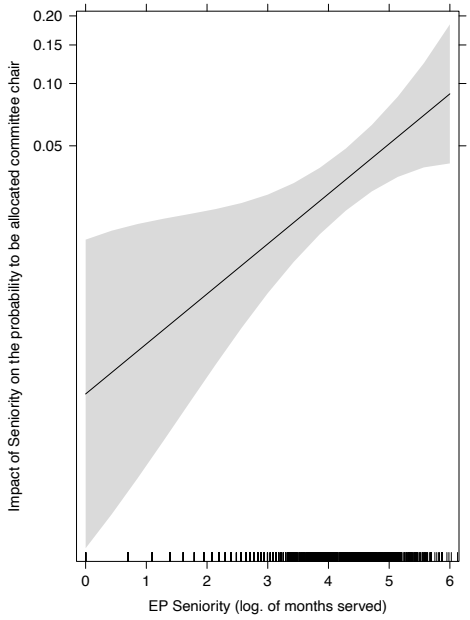

Table 3. Multilevel logistic regressions upon access to Rapporteur (all procedures)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**	**Model 5**	**Model 6**	**Model 7**	**Model 8**	**Model 9**	**Model 10**
Gender	0.59***	0.65***	0.61***	0.69***	-0.44	0.26	-0.45	0.64***	0.22	0.44
	(0.18)	(0.12)	(0.21)	(0.15)	(0.70)	(0.36)	(1.75)	(0.23)	(0.36)	(0.35)
Gender Inequality Index			0.20					0.43**	0.39*	0.38*
			(0.24)					(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.21)
EPG (Ref=Influential groups)										
Marginal groups				-2.04***				-2.24***	-2.25***	-2.25***
				(0.24)				(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.23)
Pivotal groups				0.02				-0.15	-0.15	-0.14
				(0.16)				(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.17)
EP Seniority (log. of months served)					1.66***			1.72***	1.72***	1.72***
					(0.10)			(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.10)
EPG (Ref=European Orientation)										
Censoring pattern						-1.98***		-0.29	-0.30	-0.28
						(0.24)		(0.26)	(0.29)	(0.26)
Domestic orientation						-1.45***		-0.42*	-0.41*	-0.41*
						(0.21)		(0.23)	(0.24)	(0.23)
Mixed orientation						-1.31***		-0.89***	-1.01***	-0.89***

						(0.22)		(0.20)	(0.23)	(0.20)
Political deadend						-1.18***		-0.08	-0.14	-0.07
						(0.19)		(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.20)
Age (log. of age at first office)							-0.62***	-0.94***	-0.94***	-0.95***
							(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.23)	(0.22)
Size of the national delegation	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.001	-0.04*	-0.02	-0.01	-0.03*	-0.03*	-0.03*
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Post 2004 Membership	-0.44*	-0.40	-0.64*	-0.47**	-0.63**	-0.49**	-0.44*	-1.05***	-1.05***	-0.98***
	(0.24)	(0.25)	(0.34)	(0.19)	(0.26)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.31)
Interactive terms										
Gender X Size of the national delegation	0.002									0.01
	(0.02)									(0.03)
Gender X Post 2004 Membership		-0.17								-0.23
		(0.26)								(0.49)
Gender X Gender Inequality Index			-0.003					-0.15		0.02
			(0.20)					(0.22)		(0.33)
Gender X Marginal EPG				0.10						
				(0.38)						
Gender X Pivotal EPG				-0.36						
				(0.23)						
Gender X EP Seniority					0.26					
					(0.18)					
Gender X Censoring pattern						0.39			0.15	
						(0.45)			(0.49)	
Gender X Domestic orientation						0.05			-0.06	
						(0.45)			(0.48)	
Gender X Mixed orientation						0.47			0.66	
						(0.49)			(0.51)	
Gender X Political deadend						0.46			0.38	
						(0.38)			(0.39)	
Gender X Age							0.27			
							(0.46)			
Constant	-0.70***	-0.71***	-0.82***	-0.46**	-5.55***	0.87***	1.73*	-1.87*	-1.77*	-1.76*
	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.25)	(0.18)	(0.38)	(0.29)	(0.89)	(1.03)	(1.03)	(1.03)
EPGs Country Fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislative terms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations Level I	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637
Observations Level II	172	172	172	172	172	172	172	172	172	172
Log Likelihood	-1,862.45	-1,862.25	-1,862.11	-1,821.85	-1,573.96	-1,813.50	-1,857.24	-1,508.82	-1,507.40	-1,508.42
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,752.90	3,752.50	3,754.21	3,677.69	3,177.92	3,669.01	3,744.47	3,063.63	3,066.80	3,066.84
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	3,839.69	3,839.29	3,847.20	3,783.07	3,270.91	3,799.18	3,837.45	3,206.19	3,227.96	3,221.80

Table 4. Multilevel logistic regressions upon access to Rapporteur (under codecision)

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**	**Model 5**	**Model 6**	**Model 7**	**Model 8**	**Model 9**	**Model 10**
Gender	0.40**	0.62***	0.69***	0.53***	-1.13	0.57***	-0.59	0.69***	0.52**	0.45

	(0.17)	(0.11)	(0.20)	(0.13)	(0.78)	(0.21)	(1.70)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.30)
Gender Inequality Index			0.32					0.43**	0.37*	0.37*
			(0.20)					(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.21)
EPG (Ref=Influential groups)										
Marginal groups				-1.40***				-1.30***	-1.30***	-1.31***
				(0.27)				(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.25)
Pivotal groups				-0.10				-0.12	-0.12	-0.13
				(0.17)				(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)
EP Seniority (log. of months served)					1.21***			1.37***	1.39***	1.37***
					(0.12)			(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)
EPG (Ref=European Orientation)										
Censoring pattern						-0.78***		0.35	0.45	0.36
						(0.24)		(0.25)	(0.28)	(0.25)
Domestic orientation						-0.77***		-0.09	0.03	-0.09
						(0.22)		(0.21)	(0.24)	(0.22)
Mixed orientation						-0.66***		-0.31*	-0.44**	-0.31*
						(0.21)		(0.18)	(0.21)	(0.18)
Political deadend						-0.77***		0.07	0.10	0.07
						(0.17)		(0.17)	(0.19)	(0.17)
Age (log. of age at first office)							-0.55**	-0.62***	-0.60***	-0.62***
							(0.25)	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.23)
Size of the national delegation	-0.01		-0.01	0.01	-0.02	-0.004	-0.001	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.02)		(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Post 2004 Membership	0.10	0.23	-0.19	0.09	0.14	0.10	0.11	-0.25	-0.25	-0.16
	(0.21)	(0.19)	(0.29)	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.31)
Interactive terms										
Gender X Size of the national delegation	0.02									0.01
	(0.02)									(0.02)
Gender X Post 2004 Membership		-0.35								-0.29
		(0.26)								(0.45)
Gender X Gender Inequality Index			-0.16					-0.24		-0.03
			(0.19)					(0.21)		(0.30)
Gender X Marginal EPG				0.30						
				(0.41)						
Gender X Pivotal EPG				-0.10						
				(0.22)						
Gender X EP Seniority					0.39**					
					(0.18)					
Gender X Censoring pattern						-0.08			-0.22	
						(0.37)			(0.40)	
Gender X Domestic orientation						-0.27			-0.37	
						(0.39)			(0.41)	
Gender X Mixed orientation						0.30			0.43	
						(0.38)			(0.38)	
Gender X Political deadend						0.02			-0.05	
						(0.26)			(0.26)	
Gender X Age							0.29			
							(0.45)			

Constant	-2.31*** (0.19)	-2.41*** (0.13)	-2.56*** (0.22)	-2.18*** (0.19)	-6.33*** (0.49)	-1.49*** (0.25)	-0.23 (1.00)	-4.76*** (1.11)	-4.84*** (1.12)	-4.67*** (1.12)
EPGs Country Fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislative terms	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations Level I	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637	3,637
Observations Level II	172	172	172	172	172	172	172	172	172	172
Log Likelihood	-1,556.30	-1,556.03	-1,555.58	-1,540.82	-1,465.43	-1,541.26	-1,553.44	-1,442.54	-1,441.55	-1,441.75
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,140.59	3,138.07	3,141.16	3,115.64	2,960.85	3,124.52	3,136.88	2,931.09	2,935.09	2,933.49
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	3,227.38	3,218.65	3,234.14	3,221.02	3,053.83	3,254.70	3,229.85	3,073.65	3,096.25	3,088.45

*Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*

We now look at the results for the other top positions under scrutiny, namely being nominated as rapporteurs. We cover rapporteurship for all procedures in general (table 3), as well as rapporteurship under codecision procedures (table 4). The results about the effects of the gender variable are in these models dramatically different. First, the variable gender is now statistically significant while the coefficients are positive (for the two types of rapporteurship, but not in the Models 5, 7 and 10). This indicates that being a woman enhances the probability of receiving a rapporteurship (be it in general, or under the codecision procedure). This is not that surprising considering the conclusions from figure 3. While the allocation of committee chair shows important discrepancies between the ratio of female MEPs in the assembly and the number of chairs obtained by female MEPs (towards underrepresentation); the analysis of rapporteurs shows that the ratio was much more equilibrated, or even slightly 'overrepresented' in comparison to the number of female MEPs serving on the benches of the EP.

However, none of the interactive terms are significant, which indicates that the gender variable is the predominant factor behind the enhancing effects of the probability of female MEPs to be selected for rapporteurship. The profiles of these female MEPs (H3a and H3b), their country of origin (H2a and H2b), or their EPGs (H1) make no difference – be it positive or negative. The only exception at this stage of the research is model 5 (a simpler model with an interactive term between Gender and EP seniority). In this model, the MEPs' seniority in the EP provides a positive asset for female MEPs in comparison to male MEPs. While the probabilities of access remain relatively equivalent between male and female MEPs when they have limited experience in the EP, a larger seniority (12years+) gives a significantly greater probability to female MEPs (58 percent, which 20 points higher than for male MEPs, all other things being equal).

Given the absence of significantly results, we furthermore examined whether gender differences could be observable not in terms of access to top positions, but in the ease of this access for female MEPs. In other words, do female and male MEPs obtain such positions faster in their career? To answer that question, we first developed Kaplan-Meier curves that permits to account for the time served in the EP before MEPs are allocated a committee chair. On figure 4, we clearly observe that female and male MEPs do not present different survival curves indicating that one of two groups would access at a faster rate a committee chair (statistical differences between the two curves are not significant, p=0.27). Secondly, we verify that no difference subsisted when considering other individual, party, and country-level factors. For that goal, we use different models of survival analysis (table 5). In all models, gender was not significant, nor were the interactive terms with gender. This confirms that gender makes no difference in the time rate of access to chair: male and female MEPs are allocated a chair at a time rate that is not associated with their gender. As from our multilevel logit model, the only exceptions are the interactive terms between gender and Gender Inequality Index. These interactive terms tend to indicate that female MEPs from more inequalitarian member states are accessing such positions faster than male MEPs. However, considering the limitations of the Gender Inequality Index for the purpose of this research, the results must be appreciated with great caution.

Figure 4. Survival curves of female and MEPs for (no) access to committee chair

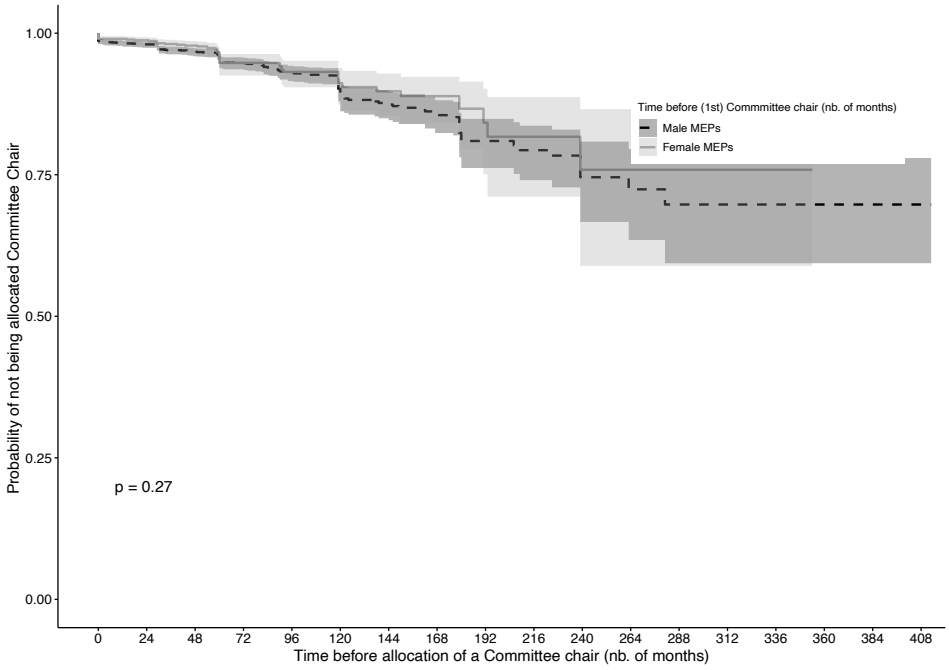

Table 5. Survival analysis of time of access to committee chair

	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13
Age (log. of age at first office)	0.01*	0.02**	0.02**	0.02**	0.02**	0.02**	0.02**	0.02**	0.02**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Gender	-0.15	-0.13	-0.16	-0.72**	0.19	-0.77**	0.10	-0.23	0.02
	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.36)	(0.34)	(0.37)	(0.34)	(0.20)	(0.21)
Gender Inequality Index	-0.07	-0.07	-0.09	-0.28	-0.07	-0.31	-0.09	-0.10	-0.07
	(0.24)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.28)	(0.25)	(0.29)	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.25)
Size of the national delegation	0.04**	0.04**	0.04**	0.04**	0.05**	0.04**	0.04**	0.04**	0.04**
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
EPG (Ref=European Orientation)									
Censoring pattern		-0.19	-0.03	-0.17	-0.18	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03	-0.38
		(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.53)
Domestic orientation		-0.27	-0.23	-0.28	-0.28	-0.24	-0.24	-0.23	-0.05
		(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.29)	(0.30)
Mixed orientation		0.09	0.17	0.09	0.08	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.25
		(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.21)
Political deadend		-0.76***	-0.65***	-0.76***	-0.76***	-0.65***	-0.65***	-0.64***	-0.47**
		(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.24)
EPG (Ref=Influential groups)									
Marginal groups			-2.96***			-2.97***	-2.95***	-2.79***	-2.96***
			(1.00)			(1.00)	(1.00)	(1.00)	(1.00)
Pivotal groups			-0.28*			-0.29*	-0.28*	-0.34*	-0.29*
			(0.15)			(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.18)	(0.15)
Post 2004 Membership	-0.40	-0.38	-0.43	-0.40	-0.38	-0.45	-0.43	-0.42	-0.43
	(0.39)	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)	(0.40)
Gender X Gender Inequality Index				0.72*		0.75*			
				(0.39)		(0.39)			
Gender X Size of the national delegation					-0.03		-0.03		
					(0.03)		(0.03)		
Gender X Marginal EPG								-13.25	
								(1,723.98)	
Gender X Pivotal EPG								0.26	
								(0.36)	
Gender X Censoring pattern									0.87
									(0.74)
Gender X Domestic orientation									-1.34
									(1.06)
Gender X Mixed orientation									-0.33
									(0.45)
Gender X Political deadend									-0.88
									(0.57)
Observations	3,635	3,635	3,635	3,635	3,635	3,635	3,635	3,635	3,635

R^2	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02
Max. Possible R^2	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58
Log Likelihood	-1,545.94	-1,538.60	-1,523.88	-1,537.00	-1,538.06	-1,522.18	-1,523.53	-1,523.44	-1,520.51
Wald Test	18.11*** (df = 5)	31.71*** (df = 9)	42.84*** (df = 11)	33.97*** (df = 10)	33.08*** (df = 10)	45.18*** (df = 12)	43.85*** (df = 12)	42.20*** (df = 13)	46.27*** (df = 15)
LR Test	20.22*** (df = 5)	34.90*** (df = 9)	64.34*** (df = 11)	38.11*** (df = 10)	35.98*** (df = 10)	67.75*** (df = 12)	65.05*** (df = 12)	65.23*** (df = 13)	71.09*** (df = 15)
Score (Logrank) Test	18.69*** (df = 5)	32.68*** (df = 9)	51.50*** (df = 11)	35.12*** (df = 10)	34.16*** (df = 10)	54.04*** (df = 12)	52.54*** (df = 12)	52.17*** (df = 13)	56.33*** (df = 15)

4. Discussion and conclusion

This is the first paper which analysed top positions in the European Parliament quantitatively from a gender perspective and based on a comprehensive dataset (all MEPs having served over the 1979-2019 period). By interacting gender with national delegation size, party groups, political culture of the member state and political experience within and outside the EP, we analysed gender from every angle possible with quantitative data. Surprisingly, we have found that gender does not make a difference when it comes to committee chairs but for rapporteurs we found a significance. Therefore our results are not only in line with the scholarship which used gender as a control variable but also with work that found that women in other top positions in the EP are slightly overrepresented as well (committee coordinators) (Kantola and Miller 2022: 20).

Even more surprising was the opposite result of our hypothesis about the political culture. While it is often agreed that a woman-friendly political culture promotes women more than more conservative-oriented countries, our analysis has shown the opposite. The same applies to the political ideology. We find more women from right wing parties (marginal) in top positions than from the left parties (pivotal). However, our data to account for political culture remains extremely limited at this stage of the research, and results must therefore be appreciated with great caution.

All in all, we cannot find any hint that women are disadvantaged in the political career in the EP from their male counterparts. Regardless if a MEP is male or female, experience is a significant factor for a top position as well is the fact that the group of the European careerists allocates top positions more often. This completes the findings of Willy Beauvallet and Sebastien Michon who analysed female MEPs with a mixed-methods approach and found that female MEPs have less political capital but that the mandate in the EP gives the opportunity for a political professionalization of women (Beauvallet and Michon 2013). EU oriented female

MEPs are more likely to make a career within the EP than female MEPs who are not aiming for a career within the EU.

Our assumptions could be verified when it comes to the size of national delegation. The bigger national delegations as Germany distribute their top positions according to the number of male/female MEPs.

In sum, it is not that much the allocation to top positions where the EP has a gender gap so if we need to make an internal organizational reform, it will not be a reform about the access to top positions but more about women's access to the European Parliament. The main discrepancy between male and female MEPs lies in the access to the institution itself as the EP still has not reached parity. The descriptive representation of women in general must be increased that we can define the EP as a gender-equal place in which both genders are equally present in the institution and also in top positions.

Although our findings show that gender does not make a difference when it comes to the top positions in the European Parliament, we have to admit that this finding also reveals the limits of our methodology. We are aware of the limits a single quantitative analysis can bring as it risks to come to one-sided conclusions in the sense that they may show patterns and lead to conclusions that are far away from actual practices in the EP when it comes to the allocation of top positions. Complementary to our study, qualitative approaches as they have already been conducted by scholars revealed that the behaviour in the everyday life of the European Parliament is not always women friendly and creates discrimination (Kantola and Rolandsen Agustín 2019).

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