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Penelope's Web

**Institutional resistance against gender equality and LGBTI rights in
Italy, 1995-2021**

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To Rossella and Petra, for their feminist mentorship

Abstract

Compared to other historical periods, the last three decades have been characterized by a considerable legislative effort for gender and sexual equality. At the same time, gender equality remains a deeply contested political goal and progress has been patchy and confronted with resistance. These dynamics are the object of this thesis, which looks at the ways gender and sexuality legislations end up being toothless or fail to materialize altogether. The thesis asks how policies for gender+ equality are resisted in the institutional sphere; and which factors contribute to the failure of gender+ equality policies. I propose a conceptualization of loud and quiet forms of resistance to gender+ equality policies, bringing together interdisciplinary approaches from policy studies, feminist institutionalism and social movement studies. Empirically, I focus on the paradigmatic case of Italy, a country characterized by a slow process of liberalization compared to other post-industrial democracies, influenced by an entrenched conservative legacy and a renewed backlash against gender equality. Under these structural conditions, inclusionary policy efforts have often been ill-fated, and different forms of resistance are likely to occur.

The empirical analysis consists of three in-depth case studies of policy failure, concerning gender representation and LGBTI hate crimes policy, both of which are understood as attempts at expanding gender and sexual equality in the domain of citizenship. An analysis of the implementation of non-quota gender representation policies shows that one form of resistance consists in turning gender equality policies into purely symbolic interventions. This analysis also reveals parties as important actors resisting changes to their gendered internal structures; and bureaucratic actors as responsible for policy inertia. A second case study, digging deeper into the dynamics of the policy formulation phase, highlights the importance of historical legacies and constellations of oppositional and supportive actors in determining these poor policy output. These findings are then complemented with another case study of policy adoption phase, this one focalising on discursive resistance to LGBTI hate crimes policy. Here, the analysis situates resistance in the strategic interactions between supporters and opponents, and the frames by which they articulate their positions.

Taken together, these perspectives reveal the multidimensionality of resistance, showing how both loud and quiet forms of opposition at different stages of the policy process led to the

failure of gender and sexual equality policies. The thesis also highlights commonalities in the set of actors resisting gender+ equality across different policy areas. In this way, the dissertation seeks to contribute to debates on varieties of opposition to gender equality policies and the gendering of institutions, as well the literature on the institutional impact of anti-gender movements. At the methodological level, the thesis draws on a mixed methods design, including documentary analysis, frame analyses of parliamentary debates, semi-structured interviews and dictionary-based quantitative text analysis.

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List of Abbreviations

AN	Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance)
ART	Artificial Reproductive Technologies
CCD	Centro Cristiano Democratico (Christian Democratic Centre)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEI	Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (Italian Episcopal Conference)
CNPOUD	Commissione Nazionale per le Pari Opportunità fra Uomo e Donna (National Commission for Equal Opportunities for Man and Woman)
CNPPOUD	Commissione Nazionale per la Parità e le Pari Opportunità fra Uomo e Donna (National Commission for Equal Status and Equal Opportunities for Man and Woman)
CoD	Camera dei Deputati (Chamber of Deputies)
DPO	Dipartimento pari opportunità (Equal opportunity department)
DC	Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democracy)
DS	Democratici di Sinistra (Democrats of the Left)
FdI	Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy)
FI	Forza Italia (Go Italy)
GEF	Gender electoral financing
GEP	Gender equality policies
GTPF	Gender-targeted public funding
G.U.	Gazzetta Ufficiale (Official Law Bulletin)
IdV	Italia dei Valori (Italy of values)
IV	Italia Viva (Italy alive)
LGBTI	Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, Trans, Intersex
LN	Lega Nord (the Northern League)
M5S	Movimento 5 Stelle (Five Star Movement)
MP/MPs	Member of Parliament/Members of Parliament
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement)
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party)
PD	Partito Democratico (Democratic party)
PDL	Popolo della Libertà (People of Liberty)
PDS	Partito dei Democratici di Sinistra (Left Democratic Party)

PRC	Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (Party of the Communist Refoundation)
SEL	Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà (Left, Ecology and Liberty)
SI	Sinistra Italiana (Italian Left)
SVP	Südtiroler Volkspartei (the South-tirolean people's party)
TERF	Trans Exclusive Radical Feminism
Transparency commission	Commissione di garanzia degli statuti e per la trasparenza e il controllo dei rendiconti dei partiti politici (Committee guaranteeing on party statutes and for the transparency and accountability of political parties)
UDC	Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e dei Democratici di Centro (Union of the Christian-democrats and Democrats of the Centre)
UDI	Unione Donne Italiane (Italian Women's Union)
UN	United Nations
UNAR	Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali (National office against racial discrimination)
WPA	Women Policy Agency

The history of men's opposition to women's emancipation is more interesting perhaps than the story of that emancipation itself.

–Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

We could see [Penelope] working on her great web all day long, but at night she would unpick the stitches again by torchlight. She fooled us in this way for three years and we never found her out, but as time wore on and she was now in her fourth year, one of her maids who knew what she was doing told us, and we caught her in the act of undoing her splendid web.

–Homer, *Odyssey* (Book 2, line 105)

1. Penelope's web: Conceptualizing forms of resistance to gender equality policies

1.1. Introduction and research question

The case studies of this thesis examine three instances of a common phenomenon: How the gendering of political institutions and the expansion of gender and sexual equality is resisted at different stages of the political and policy process and how this hampers inclusionary political efforts.

This way of formulating the issue is bound to a highly specific historical moment. Today, gender equality form part of the internationally acknowledged democratic norms (Krook & True, 2012). In other words, there is a growing understanding that gender equality and the quality of our democratic systems are deeply interconnected (Lombardo, Kantola, & Rubio-Marin, 2021): The more gender equality there is, the higher the chances are of making existing democratic systems more democratic; the more democratic these systems are, the higher the chances of tackling the tenacity and complexity of gender inequalities (Bhargava et al., 2016). Feminist and LGBTI activism – both in the form of grassroots movements that, since the 1960s, have organized to deeply change the foundations of our society, and in that of transnational advocacy networks (M. E. Keck & Sikkink, 2014) – have played a crucial role in including issues

of gender and sexual equality in the boundaries of democracy (Ayoub, 2016; Ewig & Ferree, 2013; Montoya, 2013). As Éric Fassin (2012) points out, the current conjuncture is marked by the paradigm of “sexual democracy”: Gender and sexuality are no longer confined to the sphere of the natural, innate and thus unchangeable, or to a private sphere positioned outside the sphere of activity of politics, as religious and traditionalist thought would have it. Instead, they have become prominent themes in public discourse, as descriptively illustrated in Figure 1, and are widely seen as a central object of political debate and of state intervention, through policy-making.

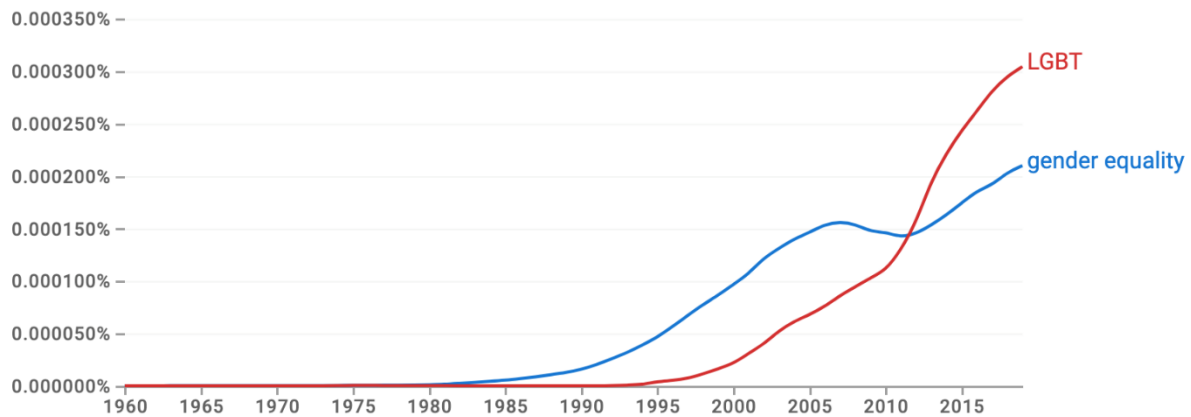
The politicization of gender equality within the international framework of human rights started in the 1960s within the United Nations (UN) (Gaer, 2009). The adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 was a milestone in this process, as it set out a common framework for the development and synchronisation of national interventions in the field of gender equality. A series of UN conferences in the 1990s – in particular the World Conference on Human rights held in Vienna in 1993, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 concluding with the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action – deepened those core principles of the CEDAW. In particular these pertained to the notion that combating gender inequalities and gender-based discriminations forms part of the protection of human rights. In the European context, these norms have been primarily received and then propagated within the supranational infrastructure of the European Union, which over time made them its own guiding normative and legal principles (Eigenmann, 2022; Sloomaeckers, 2020).¹

Driven by feminist pressure and normative change, and mediated by the “international imperative of feminist policy development” (Mazur, 2002, p. 1), national governments of various political leanings have begun targeting gender inequalities. They have developed a complex set of policies, specialized policy agencies, strategies and plans of action charged with

¹ Already art. 119 in the treaty of Rome (1957) established a principle of equal pay for women and men (Feo, 2022). However, it is with the treaty of Amsterdam (1997) and the treaty of Lisbon (2007) that gender+ equality and nondiscrimination became core values and principles of the EU. For an overview of this process see (Eigenmann, 2022; Stychin, 1998).

promoting women’s and LGBTI rights and tackling gender and sexual inequalities, including in countries with traditional gender cultures and regimes.

Figure 1: Ngrams for "gender equality" and "LGBT" in English language books 1960-2019



Source: Google Books

Compared to other historical periods, the last three decades have been characterized by a considerable legislative effort for equality.² At the same time, all advancements have been met with resistance. As discussed below, this takes the form of both “loud” political opposition and the “silent” one of the feet-dragging obstructionism and inertia of sexist institutions (Lovenduski, 2005b). Gender equality remains a deeply contested political goal, and progress has been patchy and partly matched with regression. As the International Panel on Social Progress (2016, para. 121) observes,

“Gender inequality regimes have proven to be very flexible in readapting to changed contexts and structures. Non-discrimination laws or formal governmental regulations obliging governments to do gender budgeting or gender mainstreaming have not changed

² In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action introduced the approach of gender mainstreaming to policy-making, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in these processes. This created a ground-breaking shift in the way gender equality policies have been conceived in previous decades. In a summary, we could identify four phases in gender equality policy-making. In the 1970s, efforts target mainly women’s civil and economic rights, based on the idea of equal treatment in the labour market. In the 1980s, the focus shifted to equal opportunities and affirmative actions. In the 1990s, gender mainstreaming across all policy areas became the dominant policy paradigm. In the 2000s, we see the emergence of an intersectional approach, with policies designed to simultaneously tackle different concurring inequalities. For an overview see (Fiig, 2020; Kantola, 2010). On the obstacles in gender mainstreaming see (Ahrens, 2018a; Jacquot, 2010, 2015).

reality as intended. Progress is made, but mostly partial and never ensured”.

These dynamics are the object of this thesis. In brief, this thesis looks at the way gender and sexuality legislations end up being toothless or fail to materialize altogether. The overarching research questions of the following studies are:

Q1: How are policies for gender+ equality in the domain of citizenship resisted in the institutional sphere?

Q2: Which factors contribute to the failure of gender+ equality policies?

I focus on the particularly pertinent case of Italy, a country characterized by a slow process of liberalization compared to other post-industrial democracies, influenced by an entrenched conservative legacy and a renewed backlash against gender equality. As laid out below, I examine the case of gender representation policy and that of LGBTI hate crimes policy, understood as attempts to expand gender and sexual equality in the domain of citizenship. In doing so, I explain crucial dynamics that led to the failure of gender and sexual equality policies at different stages of the policy process in Italy.

1.2. Conceptual strategy

1.2.1. Gender equality policies

Before moving to the core part of this introduction, aimed at conceptualizing different ways in which gender equality policies are opposed, I would like to briefly engage with the definition of gender equality policies adopted in this thesis.

I understand policies as the (socially constructed) output of policy-making processes in which decision-makers – very often governments, but not only restricted to these – plan, formulate, adopt, implement and evaluate actions made to address problems that political actors have considered relevant in specific social fields (see also John, 2013; Lombardo & Meier, 2016). As underlined already by Dye (1972), policy springs from both decisions to act and, equally important, decisions not to act.

Gender equality policies are policies specifically aiming to overcome gendered forms of inequality and subordination in institutions and wider social relations.³ Beyond its often non-conflictual presentation⁴, gender equality is a contested concept, subject to multiple meanings and interpretations. Different feminist traditions have produced distinct visions of gender equality, which with Verloo and Lombardo (2007) we can summarize as the perspectives of gender equality as sameness, difference, and transformation (Walby, 2005). Their variance also has consequences for the design of policies. The sameness perspective is generally associated with anti-discrimination policies that seek to equip women with the same means as men and thereby take gender out of the equation, yet without challenging the male as norm. On the contrary, a difference perspective on gender equality, exemplified by affirmative action policies, seeks to bring gender into procedures and thereby expand the space for non-hegemonic gendered identities. The transformational understanding of gender equality seeks to realize gender equality by deconstructing how policy is not only gendered but also *gendering*. In this vision, the focus is on the ways policy creates the meaning of gender, rather than taking it as a given in the form of the unquestioned male norm or the inherent duality of male and female identities. Some aspects of gender mainstreaming strategies are informed by this kind of perspective.

It is important to note here that gender equality policies can take a diverse range of shapes, which can often coexist and be complementary to each other in tackling different forms of subordination and exclusion. It is further useful to note that gender equality as understood here does not entail a formalistic idea of equality as treating everyone in an identical way, but leaves space for accounting for difference and deconstructing how gender is made salient. That said, in studying the policies selected for the following case studies, I generally do not

³ Feminist approaches to policy making have also underlined that gender – processes of gendering and gendered effects – is present in all policies, also those that do not explicitly tackle gender inequalities. As a consequence, not only gender equality policies, but also gender *in* (mainstream) policies has been at the centre of attention for feminist policy scholars (Mazur & Hoard, 2014).

⁴ The non-conflictual presentation of gender equality as a concept can be explained following two non-mutually exclusive argumentations: on the one hand, there is a tendency a considering the hegemonic discourse about gender equality, such as the “liberal feminist” discourse developed by international and supranational organizations like the European Union, as the only existing discourse (Kabasakal Arat, 2015); on the other hand, scholars have highlighted an ongoing processes of strategic framing and “bureaucratization” of the discourse about gender equality, which have helped including gender equality as a more commonly accepted goal in policy-making (see Verloo, 2007).

analyse how understandings of gender equality are constructed by policy actors (Lombardo, Meier, & Verloo, 2009b; Verloo, 2007) or what *should* be understood by gender equality (Fraser, 2013), but take these understandings as empirical givens.

Another point of clarification pertains to the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity issues in gender equality policies. Going beyond currents of feminism that limit the scope of gender equality politics to the subject of women, and following the theoretical and political evolution of contemporary feminisms towards a more inclusive understanding of the feminist subjects (Bonu, 2022; Dean, 2010; Evans & Chamberlain, 2015), I include under the definition of gender equality policies provided above not only policies addressing women's unequal conditions, but also policies concerning the unequal status of sexual minorities, sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) rights. The scholarship on gender and policy studies is experiencing a similar trajectory. While in previous years the discipline has been characterized by a fairly strict division of labour between scholars focusing on gender equality policies and others focusing on LGBTI policies, there is a plea for widening the frontiers in gender and policy studies so as to include greater diversity, intersectional approaches and perspectives coming from sexuality studies (Lombardo & Meier, 2022).

Accordingly, we see that the boundaries between the study of gender equality and sexual equality policies are increasingly blurred. Without wanting to cross out analytical distinctions that remain extremely useful, it is worth pointing out that going beyond this distinction can prove fruitful, if our aim is to understand the potential common nature of processes affecting both policy areas – in particular the constellation of actors, discourses and strategies mobilized to oppose these policies and defend the *status quo* of gender and sexual inequalities. In fact, the subordination of women as well as gender and sexual minorities that gender equality policies seek to dismantle finds a common root in patriarchal domination. The political struggles for women's and sexual emancipation theoretically share, in this sense, a common ultimate goal: take down the structure of power and concomitant privileges of this hegemonic group. Of course, the relationship between the feminist and LGBTQI movements is complex and their trajectories, political demands and objectives have often diverged substantially (M. A. Bracke, 2014; De Leo, 2021; Prearo, 2015; Rossi Barilli, 1999). Since 2010, however, mobilisations are characterized by an increasing convergence between the two movements

and the seeking of (discursive) alliances in a joint critique of neoliberalism and other structural factors creating the conditions for gender-based inequalities (Bonu, 2022; Ciccia, della Porta, & Pavan, 2021; Lucas Platero & Ortega-Arjonilla, 2016).

Furthermore, in policy terms, the policy toolkit used to combat inequalities in the domain of SOGI rights draws heavily from that of women's equality policies (e.g. anti-discrimination legislation, positive action, or anti-harassment and violence laws). In other words, in many cases gender-equality policies constituted the framework for the development of LGBTI policies (Méndez, 2007). This commonality of instruments further supports the opportunity to consider these two areas of policy under a common framework. To highlight the interconnectedness of gender and sexual inequalities with other forms of inequality without resorting to enumerations, I at times follow Lombardo, Meier and Verloo (2017) in using the shorthand "gender+".

Gender equality policies can be found crosscutting a variety of different policy sectors and areas, including as political representation, the labour market, family law, body politics (Mazur 2002). In this thesis, I do not consider gender equality policies in their full breadth, but focus on gender equality policies operating in the domain of "citizenship". I draw on a typology by Verloo and Lombardo (2007), building on the pioneering work of Sylvia Walby (1990) and Raewyn Connell (1987). These authors distinguish three domains – the conjunction of norms, institutions, and organizations – in which gender inequalities are maintained and can therefore be targeted by transformative policies. These are the domains of *labour* – where an unequal division of labour in workplaces and labour markets are tackled, for example, by equal pay and equal employment policies; *Intimacy* – where inequalities in bodily rights, sexual relations, and family life are combatted, e.g. by legislative interventions against domestic violence or reproductive rights policies; and *citizenship*. This latter domain, which I focus on here, concerns the persistence of gender hierarchies that affect the enjoyment of the main civil, political, and social rights (Verloo & Lombardo, 2007), as evidenced by unequal access to political power, institutions, and rights. Gender equality in the domain of citizenship centrally denotes parity of access to and power within political institutions, as well as the elimination of institutional sexism pervading the political sphere (Lovenduski, 2005a), but also parity in the enjoyment of civil rights. Important examples of gender equality policies in the domain of

citizenship are political representation policies, and LGBTI rights policies, like marriage equality and anti-LGBTI hate crimes policies.

It has been shown that the shape and impact of gender+ equality policies vary with structural conditions and political opportunity structures. These include countries' gender regimes (Siaroff, 1994; Walby, 1997) and gender attitudes; structures of multi-level governance (Mazur, 2002; e.g. Méndez, 2007); the political leaning of governing majorities and the institutional embeddedness of feminism through the presence of Women Policy Agencies (WPAs) (McBride & Mazur, 2013; McBride & Mazur, 2010); religious and cultural traditions (Verloo 2015xx); as well as constitutional norms and judicial activities (Keck, 2009; de Waele and Van der Vleuten, 2010; Lépinard, 2016; see examples in chapter 2 and 3).

Certain actors have been identified as crucial for facilitating the introduction of gender equality policies, such as those identified by the notion of "state feminism" (Joyce Outshoorn & Kantola, 2007; Stetson & Mazur, 1995), or feminist/velvet triangles (Woodward, 2004).⁵ These geometries of actors, made up of gender policy agencies, feminist movements, and feminist politicians are key in the process of adoption and implementation of gender equality policy. It has been shown that more comprehensive policy outputs are achieved when institutional actors are responsive to the movements's claims (McBride & Mazur, 2010). In other words, notwithstanding the usually indirect influence of movement actors in policy-making processes, their agency can influence agenda setting processes via the timely politicization of issues (Lombardo & Meier, 2022), as well as the outputs of policy processes.⁶ The fortunes of gender+ equality policies are also greatly influenced by the transnationalisation of gender and sexual politics. The transnational level has facilitated the advocacy actions and the organizing of progressive actors (Ayoub, 2016; Mala Htun & Weldon, 2012; Paternotte, 2016), while providing the discursive resources and opportunities for these actors.

⁵ For a critique of the concept of feminist triangles, in particular on the drawbacks of reducing the networked structure of support to feminist policymaking to a "triangular geometry" see (Holli, 2008)

⁶ See, for example, the effect of the "parité movement" in France (É. Lépinard, 2016). On the importance of the women's movements for the adoption of reproductive rights legislations, see (Beccalli, 1994; Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, & Rucht, 2002; Mazur, 1995).

1.2.2. Resistance to gender equality

As Virginia Woolf remarks in the passage cited at the beginning of this introduction, the history of *resistance* to gender equality is as long as that of its advancement. Yet it is only recently – and in the wake of a renewed, highly organized and proactive transnational wave of anti-gender mobilization – that forms of opposition and resistance to gender+ equality policies have turned into a central concern for feminist research. In fact, the current attacks to LGBTI and gender policies – such as the restriction of reproductive rights in Poland and in the US (Gwiazda, 2021), or the adoption of constitutional bans against LGBTI rights in other countries (Mos, 2020) – have shown that the advancements made in the past decades are flimsy, reversible, and far from being widely acknowledged as norms. The conflict and the heightened polarization around gender+ equality is clearly a phenomenon among political elites, and recent studies, contrary to previous findings, are providing evidence that such polarization increasingly pervades public opinion (Abou-Chadi, Breyer, & Gessler, 2021; Santos & Geva, 2022). In the broader picture, the retrogression of gender+ equality is at the core of a more general process of democratic backsliding and the rise of illiberal democracy, driven by the rise to power of radical right political actors, and their alliance with ultraconservatism (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). As Myra Marx Ferree (2020) points out, this resistance can be understood as a masculinist reaction to a new and contested understanding of democracy based on equality in politics and the family.

Verloo (2018c, p. 6) defines opposition to feminist politics and gender+ equality politics as

“any activity in which a perspective of opposing feminist politics and gender+ equality policies can be expected to influence or is actually influencing politics or policy making at any stage”.

What this definition points to is the need for a broad understanding of the variegated forms in which opposition and resistance manifest themselves. Opposition takes place in different arenas, be they the sphere of institutional politics (e.g., parliaments or governments and political parties), that of civil society (with e.g., religious associations or protest movements as actors), or that of state bureaucracy. What the perspective highlights is the wide variety of actors and activities feeding into the making and unmaking of gender equality policies. In this

thesis, I take a look at institutional actors (political parties, politicians, parliamentary groups) acting as protagonists of resistance to gender equality+ policies in different arenas. Following Verloo's spirit, I connect forms of opposition occurring in different fields usually siloed into distinct research literatures.

On the one hand, I draw on the burgeoning literature on anti-gender movements and political opposition of the ultra-conservative right to the progress of gender+ equality (Chappell, 2006; Corredor, 2019; Dietze & Roth, 2020; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017; Roggeband & Krizsán, 2018; Scheele, Roth, & Winkel, 2022). As discussed below, gender and sexual equalities have become the central target of a transnationally organized backlash. The opposition to the institutional gains of feminism act as a "symbolic glue" for the agenda of this renewed radical conservatism (Kováts & Põim, 2015), creating significant obstacles to any further expansion of gender+ equality policies.

On the other hand, I also think of opposition as including the more subtle and indirect resistance to the gendering of political institutions as studied by feminist institutionalism (Kenny, 2013; Krook & MacKay, 2011; Mackay, Kenny, & Chappell, 2010; Waylen, 2017). This strand of literature starts from the observation that gender pervades all social institutions (Connell 1987). A feminist perspective "makes visible constitutive, gendered power relations and the processes that support and undermine them" (Lovenduski, 2011, p. xi) in formal and informal institutions, even where gender is not an explicitly cited category. This reveals path dependencies and historical legacies of gendered inequality, but also clarifies under which conditions institutions offer opportunities for change.

In this thesis, I centre both on active, direct, and overt opposition as political contestation, as well as instances of passive, indirect, and hidden forms of opposition. Situating gender equality policies in a historical arc of contradictory change, the thesis looks at empirical cases in which resistance by institutional actors obstruct progress in the direction of greater gender+ equality in various arenas and at various stages of the policy cycle. Some parts of the literature describe these as *opposition* where others prefer the term *resistance*. The term *opposition* is perhaps more fitting for processes that take place in the open, while *resistance* can also include processes that are taking place behind the scenes, within the "black box" of institutions (e.g. Lang, Meier, & Sauer, 2023). While generally using the two terms

interchangeably, in what follows I use the term resistance as it highlights the reactive element of *counter*-processes to gender+ equality policies.

1.2.3. Penelope's web

In the following, I want to introduce central themes of these empirical studies by way of a story, which I found myself thinking about often while researching for this project. It is a famous passage from the *Odyssey*, the ancient Greek epic poem narrating Odysseus' return to his home, the island of Ithaca, after the end of the Trojan War. The passage in question recounts Penelope, Odysseus' wife, weaving and un-weaving a web with deceptive intents. The story is well-known: After Odysseus is years late in returning from war, many suitors travel to the island of Ithaca with the idea of persuading Penelope to remarry, considering Odysseus now lost at sea. Penelope, aware of the potential negative consequences that a rejection of these proposals might have for her and her court, bides her time. She promises the suitors that she will eventually remarry, only after she has finished crafting a shroud for her father-in-law, Laertes. For years, Penelope laboriously works on the shroud during the day, only to undo it at night. In this incessant doing and undoing, Penelope manages to never come close to what she had declared to be her goal – to finish the shroud and tie the knot with one of the suitors.

Three elements of this story make it a fitting metaphor to describe the contradictory and at times ill-fated policy processes surrounding gender+ equality policies. These are firstly the disconnect between Penelope's stated goals and her actual practice; secondly, how just like Penelope's web, egalitarian progress can be simultaneously made and unmade; and thirdly, how like her, progressive actors in the field of gender+ equality politics navigate conditions of contextual constraint. Each of these elements elucidates distinct forms of resistance and opposition to gender+ equality policies which are important for the empirical studies here collected. Let us look at these elements one by one.

1.2.4. Quiet resistance: the politics of implementation and symbolic policies

A central element we can glean from the metaphor of Penelope's web is the simultaneity of making and unmaking – weaving and unravelling – that is also characteristic for the arena of gender+ equality politics, and perhaps most clearly manifested at the moment of policy

implementation. Since the emergence of studies about policy implementation in the 1970s, it has been clear that the phase of implementation – when policy decisions land on the ground – is indeed highly political (Howlett, 1991; Howlett, Ramesh, & Perl, 2020). Public policy research has shown that in the implementation phase of potentially every policy, whatever is adopted by a government can easily be ditched, eluding the original intent of the formal decision. This is to be particularly expected in the case of gender+ equality policies and sexuality policies that bear with them an inherent challenge to the status quo of gender relations (Connell & Pearse, 2015; Mazur, 2002).

Attention to the implementation of gender+ equality policies is an emerging theme in feminist policies (AMazur, 2017) and it is at the core of the Gender Equality Policy in Practice (GEPP) approach (Engeli & Mazur, 2018; Mazur & Engeli, 2020). The GEPP approach studies

“whether, how, and why the broad range and large number of government policies explicitly designed to promote women’s rights and strike down gender-based hierarchies [...] have been put into action to generate meaningful change” (Engeli & Mazur, 2022)”.

This links to the abovementioned feminist institutionalist research on the gendered nature of institutional routines insofar as they act as roadblocks in the implementation of GEPs. Petra Ahrens (2018b) for instance, studies the implementation of gender mainstreaming in EU institutions and reveals an indirect opposition on the part of the bureaucratic apparatus that obstructed these policies. She identifies three mechanisms by which bureaucratic actors create “diffuse barriers” (ibid.) for gender equality policies: *inertia*, “a form of opposition characterized by inactivity” (ibid., 83); *nescience*, a cultivated lack of awareness and the delegation of gender issues to specialized actors; as well as forms of *negligence*, e.g. in the form of de-prioritizing gender vis-à-vis other concerns or constructing gender as a non-issue (see also Mergaert & Lombardo, 2014). All these behavioural strategies can be understood as forms of quiet resistance, which shapes a highly important context for the implementation of gender equality policies. Moreover, discursive factors and processes can also negatively affect implementation and create resistance to progressive change (Ciccina & Lombardo, 2019) . Accordingly, a perspective on this type of opposition to gender equality policies focuses on how “public policies, law, bureaucratic and organizational practices, and political and economic processes tend to reproduce the male norm masqueraded as ‘neutral’” (Lombardo

et al., 2017, p. 5) and as a consequence maintain a male power advantage while systematically disadvantaging gendered subjects.

An important form of quiet resistance combines discursive commitment and informal obstruction. It stands for the gap between the words and the deeds of policy actors in the gender+ equality policy field. Out of the metaphor just presented, governments and political actors resemble Penelope when they publicly declare transformative intentions with regards to gender+ inequality but do not follow up with actual policies that challenge the status quo.

As many studies have shown, despite the amount of policy activity around gender+ equality in recent decades, actors in government or other policy-relevant institutions often do not actually have an interest in pursuing policies challenging male domination. Rather, and as argued by Amy Mazur, “they may systematically pursue symbolic measures (M. Edelman, 1964), formal policy statements, with no ‘policy outputs’ or results (Cobb & Elder, 1983, p. 22) (2017, p. 68). These symbolic policies are formulated intentionally without the necessary components to ensure their actual implementation. In this case, gender+ equality policies act as instances of a merely rhetorical modernization (Wetterer, 2005), leaving the practices perpetuating gender inequality intact. As Joni Lovenduski (2005a, p. 90) puts it, a *rhetoric* of equality, although it may be useful in changing over time the discursive opportunity structure for subsequent policies, does not lead to a mechanism ensuring the *promotion* of equality nor does it manifest *guarantees* for equality (see also chapter 2). Where non- or mis-implementation is an active, albeit often hidden, form of sabotaging expected policy outcomes, here the legislative output simply is not meant to reach to the true mechanisms perpetuating inequality.

Of course, the symbolic nature of the reform project sponsored by governments, especially when dealing with urgent or salient issues, is not specific to the field of gender+ equality⁷. However, in the course of the discursive and normative liberalization mentioned in the previous section, gender equality has become part of the standard vocabulary and value set of normal politics. This current conjuncture makes the rhetorical compliance to equality

⁷ See for example Boussaguet on the merely symbolic nature of participatory instruments for governance (Boussaguet, 2016).

almost necessary,⁸ forcing opposition to take the form of a more subtle avoidance of change by laws that remain toothless while appearing transformative. For example, the pioneering work of Amy Mazur has shown the symbolic nature of equal employment policies advanced by governments of different political leanings in the French Fifth Republic. Beyond the lack of any factual effects, symbolic policymaking also complicates the available actions for actors promoting value change. Another example dates back to 1993, when Mazur and Appleton (1993) showed that for the case of French political parties, a rhetoric of equality obscures the structural obstacles faced by women in party organisations, making it harder to address and remove them (see other case studies in Lovenduski & Norris, 1993). In other cases, equality norms instituted on the constitutional level – so-called blueprint policies – proved to be a burden for the actual adoption and implementation of equality policies (Lépinard & Rubio-Marín, 2018), or simply were not spelled out in more precise legislation, thus remaining inconsequential in practice. It is important to stress that the symbolic policy-making in the field of gender+ policies is not limited to state institutions, but common also in other institutions characterized by the domain of structural masculinity, such as universities (e.g. Edelman & Cabrera, 2020).

1.2.5. Loud resistance: Mobilization against gender equality policies

The second, more visible form of resistance is loud opposition to gender equality policies in the political and protest arena. This loud resistance and backlash to feminist political projects are central elements of the political and discursive opportunity structure in which gender+ equality policies are made and unmade. As mentioned above, the opposition to feminism and gender equality has become highly salient in the current political moment, especially in the campaigns, appeals, and ideologies of the political Right. Continuing a long history of anti-egalitarianism in general (Robin, 2017), and anti-feminism in particular (Bob, 2012; Corredor, 2019), ultra-conservative movements have engaged in an intensifying struggle against gender equality as a symbol of the wider liberalization of societal values in an arena of conflict commonly labelled in the US literature as that of “culture wars” (Hunter, 1991). Women’s reproductive rights, empowerment mechanisms and quotas, legislation against gender-based

⁸ This is for example what is found by Ahrens (2018b) in her analysis of EU institutions: in that setting, the “logic of appropriateness” (March & Olsen, 1989) embedded in the institutional setting preclude resorting to open opposition to the process of mainstreaming.

violence and the recognition of same-sex unions, but also feminist artists and cultural producers, university programs of gender studies or sexual education programs are targeted by a host of political and civil society actors often linked by transnational networks (Chappell, 2006; Graff, Kapur, & Walters, 2019; Kovats, 2017; Velasco, 2023).

As mentioned, this political project can be understood as a counter-movement to the democratization of gender relations, seeking to build a backlash to progressive, feminist, and LGBTI political gains since the 1990s. A nodal point holding together the “loosely structured transnational conservative patriarchal network (TCPN)” (Chappell, 2006, p. 493) around “anti-genderism” is the identification of a common enemy in “gender ideology”. The concept was coined by the Vatican after the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, as a coordinated response to the recognition of sexual and reproductive rights within the ONU human rights system (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017, p. 9). Thanks to its nature of an empty signifier, the “gender as ideology” frame has been adopted to account for different meanings and sexuality issues (contributions in Kötting, Bitzan, & Petó, 2017; see contribution in Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017; Lavizzari & Siročić, 2022; contributions in Scheele et al., 2022). In general, the “gender as ideology” frame articulated by the Christian right portrays gender and sexual equality as an assault to the self-evidence of sexual binary, the complementarity between the sexes, and to what “naturally” derives from this understanding: the centrality of the nuclear family, a family model shaped by traditional gender relations and conservative morality. As well put by Graff and Korolczuk: “‘Gender’ is the Right’s name for what the left calls sexual emancipation, modernization and equality” (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022, p. 17). These appear, in the eyes of the right, as the causes of a loss of community, loyalty and stability in both partnerships and wider social life.

The origins of the anti-gender movement lie in the mobilizations of conservative Christian groups of different denominations, at times allied with other religious groups (such as conservative Muslim organizations), which rallied against the very idea of gender as socially constructed, rather than a natural feature of individuals, and the implications of this conceptualization for gender equality provisions and LGBTI rights propagated by UN institutions (for an excellent overview, see Prearo, 2020). Hailing originally from religious civil

society organizations (and the fringes of centre-right politics), in the European context anti-gender conservatism fell on fertile soil in the expanding field of populist radical right politics. On the one hand, the latter sought to demonstrate its ideological purity in distinction from what they saw as an overly secularized and liberal mainstream centre-right. On the other, the evocation of religious morale and traditional gender order against the liberalization of sexuality are pretty congenial tropes for the articulation of nativist, traditionalist and conservative values at the core of populist radical right ideology (Spierings, 2020). Even though the positions vis-à-vis gender and sexual equality of populist radical right parties varies greatly across different contexts, with some parties in Northern and Western Europe genuinely supporting LGBTI rights (Akkerman, 2015; Linders, Dudink, & Spierings, 2022; Spierings, Zaslove, Mügge, & de Lange, 2015) their growing presence in the political arena throughout Europe and in the EU parliament has been central in the increased salience of gender equality policies and their political contestation (Ahrens & Woodward, 2021; Alonso & Espinosa, 2022; Kantola & Lombardo, 2021). Where in the previous section, we discussed forms of indirect, hidden, and informal opposition, the (strategic) marriage (cf Giorgi, 2021; McDonnell, 2016) between anti-genderist ideology and populist radical right parties sets the stage for forms of direct opposition in parliaments, public debates, and the protest arena.⁹ While far right parties are the most prominent actors in the institutional arena to espouse anti-gender ideology, in some cases the discursive resonance of anti-gender discourses can stretch out so as to include radical feminist actors within left-wing parties and movements. While these alliances are odd and very minoritarian, it is important to take them into account while analysing the constellation of oppositional actors to gender+ equality policies.

Loud resistance to gender+ equality policies operates with a number of prominent frames (Juroš, Dobrotić, & Flego, 2020; Lavizzari, 2020; Ozzano & Giorgi, 2015) most of which clearly intersect with the frames highlighted in the realm of morality politics (Mucciaroni, 2008; Mucciaroni, Ferraiolo, & Rubado, 2019). Beyond the “gender ideology” frame already introduced, a “pro-family” frame is used to oppose gender+ equality policies, as a source of social anomie. Beyond the contestation of specific policies, opposition here also takes the

⁹ As Krook rightly points out, an equally direct opposition to gender and LGBTI equality is at times articulated in discourses of the liberal mainstream (Krook, 2016). We could add that the same is true paradoxically, of certain conservative parts of the feminist movement opposed to the emancipation of trans people.

form of a questioning of the concept of gender – as a social construct distinct from biological sex – altogether (Garbagnoli, 2017). Conservative gender politics is informed by an ideology that views the sexes in an essentialized complementarity whose highest realisation is found in marriage. Although nominally according equal worth to men and women, this view quite overtly calls for a return to a patriarchal tradition of divided (and unequal) spheres. As in many forms of morality politics, concern over children is another powerful trope of anti-gender mobilisation, viewing their exposure to non-heteronormative life forms or role models as a corrupting influence (Robinson, 2008). Moreover, efforts for greater gender equality, especially in the area of reproductive rights, are at times framed as a demographic threat to Western Christian civilization (Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). Frames used to counter sexual equality in the realm of citizenship stand at the heart of the investigation in chapter 4. Here, let it suffice to say that morality politics is the central battleground of direct opposition to gender equality policies, but there are also other forms of opposition afforded by the political process (Mucciaroni 2019). Interestingly, human rights frames, originally central to the propagation of feminist and LGBTI policies, have now also been taken up on the anti-genderist right (Lewis, 2017) (see ch. 4).

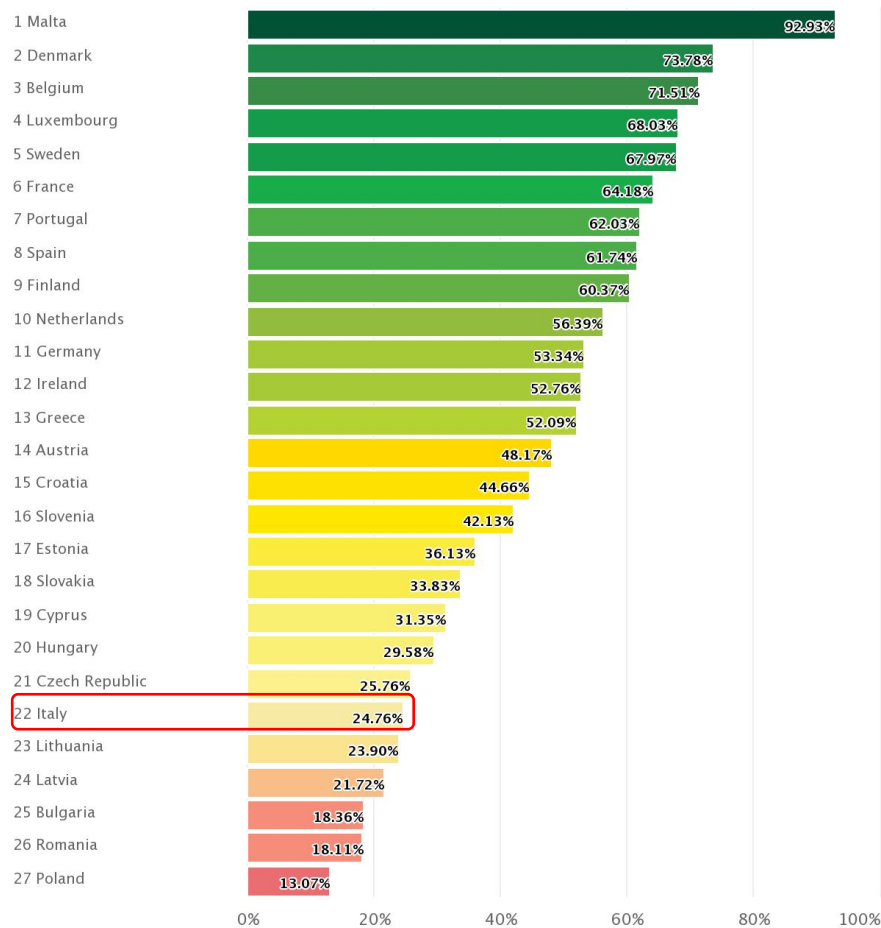
1.3. Setting the stage: Italy, a paradigmatic case of a conservative gender regime

This thesis analyses the making and unmaking of gender+ equality policies in Italy. Italy forms a particularly pertinent case for studying the dynamics of resistance to gender equality policies, because the country's political dynamic in this field paradigmatically exemplifies the overall historical moment introduced above. Italy can be considered a laggard in the EU when it comes to gender+ equality policymaking. Notwithstanding the clear role played by the EU as an *agenda setter* on issues of gender+ equality (Lombardo and Forest, 2012; see also chapters 4), the country has often resisted the pressures to policy reforms coming from the EU level in the process of Europeanization (on reconciliation policies, see Donà, 2012).

Existing indicators give us some coordinates for the state of gender+ equality in the country. According to the Gender Equality Index, tracking achievements of European countries regarding gender equality in the areas of work, money, knowledge, time, power and health,

Italy ranks 14th in the EU with 63.8 out of 100 points in 2021. Its score is 4.2 points below the EU's average. Moreover, since 2018, Italy's score has shown no change (only + 0.3 points).¹⁰

Figure 2. ILGA-Europe Rainbow index 2021 in EU-27 member states



Source: ILGA Europe annual map 2021. Available at: <https://rainbow-europe.org/>

Notes: Since 2009, ILGA-Europe monitor the advancements on LGBTI rights in 49 European countries. The cumulative index ranks countries on a scale between 0% (gross violations of human rights, discrimination) and 100% (respect of human rights, full equality). The cumulative index is based on a variety of indicators based on the evaluation of each country's laws and policies that have a direct impact on the LGBTI people's human rights, divided in 7 thematic categories: equality and non-discrimination; family; hate crime and hate speech; legal gender recognition; bodily integrity; civil society space; and asylum rights. For information about the index calculation see: <https://rainbow-europe.org/about>

It is worth noticing that the overall index is positively affected by the extremely high score recorded in "health", linked to the longevity of Italian women; otherwise, the scores in other

¹⁰ EIGE Gender Equality Index, Italy. Available at <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/country/it>. Last accessed in October 2022.

dimensions capture a picture of alarming inequality especially in the sector of employment, time – that is, the gender division of labour for productive and reproductive work – and access to political power. All in all, gender inequality is still marked across the political, economic and private sphere. Italy's backwardness is even more pronounced when it comes to gender+ equality policies targeting LGBTI rights. According to the ILGA Europe Rainbow Index, the country scores 24th out of 27 EU member states in 2021 (see figure 2). In other words, the country falls short in providing for formal – legal – and substantial guarantees concerning the civil rights of LGBTI subjectivities.

According to the literature on gender regime types, Italy belongs to the domestic or conservative model (Walby, 1997). In the recent conjuncture – resulting from the long-term effects of the 2008 economic crisis and the devastating impact of the covid-19 pandemic – we witness a “even greater privatization of [Italy's] gender regime” (Alonso, Ciccia, & Lombardo, 2022, p. 30). This trajectory, branded by a regression, is the result of the interaction of different factors – specific features of the party system, the role played by equality agencies in advancing progressive policies, the presence of actors in favour and against gender+ equality and their different integration in the institutional sphere, the role of organized religion and the persistence of conservative societal attitudes. In what follows I inspect each of these aspects.

1.3.1. Party system and politicization of gender within and across party lines

The position of gender and sexuality politics in the Italian party system is characterized by the strong structuring role of the religious cleavage, the dominance of Christian democracy in the period of 1945-1990, and the presence of a mainstreamed radical right since 1994 exerting a strong conservative influence. In this section, I recount important moments in the transformation of the Italian party system and its significance for gender and LGBTI politics. A map of the party system since the 1990s, tracing the evolution of the many party actors, is available in the Appendix (A0).

The religious cleavage (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967) played a predominant role in the structuring of party conflict after WWII. A new political party, the Christian Democracy (Democrazia Cristiana, DC) emerged as the main mediator between the interests of the Vatican and those of the Italian Catholics. The DC could count on a strong network of Catholic associations and

organizations at the local level and maintained a strong connection between the Church and the party structure (Marzano, 1997). Even when the support of the Church became less important for the survival of the party in the 1970s and 1980s, the DC remained the Church's political referent until the party's collapse in the 1990s (Ozzano & Giorgi, 2015). The DC was also a pivotal actor in the party system: it occupied the centre of the political spectrum¹¹ and, since its identity was mainly rooted in catholic values and anticommunism (Galli, 1978; Marzano, 1997), it was in direct competition with the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano, PCI), the second biggest party, that was situated on the other end of the religious cleavage. Yet, an alternation in government between DC and PCI was not an option throughout the postwar decades. The PCI was perceived as an anti-system party (Sartori, 1982), a status asymmetry that resulted in the DC always occupying governmental charges, while the PCI was relegated to the opposition (Galli, 1966).

In terms of gender equality, this meant that throughout the formative postwar decades, gender politics was always mediated by a political system dominated by a conservative Catholic political force. Nonetheless, moments like the legalization of abortion and divorce in the 1970s were critical breakthroughs for feminist struggles, which maintained a complicated relation to the Communists while intermittently profiting from their support.¹² Indeed, the 1970s and 1980s saw a high politicization of issues such as abortion rights, divorce and the renewal of family law, which were staunchly opposed by the DC. Over these issues, the secular parties, in particular the PCI, the PSI (the Italian Socialist Party, PSI) and the small movement-party of the Radicals transmitted the demands of the feminist movement into the institutional arena. Homosexuality, by contrast, was a “non-issue in the Italian public sphere” (Ozzano & Giorgi, 2015, p. 41) during the most part of the Italian First Republic (1946-1991), which

¹¹ Differently from other members of the European Christian Democratic party family the DC did not turned into a conservative, centre-right party, but continued to maintain a great internal diversity, with strong factions leaning either to the left or to the right (see Colarizi, 1994; Leonardi & Wertman, 1989).

¹² The relationship between the feminist movement(s) and the PCI was not straightforward, but rather full of tensions and mutual critiques. However, studies have shown that regardless of these tensions the PCI became progressively more responsive to the demands of the feminist movement, with a peak in the 1980s, when the younger generations of women in the party held a closer relationship with feminist activism (Piccio, 2019). On the relationship between the PCI, leftist trade unions and the women's movements see also (Beccalli, 1994; Beckwith, 1985). For a direct testimony and a reflection on the conflictual aspects of the relationship between communist and feminist activism see (Rossanda, 2021).

inherited the lack of attention towards homosexuality from the former fascist regime.¹³ The predominance of the DC and its close ties to the Catholics institutions placed Italy, until the 1990s, in the “religious world” of morality politics (Engeli, Green-Pedersen, & Larsen, 2012), a constellation in which the importance of the religious cleavage and the presence of a strong Christian Democratic party created a high politicization around “morality issues”.

Since the 1990s, this constellation changed profoundly. In the party system, the combined effect of a series of corruption scandals that involved all major parties in 1992, and the end of the Cold War resulted in the disappearance or transformation of all main traditional parties, notably the PCI, the DC and the PSI. This, together with the adoption of institutional reforms altered the centripetal mechanism that had structured the party system until that point, creating instead two broad coalitions on the left and the right of the political spectrum competing for government (Cotta & Verzichelli, 2011). The disappearance of the DC, and the emergence of substantively new parties had important consequences for the relation between religion and Italian politics: In the words of Ozzano and Giorgi: “Among the new relevant political parties, the explicit religious reference disappeared: many parties try to appeal in different ways to a supposedly ‘Catholic constituency’, though none has an explicit religious profile” (2015, p. 26). This implied that the Vatican was left without a privileged political ally, which also proved consequential for its strategies of influence over morality and gender politics. Orphaned by Christian democracy, the Vatican shifted its strategy of a “re-Christianization” of Italian society from the political to the cultural arena (Garelli, 2013). This was the moment in which the networks of religious civil society organizations behind the emergent anti-gender mobilization were created (Prearo, 2020). Moreover, the Vatican adopted a new political strategy, backed by other relevant Catholic associations, as “Catholic diaspora”: this strategy “foresees the occupation of the political field and electoral arenas by lobbying on specific candidates in each party along the political spectrum, according to the scheme of the so-called ‘non- negotiable values’” (Lavizzari, 2020, p. 72). There were multiple

¹³ The attitude of the fascist regime towards homosexuality, in fact, combined an erasure strategy, which aimed at excluding from public debates all acts potentially perceived as immoral and disturbing, with a certain degree of tolerance in so far as homosexual conducts remained out of public display (Rossi Barilli, 1999). Homosexuality was not openly punished in the penal code adopted by the regime – the so-called Rocco penal code adopted in 1930 – yet, it was at times punished with confinement sentences, especially when instrumental to condemn political opponents (Dall’Orto, 1986 cited in Ozzano and Giorgi 2016).

attempts to overcome this lobbying model and recreate a unitary political actor for (ultra)catholic activism – the last being the *People of the Family*, founded by Mario Adinolfi in 2016 – but they remained minoritarian strategies (Lavizzari & Prearo, 2019). That said, the Vatican degree of influence into Italian politics remains high, and consequential for decision-making when issues related to gender+ equality are concerned, even without a direct political referent (Hurka, Knill, & Rivière, 2018). This is not unique to Italy: the views of the Catholic Church have had considerable influence upon law-making in other European countries where the Catholic legacy is still sizeable. However, the “Italian case” (Garelli, 2007) is particularly representative of the power that the Vatican maintains in political decisions with regard to family life and sexualities. Church’s sway over the country is rooted in a social context, as we will see below, in which Catholic ethical values are still widely shared among the population, albeit implicitly. Moreover, direct interference in Italian policy-making is not really questioned. As an example, the Italian Episcopal Conference (Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, CEI) has openly condemned or discouraged Italian policy-making processes concerning morality issues, from the expansion of LGBTI rights to reproductive rights, and these claims have been received and promoted by political representatives, in a number of occasions.

Today, we clearly see a difference between the left and the right concerning the positioning of political parties around gender+ equality issues, following the GAL-TAN dimension (Hooghe & Marks, 2018). In this constellation, the populist radical right – ascendant after the collapse of the First Republic – plays a particularly significant role. The main parties belonging to this party family are the League and Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d’Italia, FdI), the latter being the party leading government since national elections were held in September 2022. The two parties and their predecessors – the Northern League and the National Alliance – were members of the same “centre-right” coalition together with Silvio Berlusconi’s populist centre-right party Go Italy (Forza Italia, FI) since its establishment in 1994. The electoral stability of the centre-right cartel favours the mainstreaming of the radical right’s conservative agenda and discourses (Castelli Gattinara & Froio, 2021), especially regarding gender+ equality policies (Feo & Lavizzari, 2021). In addition, both parties have become new privileged interlocutors for the political demands of the Church, having strategically adopted an anti-gender rhetoric for political gains (cf. Giorgi, 2021; McDonnell, 2016; Wodak, 2015).

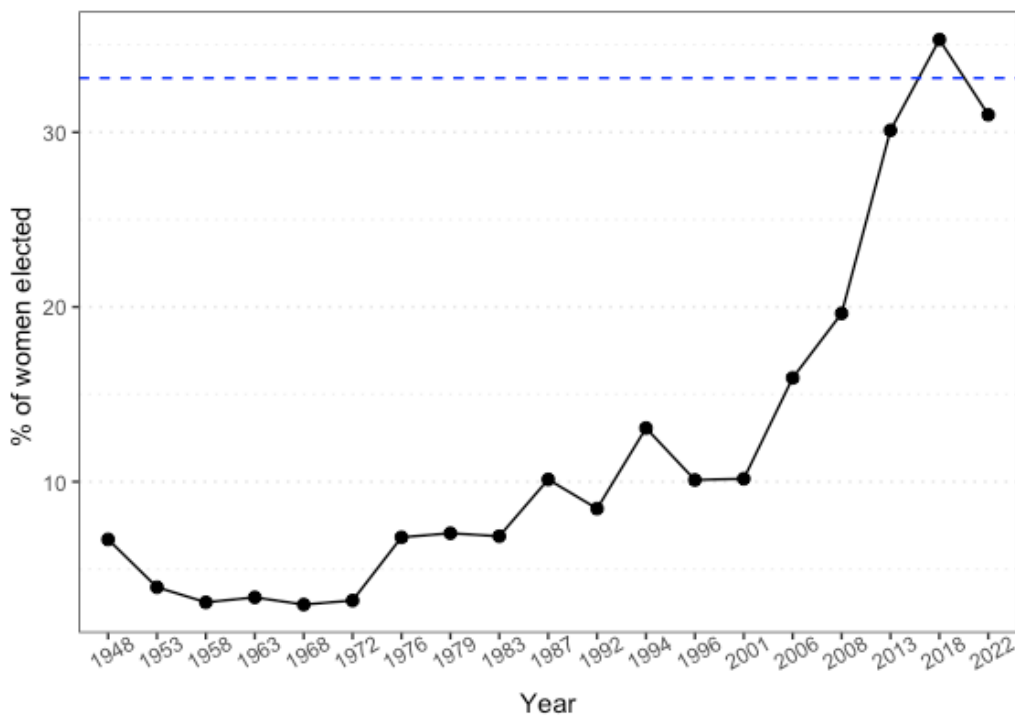
On the left, the constellations of parties still referring to the Communist identity, such as the Party of the Communist Refoundation (PRC), Left, Ecology and Liberty (SEL) and its successor Italian Left (SI), generally hold ultra-liberal stances on issues of gender and sexuality. As shown in chapter 4, they have been first-time promoters of LGBTI rights legislations. The Five Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle, M5S), a populist challenger party established in 2009, has recently acquired a clear progressive profile on issues concerning gender and sexuality (Saccà & Massidda, 2018) after years of “eclectic” ideological positioning (Mosca & Tronconi, 2019; see also Pirro, 2018). Since 2018, the party have openly sustained many progressive positions on many issues subsequently appeared in the political and parliamentary arena, such as gender-based violence, euthanasia, LGBTI rights, reproductive rights. Notably, as also shown in chapter 2, the party has also been an active promoter of gender equality in political representation.

The Democratic Party (Partito Democratico, PD), the main actor of the centre-left that held governing responsibilities in the period under observation, hold somewhat mixed positions on issues of gender and sexuality. To account for this, we need to consider the “genetic moment” (Panebianco, 1988) of the party. The PD was established in 2007 from the merging of one party of socialist-reformist tradition (the Democrats of the Left, DS) and another of the Catholic-reformist coalition (The Daisy, LM). This resulted in the existence of heterogeneous positions regarding morality issues such as reproductive rights, LGBTI rights, Artificial Reproductive Technologies (ART) etc., within the party which have at times created additional hurdles for the pursuing of gender+ equality policies (as in the case of same-sex union legislation in 2008 (Donà, 2021). Chapter 4 provides an illustration of the effects of the internal divisions of the party on gender+ equality policymaking.

Besides the different positioning on gender and SOGI issues, Italian political parties all have in common the persistence of gendered organizational cultures, and have proved particularly resilient to the feminization of politics. Numerous studies have shown the persistence of gendered informal practices and organizational cultures in Italian political parties, especially on the Right, which continue to represent a strong hurdle for women’s political participation (Avanza, 2008; Bellè, 2014; Bellè & Elisa, 2014; Hermanin, Feo, & Fischietti, 2022; Scrinzi, 2014). With few exceptions, all parties have directly and indirectly resisted positive actions for

gender representation (Legnante & Regalia, 2020; Pansardi & Pedrazzani, 2022; Regalia & Legnante, 2022; Weeks & Masala, 2022).¹⁴ As a result of male homosociality in Italian politics, levels of gender descriptive representation in Parliament remains comparatively low. A steady increase up to the 35,3 per cent is recorded after the 2018 national election, but in the new Parliament elected in 2022 the percentage of women elected was 31 per cent, below the EU_27 average for 2022 (see figure 3).

Figure 3. Percentage of women elected in the Italian parliament, 1948-2022



Source: Author's elaboration. Note: the blue dashed line represents EU_27 average for 2022

¹⁴ As I show in chapter 3, the debate on positive actions was extremely complex and controversial. Even progressive political actors – influenced by currents of the feminism of difference – did not accept positive and affirmative actions.

1.3.2. State feminism and emancipatory movements

Another important factor contributing to the overall conservatism of the Italian gender regime is the substantial weakness of the Italian state feminism, that is, the infrastructure of agencies and bodies aimed at elaborating and supporting gender+ equality policies – through the interaction with feminist and LGBTI movements, on the one hand, and policy-makers on the others – as well as monitoring the implementation and impact of the policies when adopted. (Joyce Outshoorn & Kantola, 2007; Stetson & Mazur, 1995).

The set-up of women's policy agencies was highly influenced by the EU, even if it was implemented rather late compared to other EU countries (Guadagnini, 1995) In fact, reflecting the EU initial conceptualization of gender equality policies, the first women's policy agency was created in 1991 within the Ministry of Labour, to follow issues of gender equality in labour-related measures.¹⁵ Another agency with competences crosscutting other policy sectors, with only advisory competences, was set up in 1984, within the Prime Minister's Office.¹⁶ The first Ministry for Equal Opportunities, together with an entire department to bolster the Ministry's activities– the Department for Equal Opportunities – were created in 1996 and 1997, respectively, under the first centre-left government led by Romano Prodi (for an overview, see Guadagnini & Donà, 2007). While the establishment of these committees were necessary to meet EU and international obligations, during those first years the Ministry – under the direction of Anna Finocchiaro and Laura Balbo – actively sought for the inclusion of women's organizations in the policy making process (Donà 2012; see also chapter 3).

However, already in 2001 with the coming to power of a new centre-right coalition, collaborations between the Ministry, feminist bureaucrats and women's movements faded (Guadagnini, 2001).The Ministry of equal opportunities is considered to hold “a marginal position in the policymaking process” (Donà, 2012, p. 114). This observation is even more valid in the recent years: between 2013 and 2019, the Ministry was discontinued – it was not even

¹⁵ “The National Committee for the implementation of the principles of equal treatment and equal opportunities for workers of both sexes” (Il Comitato Nazionale per l'attuazione dei principi di parità di trattamento e uguaglianza di opportunità tra lavoratori e lavoratrici). The committee still exists. Official website:<https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/parita-e-pari-opportunita/focus-on/Comitato-Nazionale-Parita/Pagine/default.aspx>

¹⁶ “The National Commission for Equality and Equal opportunities” (Commissione Nazionale per la parità e le pari opportunità – CNPPO).

established. As of today, under the newly established government, competences for gender equality are lumped together under the Ministry for family.

Stretching beyond the Ministry, also the initial network of women's policy agencies has also been subjected to numerous reshufflings during the 2000s. Most importantly, specific structures have been created to coordinate gender mainstreaming efforts at different levels of governance – the regional, provincial and local Equality Councillors. Moreover, in compliance with EU directives concerning discriminations¹⁷, in 2003 the government established the Italian National Office against Racial Discrimination (Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali, UNAR) as an agency within the Department of Equal Opportunities (DPO). The UNAR is today in charge of promoting equal treatment, coordinating all antidiscrimination strategies and programmes, including those relating to gender-based discriminations, and handling complaints of affected victims. The UNAR has progressively broadened its functions to become an advisory body, in charge of provide briefings on issues related to discriminations, and policy advice. It has often been suggested that this agency should be made independent from the DPO to enhance a more intersectional profile, but no action has been taken in this direction so far (see also Donà, 2012). Generally speaking, experts consider the structure of Italian state feminism rather weak, in a chronic lack of financial and human resources and deeply depleted by the difficulties of coordination between different territorial levels (Rosselli, 2014 and in personal communication with the author).

All in all, we can conclude that the presence of what has been called “velvet triangles” (Woodward, 2004), or “women's cooperative constellations” (Holli, 2008) made up of femocrats, women's movements and women political agencies, have been very discontinuous if not absent. While present between the first years of life of the ministry of gender equality (1997-2001), they were not able to retain competencies and power in the ups and downs of subsequent government alternations. Within political parties and their parliamentary branches, the gender policy-making routine tends to delegate these issues to single MPs that specialize in this sector. Beyond these critical actors, gender remains an issue with which the majority of MPs never really get acquainted with. This blindspot constitutes a problem, as it

¹⁷ Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32000L0043>

has been noted that the wide diffusion of knowledge about gender issues is crucial to ensure the success of gender equality policies (Squires 2005).

The weakness of state feminism is exacerbated by the inherent characteristics of the Italian feminist and LGBTI movements. The former generally chooses a subcultural strategy that shuts them out from institutional linkages and weakens their political cachet. This is related to the history of the Italian feminist movement, which, though strong by European standards, by and large remained wedded to a separatist understanding of feminism that did not square with engagement in institutional politics (Bracke, 2014; Guadagnini, 1995; Martucci, 2008). Moreover, after the end of a phase of intense mobilization in the 1970s and 1980s, the Italian women and feminist movement remain lively but privileged activities at the local level – different types of direct social actions, often financially supported by local administrations (della Porta, 2007). Concerning the LGBTI movement, a high degree of division and internal conflict resulted in the absence of a coherent national plan of action and demands, which were instead directed at the local level, where the groups of local activists started fruitful projects and collaborations with different municipalities, especially in cities like Rome, Bologna and Turin (Prearo, 2015).¹⁸

1.3.3. Attitudes: The “traditionalist syndrome”

In terms of societal attitudes, Italy has historically been a very conservative society. The prominence of the Catholic church and the influence of the Vatican have been important pillars of the patriarchal culture throughout the modern history of Italy. Since the 1960s a process of secularization has marked Italian society, but nonetheless a form of “culturalization of the Catholic legacy” (Lavizzari, 2020, p. 6) characterises today’s Italy. This means that, despite the overall decrease in the levels of religiosity and adherence to the Catholic faith highlighted in numerous studies of public opinion (e.g. Vezzoni & Biolcati-Rinaldi, 2015), the

¹⁸ A movement advocating LGBT rights started to develop only in the 1970s, with the creation of many local groups that then merged in the FUORI organization (Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano). The first phase of the movement was characterised by a “revolutionary” tendency, inspired by the experience of gay movements abroad, but also by the radicalisation and expansion of the Italian feminist movement in the late 1960s. A second tendency, more “reformist”, emerged later on from a split of the FUORI organization, and became active in the political struggle for the recognition of civil rights, in a close alliance with the Radical party, the only party that, at the time, supported the LGBT recognition struggles (Rossi Barilli, 1999). In fact, as recalled by one of the most prominent leaders of the Italian LGBT movement, Franco Grillini, the PCI was reluctant to discuss LGBT issues until the 1980s (Varesi, 2013, cited in Ozzano and Giorgi 2016).

public role assumed by the Italian Church still has an influence on people's thinking, thanks to its pervasive presence ensured by high media visibility on a variety of issues of public interests, especially regarding sexuality and morality (Sciolla, 2004). Since 2013, anti-gender movements rooted in radicalized forms of Catholicism have been central actors in a particularly strong backlash in the form of a forceful mobilization of the populist radical right. After the end of the direct representation of Catholic fundamentalist politics in the form of Christian Democracy, its ideology and discourses took on a more networked nature pervading civil society. In recent years, anti-gender mobilization has been an important point of connection between this strand of more loosely networked civil society conservatism and the organizations of the radical right.

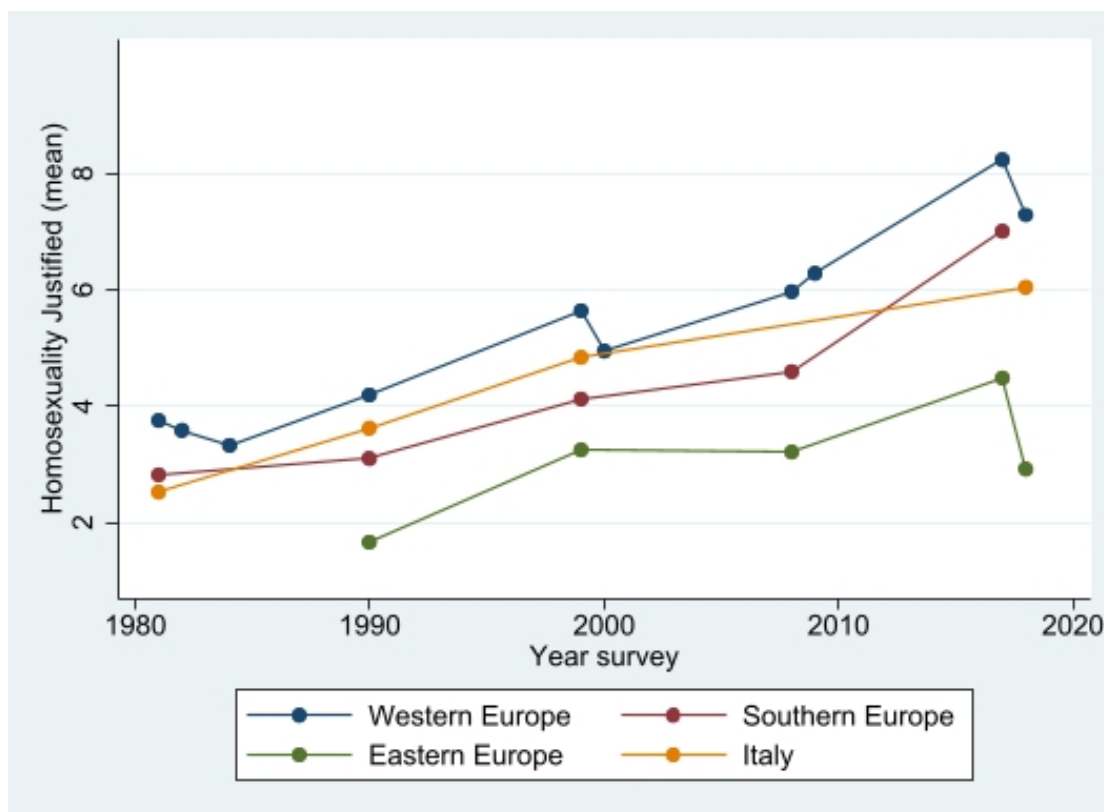
Societal ideas about gender roles remains anchored to traditional (and gendered) conceptions. In 1994, more than 68 per cent of the Italian population would agree with the statement that "a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works"; and more that 46 per cent would agree that "women's utmost desire is to have a family and children" (compared to the 30 per cent that would disagree with the statement).¹⁹ Fast forward to 2018, and 51 per cent of the Italians still considered housekeeping and raising children as largely a woman's role (European Commission, 2018). Studies based on the evolution of Italians' attitudes towards libertarian values since the 1980s as recorded in the European Value Survey (EVS), including perceptions of gender roles and attitudes towards gender equality, depict Italy as affected by a "traditionalist syndrome" (Sciolla, 2015). Contrary to what has happened in other Western European societies, Italians today still hold

"attitudes, beliefs and values marked by the preservation of roles, habits and practices handed down by tradition and widespread in a given culture. [...] Italians are, in some respects, going against the European tide, in the sense of a 'return to the past', particularly with regard to abortion and divorce, [whose acceptability levels] have fallen significantly from the levels reached in the early 1980s." (Sciolla & Torrioni, 2020, p. 144)".

¹⁹ Own elaboration from the 1994 International Social Survey Programme. Data available at: <https://www.gesis.org/en/issp/modules/issp-modules-by-topic/family-and-changing-gender-roles/1994>, last accessed October 2022.

An exception to these trends is attitudes towards homosexuality. On issues related to the acceptability of homosexuality, the Italian population has become more open, recording a significant increase in 2018, as shown in Figure 2 – although it is important to note that this opening does not concern attitudes towards same-sex parenting (Ioverno et al., 2019).

Figure 4: Evolution of attitudes towards homosexuality in comparative perspectives, 1981-2018



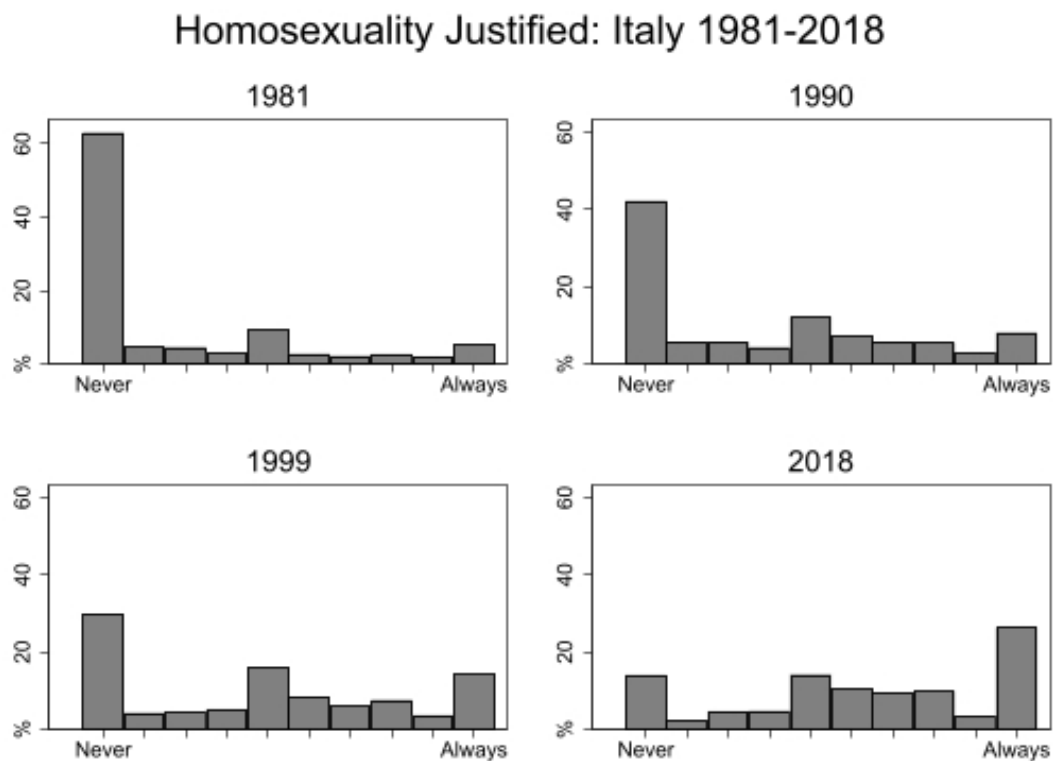
Source: EVS Trend file, 1981-2018. Author's elaboration

However, from a cross-country perspective, the Italian advancement remains below that experienced on the same issue by other Southern European countries (red line in Figure 2). These countries are usually considered comparable to Italy under a number of socio-economic characteristics, including societal values.

Looking at the data in a different way (Figure 3) also shows that the distinctive liberalizing trend in attitudes towards homosexuality is also characterized by an increasing level of polarization around the issue. In fact, over time, the percentage of Italian respondents situated at the extreme of the scale (Homosexuality is never justified; Homosexuality is always justified) increases. In the absence of an overall trend towards social modernization, as

mentioned above, this distinctive trend regarding attitudes towards homosexuality can be explained by the role played by specific actors – such as social movements – in pressuring for the redefinition of social norms regarding homosexuality (Biolcati-Rinaldi, Rovati, & Segatti, 2020).

Figure 5: Evolution of attitudes towards homosexuality in Italy, 1981-2018



Source: EVS trend file 1981-2018. Author's elaboration

The country is also still characterized by a familialist welfare state (Naldini & Saraceno, 2008), a model which is also strongly supported by the governing populist radical right parties (Meardi & Guardiancich, 2022).

In summary, Italy presents itself as paradigmatic case for studying the complex dynamics of the current moment in gender equality politics, and particularly resistance to egalitarian progress. The structure against which the empirical cases of this thesis are set is marked by a legacy of societal conservatism punctured only by an uneven, slow and contested liberalization, a political arena in which gender and sexuality politics is highly polarizing, political parties resisting egalitarian change, and a set of feminist actors on the feminist side

that have great difficulties influencing policy making, especially in comparison to a powerful political right.

1.4. Case selection

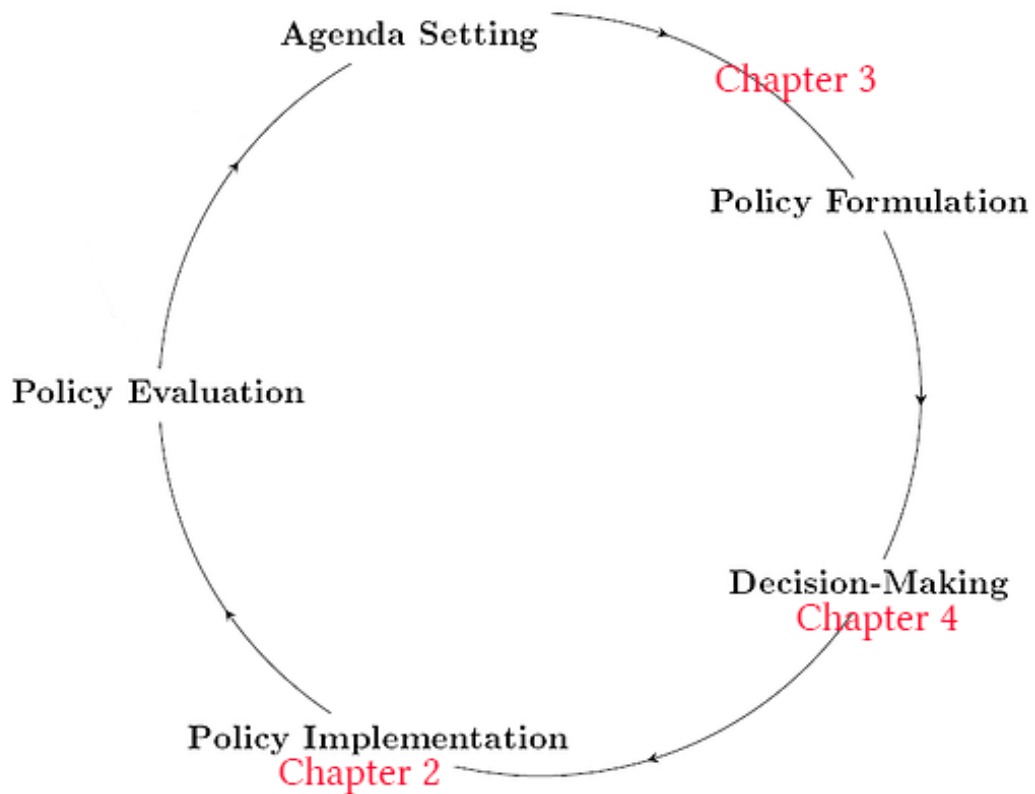
In the empirical studies, I examine two specific types of GEP: non-quota gender representation policies and anti LGBTI hate crime policy. Italy resisted the “quota fever” until their adoption at the national level in 2017. In 1999, other policy instruments based on financial incentives were implemented in the place of quotas, as positive action had been banned by a sentence of the Constitutional Court in 1995. Chapter 2 examines the effects of this gender representation policy based on financial incentives, while chapter 3 explores the policy process that led to the adoption of this rather weak policy instrument. Both chapters focus on the resistance of actors opposed to this policy. Chapter 4 then turns to a bill against LGBTI hate crimes proposed in 2020, the so-called ZAN bill. The chapter analyses a case of policy failure and the discursive politics around LGBTI rights in the Italian parliamentary arena.

The two policies focalized stand for distinct and complementary points at which resistance to GEPs can be studied in the Italian context. Non-quota mechanisms have been around for long enough to study their implementation and place them in the context of an established literature evaluating the outcomes of these kinds of policy (Francheset, Krook, & Piscopo, 2012; Hughes, Krook, & Paxton, 2015; Lang et al., 2023) (see ch. 2). The case study also serves to exemplify different forms of quiet resistance which took place at various points of the policy’s trajectory (formulation, adoption, and implementation). The specific proposal for LGBTI hate crime legislation, the ZAN bill, examined in chapter 4, is interesting because it exemplifies important dynamics of loud resistance in the Italian setting. Although generally, anti-violence policy is been considered as a less controversial field than other GEPs (e.g. such concerning reproductive rights and same-sex marriage), the ZAN bill garnered intense opposition both in the form of public mobilization and direct resistance in parliamentary debates.

In this way, the case selection allows us to examine resistance happening at different points of the policy cycle. As has long been established, policymaking comprises the articulation of social issues as political problems, policy formulation, adoption, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation – steps usually summarized as parts of the policy cycle. As fig. 6 shows, the

three empirical studies look at resistance at the agenda-setting, adoption, and implementation stage, each characterized by specific dynamics and actors.

Figure 6: Situating the chapters in the policy cycle



Source: author's elaboration

1.5. Methods and data

The complex way and multiple dimensions in which opposition to gender+ equality policies may take shape along the policy process (Biolcati-Rinaldi et al., 2020) requires a pragmatic approach in which the selection of methods derives from the aim of understanding these processes in the specific context in which they take place. Accordingly, for the empirical analysis of this work I have opted for a triangulation of different methods of data collection and data analysis. Following Ayoub and colleagues I understand triangulation as “the use of multiple research methods and types of data to analyse the same research problem” (Verloo, 2018a). In addition, triangulation can also be extended to the combination of different theories and concepts, as far as this combination allows the researcher to paint a more holistic

picture of the phenomena lying at the core of their study, enhancing the possibility for sound explanations or, as in this case, deeper understanding (2014, p. 68).

In the empirical chapters, I employed a triangulation of mainly qualitative methodologies combining different types of data with different modes of analysis. These include a qualitative content analysis of textual documents and interview data (Ayoub et al., 2014) in chapter 2; a historical feminist institutionalist analysis combining secondary data with in-depth interviews with political actors, speeches and documents in chapter 3; and a frame analysis of parliamentary speeches triangulate with a qualitative content analysis of policy documents and elites interviews in chapter 4. Throughout this work, I will be drawing on multiple primary and secondary data sources related to the case and questions at hand. An overview of the documents and interview data analysed are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Overview of the research material

Ch.	Main documents	Interviews
2	Parties' Balance Sheets 1999-2021 (N=146) Treasurers' Reports 1999-2021 (N=146)	Party treasurers (N=2) MPs involved in electoral reform (N = 2) Bureaucrats (N = 3)
3	MPs interventions in the 1999 Debate on the Reform of Party Finances Reports from the Women Policy Agency (WPA)	Femocrats (N=2) Feminist activist (N=2) Experts (N=2)
4	Debates in the Italian Parliament (N=15) MPs interventions in Debates (N=394) Draft bills (N= 17) Commission Reports (N = 10)	MPs (N=3)

1.4.1. Semi-structured interviews

An important data source for this thesis consisted of interviews with key informants involved in or informed about policy processes, which I selected through a purposeful sampling strategy (Coffey, 2014; Schreier, 2013). In chapter 2, these key informants were mainly parties' treasurers and bureaucrats involved in the implementation of gender-targeted public funding, as well as members of parliament (MPs) involved in reform of the electoral law and advocates for the introduction of quotas. For the research presented in chapter 3, I interviewed previous presidents of the National Commission for Equality and Equal Opportunities for Man and

Woman, one of the main Italian Women Policy Agencies (WPAs) of those times, who were at the same time MPs very much involved in the effort of gendering Italian institutions and policy-making. Femocrats, in other words (Rapley, 2014). I also interviewed feminist activists who were active in the Italian feminist movement since the 1970s, but also participated in the workings of the above mentioned WPA. Beyond elite interviews,²⁰ I also conducted some expert interviews, targeting academics or personalities whose professional background assured them in-deep knowledge of my topic of interest. In chapter 4 the perspective of three MPs with first-hand knowledge of the process leading to the failure of the ZAN bill provided invaluable background information. The object of the interviews was diverse for each chapter; thus, the questions were crafted upon each participant's expertise, but throughout, the aim was to gain rich contextual and specialist knowledge about the determinants, or the consequences, of the observed policy outcomes.

I employed two distinct forms of interviewing. In cases where mainly specialist information was sought (as in the case of party treasurers and bureaucrats), semi-structured interviews with a rigid set of questions were conducted.²¹ In other cases, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews (McBride & Mazur, 2010), characterized by a more conversational style that left respondents space to develop extensive narratives wherever historical and biographical reconstructions were required. While the former type of interview data was particularly central to chapter 2, chapter 3 and 4 rely mainly on the latter type. I developed a consent form with the purpose of providing to the participants information about the objectives of the research project and about the processes of data usage and storage (see Appendix 4). I usually agreed with the interview partners to record our conversations and disclose their identity. Only in a couple of cases I was asked to grant anonymity or I was not given permission to record. In this last case, the analysis is based on my field notes only. The consent of all

²⁰ Without entering in a discussion of what constitute an "elite" and where the boundaries of this social category can be drawn (Varesi, 2013, cited in Ozzano and Giorgi 2016), I followed the *decisional method* (on this, see Hoffmann-Lange, 2009) to elite identification, according to which are considered elites all the most consequential actors involved in the broad decision-making processes for a specific policy issue. This is why I consider also my interviews with feminist activists as "elite interviews", insofar as they were relevant actors in this process.

²¹ In one case, the interview was eventually conducted via mail, given the impossibility of obtaining a face-to-face appointment.

respondents to take part in the research was documented in consent forms or confirmed orally at the beginning of the recordings (all documentation available upon request).

Certain issues I encountered in the making of the interviews concerned field access, the non-substitutability of informants, and trust and asymmetry in the interview relation.

Politicians are notoriously difficult interview subjects. Their visibility and position are a double-edged sword for researchers. Surely, it makes it easier for us to identify suitable participants because many of their activities and involvement in terms of policy and political activity are of public domain. The visibility also imply that in most cases, politicians are too busy for, and not enough interested in, sitting down and discuss with an academic for some time (della Porta, 2014).

In my research I tried to be as creative as possible in creating access,²² nonetheless many requests for interviews I sent to political parties and politicians were left unanswered or rejected outright. This resulted, I believe, from the fact that I was transparent about my interest in highly charged and problematic issues: money, and gender representation and sexuality (politics). As has been noted in many previous studies, talking about financial practices is a dicey issue. Italian parties are usually very jealous of their internal practices and finances (Cowley, 2021). This is even more the case for parties, like Lega and Forza Italia, recently involved in corruption scandals and embezzlement charges. Especially for parties of the right, this came on top of another thorny topic, that of sexuality and gender balance in their organization. Overall, centre-right and radical right actors were less responsive than centre-left and leftist ones (interview lists in the Appendix documents all interviews sought, obtained and declined). Especially where certain individual informants (like treasurers) or members of very small circles with highly specialised knowledge could not be substituted, this lack of access created considerable problems. In some cases, access could be secured by a referral from one interviewee to the next, but this was not always possible. This non-substitutability issue was one of the reasons I opted for a triangulation strategy and a combination of interview with documentary data.

²² I used a variety of techniques: sending interview requests to institutional email accounts; calling party secretariats and parliamentary groups offices; direct contact through social media pages and accounts; connections through gatekeepers, in particular journalists and parliamentary assistants.

In addition, politicians are difficult interviewees as their occupational role predisposes them to presenting a staged and ‘cleaned up’ or strategically modified version of events and opinions that might differ significantly from their off-stage knowledge, opinions, and behaviour (Ignazi, 2013). Establishing a certain level of trust is crucial to overcome the “political talk” (Berry, 2002), which really constitutes an obstacle for the validity of the interviews as such. In the case of the interviews used in chapter 4, for instance, I anticipated that the interviewed politicians would focus only on defending their own role in what was ultimately a failed political intervention (the ZAN bill). I sought to overcome this problem with a technique inspired by the “critical feminist friend approach” (Chappell 2020; Chappell and Mackay 2021): It consisted in telling the interviewees at the beginning of the interview that I sympathized with their cause and sought to understand the reasons for the bill’s failure and not in analysing or “judging” their personal involvement, shifting the attention from defensiveness and blame attribution to a collaborative reconstruction of political dynamics.

1.4.2. Documentary data

Documentary data consisted of balance sheets and treasurers’ reports from the period of 1999-2021 (chapter 2), parliamentary interventions and reports from the Women Policy Agency (WPA) kindly made available by one of the interviewees (chapter 3), as well as parliamentary debates and surrounding documents (chapter 4). While the balance sheets were employed to build a dataset, employed in chapter 2 (for variables used in the analysis, see appendix A1.2), I analysed the rest of the documents resorting to various methods, as detailed in the respective chapters. I employed a combination qualitative content analysis (Schreirer, 2013), reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and frame analysis (Benford & Snow 2000). While the former is useful for descriptively systematizing patterns in the data, the latter two introduce an element of double hermeneutics (Giddens 1984), in the sense that it aims at reconstructing how actors seek to strategically constitute discursive objects of meaning. In other words, the researcher’s interpretive efforts encounter interpretive efforts of its objects which follow a distinct logic that needs to be accounted for reflexively.

2. Promoting Gender Equality through Party Funding. Symbolic Policies at Work?²³

Given the growing importance of state subsidies as a source of party income, several countries have introduced policies that link the provision of party funding to the promotion of gender equality in political representation. Variations in the assignment of public funding – financial incentives and cuts – are increasingly employed to promote equal gender participation in intra-party politics and in public office. However, we know little about why and how these equality promotion policies have been adopted in different countries, and how they work in practice. To contribute to this debate, the chapter concentrates on the case of Italy. First, I situate gender-targeted public funding measures in the broader set of gender representation policies. Then I present a comparative overview of existing laws in EU countries, and present the evolution of Italian regulation on gender electoral financing. In the empirical part, I analyse the extent to which Italian parties have complied with the rules over time, and how the implementation of the law went about. The results of the analysis show that this set of policy instrument is nothing more than symbolic policy. Two factors contribute to this outcome. On the one hand, the lack of appropriate mechanism of sanctions and rewards that can induce parties to change their behaviour, as a result of a poor policy design; on the other, the lack of “political will” of Italian parties to comply with the new rules.

2.1 Introduction

Given the proliferation of public funding schemes and the growing importance of state subsidies as a source of income for political parties, policy makers have an important instrument at their disposal to influence the behaviour of the recipients of these subsidies. Indeed, an increasing number of countries have introduced conditionalities that parties must respect if they wish to receive funding from the state purse. Linking the provision of public subsidies to the establishment of intra-party democracy, or to the parties’ commitment to the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms are just few examples (for the case of Belgium see Weekers, Maddens, & Noppe, 2009). More recently, a smaller group of European countries have introduced instruments within gender representation policies that link the reception of public

²³ A previous version of this chapter, presenting data until 2012, has been published as Feo and Piccio (Feo & Piccio, 2020b).

funding to gender equality norms. These policy instruments, which following Ohman (2018) I call gender-targeted public funding (GTPF) measures, acknowledge the pivotal role that political parties hold as gatekeepers to public institutions. In fact, parties are directly – and almost exclusively – in charge of the political recruitment process. At the same time, they also recognize that political parties are “institutionally sexist organizations” (Lovenduski, 2005a, p. 48) that reproduce gendered social norms that see women as less qualified, less fitted and less willing to participate in politics. Hence, variations in the assignment of public funding – in the form of rewards (additional budget) or penalties (budget cuts) – are employed as a lever to modify the “demand” side of the political recruitment process (Lovenduski & Norris, 1993), encouraging parties to promote women’s participation in party and parliamentary activities.

Notwithstanding their increasingly diffuse and potential impact, this form of political representation policy (Mazur 2002) have only recently received some attention in academics circles, despite the interest of practitioners in the field of democracy-building (Childs, 2013; Everitt & Albaugh, 2022; Kayuni & Muriaas, 2014; Muriaas, Mazur, & Hoard, 2021; Muriaas, Wang, & Murray, 2020; van Biezen & Rashkova, 2013). In this chapter, I aim to fill this gap and contribute, both theoretically and empirically, to the literature at the crossroads of gender representation policies and political finance regulation, by focusing on the Italian case. Italy is one of the European countries with the longest history of GTPF measures, as well as the country that has introduced the widest array of instruments linking public funding to women’s equality promotion. In particular, I focus on the evolution of the legal framework of GTPF and empirically assess party compliance with these rules, from their introduction in 1999 to 2021. Given the results of the analysis, I argue that financial instruments (Bemelmans-Videc, Rist, & Vedung, 1998) can contribute to providing a response to the under-representation of women in political life only they constitute effective perks or losses, so as to be perceived as an incentive or a deterrent for party organizations (Mazur, Lépinard, Durovic, Achin, & Lévêque, 2020). Moreover, the “will” of political actors in complying to the rules is also a crucial factor for the instruments’ effectiveness. When these conditions are not met, as with the Italian GTPF legislation, these are nothing more than symbolic policies, namely policies put forward by policy-makers more interested in “image-making than problem-solving”, resulting in “policy statements with no teeth” (Mazur, 1995, p. 2).

The chapter begins by embedding GTPF measures within the broader framework of political representation policies. In section 2, I provide a comparative overview of existing GTPF rules in the European Union (EU) and provide details on case selection and data collection. In section 3 I present the Italian experience with GTPF, examine the evolution of the Italian legal framework around it, and empirically assess the extent to which the Italian parties have complied with the rules over time. In the conclusion, I discuss the broader implications of the research findings.

2.2 Theorizing political representation policies and GTPF

Different policy instruments have been introduced to address the inequalities between men's and women's positions in society and to increase women's political representation. Scholars have typically focused on reserved seats and electoral quotas²⁴. The adoption of these policies has stimulated important discussions among scholars on their effects in terms of women's descriptive and substantive representation (Francheset et al., 2012; Krook, 2009; Meier, 2004; Verge, 2015). However, there is unanimous agreement on the fact that the establishment of quotas alone will not solve the problem of women's underrepresentation in politics, which is evidently connected to the persistence of traditional gender roles nested in what feminist theorists call the "public/private divide". The increasing liberalization of societies since the 1960s has changed the pervasiveness and the legitimacy of this divide (Inglehart & Norris, 2003), but the understanding that politics is by and large men's domain remains an important factor affecting women's political ambitions, and their participation in politics (Ammassari, McDonnell, & Valbruzzi, 2022; Lawless & Fox, 2010; cf. Piscopo & Kenny, 2020; Preece, Stoddard, & Fisher, 2016). In order to close the supposed "ambition gap" and upturn male dominance of political spaces and institutions, a variety of complementary and mutually reinforcing policy strategies are needed at different stages of political recruitment (Howlett & Rayner, 2013; Krook & Norris, 2014). Without aiming to be exhaustive, among the "wide inventory of tactics available for promoting women in politics beyond quotas" (Krook & Norris, 2014, p. 3), we could name awareness-raising campaigns, symbolic actions within political institutions, actions to address violence against women in politics, capacity development

²⁴ As we focus on policy solutions, voluntary party quotas are not considered in the present analysis. See (Krook, 2009) for a typology.

programs, party and legislative quotas, and party funding regulations as well as campaign support opportunities (Hermanin et al., 2022; Verge & de la Fuente, 2014).

This chapter sheds light on one of these alternative instruments to gender quotas, which has received very limited attention so far: gender-targeted public funding (GTPF)²⁵. GTPF specifically refers to rules that link the use and distribution of state funding to political parties to gender equality measures. Even if virtually all European countries provide state funding to political parties (van Biezen & Kopecký, 2017) only a few of them link public funding provisions to the promotion of gender equality. Yet, financial instruments – in the shape of public funding scheme – can be regarded as a powerful instrument to push political parties, the key gatekeepers for accessing political institutions, to undertake reforms that promote women’s equality. This is especially the case in the light of a dual and possibly mutually reinforcing development that has characterized the organizational environment of political parties in the last decades (cf. Katz & Mair, 1995, 2009). The sinking levels of partisan-political participation across almost all European democracies, and the emergence of new forms of party membership, has led to a decline in membership subscriptions and other types of voluntary contributions that constituted the economic “core” of the traditional party organizations (cf. Delwitt, 2011; Scarrow, 2015; van Biezen, Mair, & Poguntke, 2012; van Haute, 2011). As a consequence, European political parties are increasingly dependent on resources from the public purse, with aggregate national figures of state dependency exceeding 70% of the total party income in a number of national cases (Piccio, 2014). In such a context, where “the state has become the driving force behind the increased resource endowment of contemporary European political parties” (Piccio & van Biezen, 2018, p. 73), I believe that parties can be expected to be particularly sensitive and compliant when it comes to rules that regulate their access to public money.

Following Lovenduski’s distinction among “equality rhetoric, equality promotion and equality guarantees strategies” (see also Krook & Norris, 2014; Lovenduski, 2005a), in Figure 1 I placed GTPF measures along a spectrum of the strength of state intervention in women’s equality

²⁵ Legislation may either refer to “women” or “the under-represented gender”. In line with the terminology used by scholars and the international community of practitioners, I use the term “gender” instead of “women” throughout this chapter. I am aware, however, that my analytical focus here is really on women and not on gender (Kantola & Lombardo, 2017).

policies. Let us briefly recall Lovenduski's threefold classification. Equality rhetoric strategies involve the acceptance of women's claims as part of the language of formal politics. These policies, which Mazur and Edelman defined as "symbolic policies", may be beneficial for women, as they have the potential to frame political thinking and impact broader attitudes and beliefs, but they do not imply the adoption of policy instruments for changing the status quo. In their words, symbolic policies do not they entail efforts for their implementation on the part of the government (Edelman, 1985), resulting in the fact that they do not actively pursue equality as a substantive outcome (Mazur, 1995). Equality promotion strategies entail active attempts to bring more women into politics by effectively facilitating their ability to compete for office. This includes offering training or financial assistance to women candidates, but also the establishment of quotas within party structures or for electoral lists. Finally, equality guarantee strategies secure places for women representatives. They imply the adoption of "more interventionist" policies (Buckley, 2013, p. 342), such as reserved lists or quotas for the percentage of women elected to national parliaments²⁶. As shown in Figure 1, GTPF instruments are to be placed under the headings of both promotion and equality guarantee strategies, their exact positioning depending on the specific "settings" of the policy instruments adopted.

²⁶ The distinction between the introduction of legislated quotas for the number of women elected to parliament or for the number of women candidates is important. Only the former constitute an example of equality guarantee strategies (Campbell, Childs, & Lovenduski, 2006; Lovenduski, 2005b)



Equality rhetoric

- Elite discourse on women’s equality
- Awareness-raising campaigns
- Adoption of laws to punish violence against women in politics

Equality promotion

- Training programmes
- Electoral quotas (in candidate lists)
- Establishment of women’s policy agencies
- Financial assistance to women candidates
- Compulsory party quotas

Equality guarantees

- Reserved seats
- Electoral quotas (in parliaments)
- Women’s caucuses

GTPF MEASURES		
Type 1: Women’s participation promotion	Type 2: Women candidate promotion	Type 3: Women MPs promotion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public funding to parties earmarked for the promotion of women’s activities (i.e.: recruitment, training; policy development programmes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public funding to parties linked to percentage of women candidates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public funding to parties linked to percentage of women elected

Figure 7: Strategies for the promotion of women in politics

Following this scheme, I distinguish among three main types of GTPF measures. The first type includes financial instruments for the promotion of women's participation in politics, by allotting a given amount of the public funding that political parties receive to specific initiatives and activities favouring women's participation in politics. I envision a broad array of activities falling within this category, ranging from political training for aspirants, to the holding of policy-themed workshops for women, and partisan recruitment activities. A second type of measure links financial incentives – either benefits or fines – to the percentage of female candidates that parties nominate on their electoral lists. Such policies may either provide bonuses to parties in the form of additional funding, if they nominate a given percentage of female candidates on their lists, or they may prescribe economic sanctions, reducing the amount of public funding available to parties if they fail to do so, following a stick-and-carrot approach (Bemelmans-Vidéc et al., 1998). This second type of GTPF thus aims at the promotion of women candidates in electoral nominations. A third type of measure – GTPF type III – instead connects the dispensing of public funding to the election of women in parliaments. Here too, the tools adopted may consist of either bonuses or sanctions, in the shape of additional money or budget cuts. In this scenario, the amount of public funding received by parties can be either increased or decreased depending on the number of women elected to public office.

In Figure 1, “women's participation promotion” and “women candidates' promotion” measures are positioned under the equality promotion strategies. In fact, they promote women's equality by introducing incentive mechanisms that encourage parties to foster women's participation in politics and apply a more equal gender balance in the selection of candidates, but they do not secure parliamentary places. When the distribution of public funding is conditional on the percentage of women elected to national parliaments, as “women MPs promotion” does, then GTPF instruments reflect the equality guarantee strategy. It follows that the different types of GTPF measures may reach broader scopes with regards to women representation contrary to other policies, which target more specific objectives. As shown different designs of GTPF measures address women's participation at different levels: the voters as potential political aspirants, the party members, the candidates and the MPs. By doing so, it may potentially address issues of substantive representation, by

suggesting to political parties to focus on policy development and engage in discussion about equality (Childs, 2013).

Hence, if GTPF instruments are only a specific subset among gender equality policies, they can impact on women's representation in many ways, as different GTPF instruments can provide multiple venues for policy-makers to attempt at influencing parties' internal gendered behaviour and homosocial norms, which are indeed very persistent (e.g. Bjarnegård, 2013; Chiva, 2018; Connell, 2005; Kenny, 2013; Kenny & Verge, 2016; Verge, 2015; Verge & de la Fuente, 2014). The literature on quota mechanisms in gender representation policies has shown that quotas very often underperform the expected results, even when these are voluntarily adopted by political parties (Dahlerup, 2006; for Italy, Pansardi & Pedrazzani, 2022). According to Krook (2016), quotas – and policy mechanisms – for gender-balanced representation are resisted because they challenge male power, and resistance very often is based on “false universalist claims”. However, political parties can also strategically support gender-balanced representation driven by opportunistic motivations. For example, populist radical right parties seem to strategically promote gender descriptive representation when they are struggling electorally and when suffering from a gender gap in support (Weeks, Meguid, Kittilson, & Coffé, 2022). Under this light, gender targeted public funding can find a rationale in the opportunistic and strategic nature of political parties (Müller & Strøm, 1999), and act as an additional incentive for parties to change their internal practices with regards to women's participation in politics. Whether, and the extent to which this effect is achieved is the empirical question I seek to answer in the following sections.

2.3 A comparative overview on the adoption of GTPF measures

As mentioned before, EU countries have largely overlooked the possibility of linking the public funding of political parties to gender equality measures. GTPF measures are only present in Croatia, France, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Romania. Table 1 provides an overview of EU countries that adopted GTPF measures, when they were introduced, and in which form – type I, type II or type III (a complete overview and data sources are presented in Appendix A1.1. Muriaas and colleagues provides an overview on a global scale (Muriaas et al., 2021).

In the following section, I discuss the evolution of GTPF policies and the extent to which they have contributed to changing the incentive structure of political parties and incentivise women’s political participation, focusing on the specific case of Italy. Italy creates a perfect case study for assessing the effect and validity of GTPF instruments: the country is the only EU Member State where all three types of measures are present (see Table 2). Contextually, it is also one of the countries in Europe where political parties have been mostly dependent on state funding (see Piccio, 2014), thus creating the potential for a strong structure of incentives for political parties to break gendered behaviours. Moreover, it is the country (along with France) with the longest history of GTPF measures in Europe, which allows us to observe and evaluate the results of this policy over a long timeframe (Mazur, 2017). This is particularly relevant in the case of culturally-embedded policy fields such as that of gender representation, whose impact on politics may require more time to have an effect (Murray, 2012). Lastly, Italian parties’ reliance on public funding changed dramatically after 2014. As discussed below, a new law (law 13/2014) gradually repealed direct public funding. Since 2017, political parties only rely on indirect of public funding – in the form of revenues coming from tax payers’ deductions (2x1000). This evolution of the public funding regime provides with at least two scenarios to evaluate the effects of gender targeted public funding. In the following section, I will briefly elucidate on the mechanisms of different types of GTPF in Italy.

Table 2: GTPF Measures in EU Member States*

Countries	Type 1: Women’s participation promotion	Type 2: Women candidates	Type 3: Women MPs promotion
Croatia		♀ (2003; 2008)	
France		♀ (2000; 2007; 2014)	
Ireland		♀ (2012)	
Italy	♀ (1999; 2012; 2014)	♀ (2012; 2014)	♀ (2014)
Portugal		♀ (2006)	
Romania			♀ (2006)

Source: Author’s elaboration. See appendix A1.1.

* Years of adoption and following amendments/reforms in parenthesis.

2.4 GTPF instruments in Italy

Gender representation policies have gone through a complicate and bumpy path in the Italian context (Donà, 2018). While gender quota policies for the local and national level were introduced at the beginning of the 1990s, a sentence of the Constitutional Court in 1995 declared these measure unconstitutional, as they violated the principle of formal equality stipulated in Article 51 of the Italian Constitution (D'Amico, 2011). After a fairly lively debate among jurists, academics and leftist politicians (Beccalli, 1999), art. 51 of the Constitution was amended in 2003 to include the possibility to adopt positive actions for combating different forms of inequalities. Following this reform of the country's fundamental law, equal opportunities for men and women could actively be promoted. In the following years, electoral quotas were introduced for the first time for the elections to the European Parliament, the regional councils, and the national parliament²⁷. Yet, these reforms came very gradually, and especially gender quotas for national elections were introduced in 2017, and employed for the first time in 2018 National elections. All in all, Italy is one of the few countries that resisted the "quota fever" until well into the 2000s (Dahlerup, 2005). As a consequence, Italy also remained one of the countries in Europe with the lowest level of women descriptive representation in the national parliament (see figure 8).

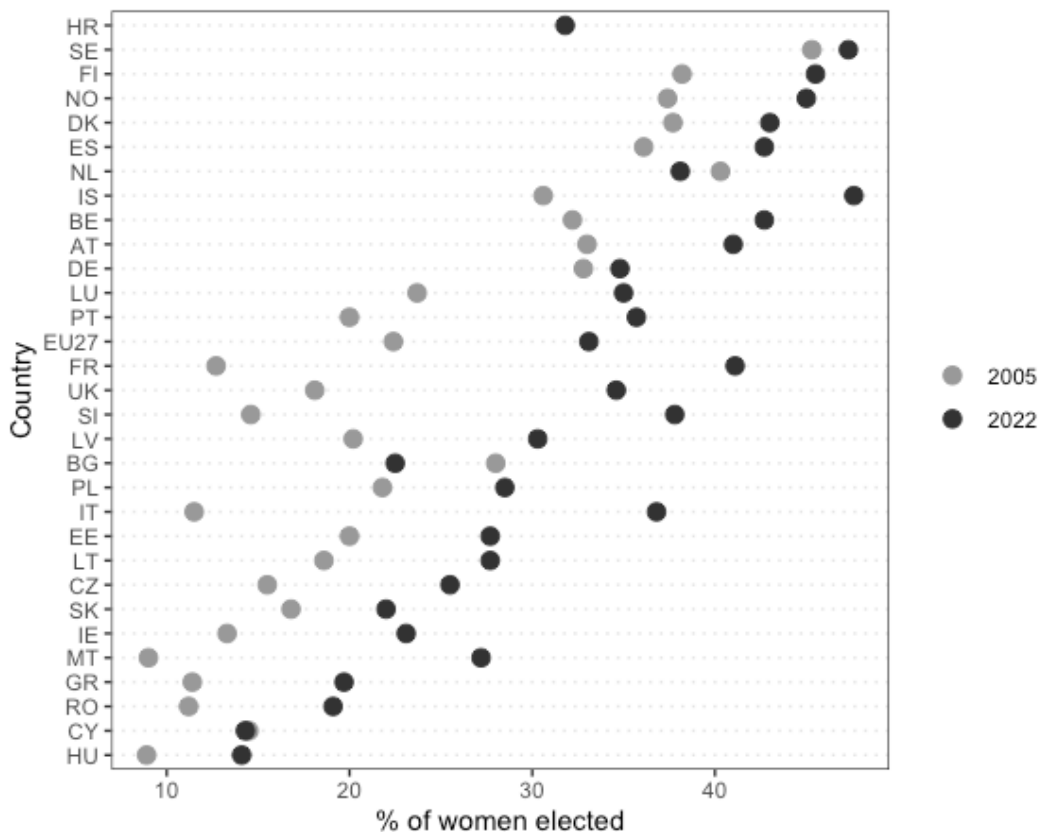
It is in the absence of legislative quotas that measures linking the provision of public funding for political parties to women's political participation promotion were adopted in 1999 (see also chapter 3).

Under Article 3 of Law 157/1999, parties that are eligible for receiving electoral reimbursement should spend at least 5% of the total amount received from the public purse in "initiatives to promote women's active participation in politics". This instrument can be categorized as a "women's participation promotion" measure (type 1), as it promotes gender equality by calling for the more active intervention of parties in order to overcome the barriers to women's political participation, and it raises awareness of the central role parties can play in overcoming them. The law also included a (very) mild oversight mechanism, as parties were obliged to introduce a specific budget item in their annual financial reports in order to record

²⁷ For the European Parliament elections, Law 90/2009, amended by Law 65/2014; for the Regional Councils, Law 215/2012; for the national parliament, Law 165/2017.

the amount of money employed for activities for the promotion of women’s participation in politics. However, penalties and sanctions in cases of noncompliance were not established.

Figure 8: Percentage of women elected in national parliaments in EU-27 and EEA countries, comparison 2005 and 2022



Source: EIGE gender statistics database. Indicator G1 “G1a. The proportion of women in the single/lower houses of the national/federal Parliaments of the Member States”. Author’s elaboration.

In 2012, a new law reformed the Italian political finance regime. Law 96/2012 simultaneously strengthened the 1999 rule and expanded the scope of GTPF legislation to include a new type of measure. With regards to the former, the law introduced sanctions for parties that did not comply with the 5% spending obligation discussed above: non-compliant parties had to return one-twentieth of the public funding they received. With reference to the latter, the latest intervention linked for the first time the provision of public funding to the promotion of

women candidates (type 2), setting a 5% reduction of public funding to those parties that did not comply with 30% gender quotas.

A third type of GTPF instrument was introduced in 2014 with the most recent amendment to the Italian party funding regime (law 13/2014). This new GTPF instrument aimed at increasing the number of elected women. The 2014 reform also strengthened the coerciveness of the two GTPF measures already in place. Indeed, following on from the promotion of women's participation in party activities introduced in 1999 (type 1), both the threshold of earmarked spending as well as the sanctions for non-compliant parties were raised to 10%. As for the promotion of women candidates (type 2), the gender quotas for the parties' electoral lists were raised from 30 to 40%. Finally, the new GTPF measure that was introduced provides additional public funding for those parties that manage to elect more than 40% of women from their electoral lists (type 3).

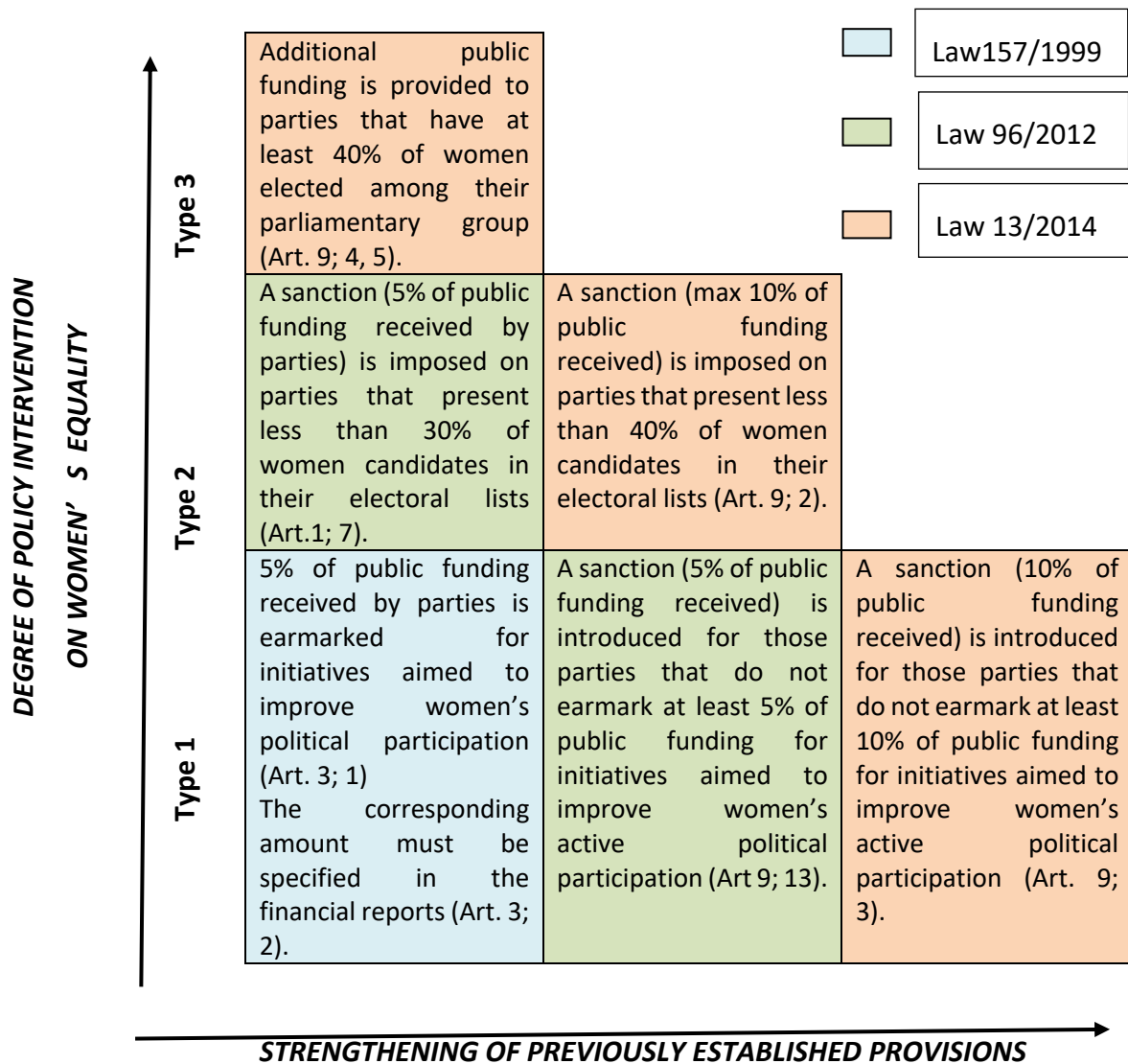
As shown in figure 9, GTPF measures in Italy seem to follow an incremental logic of policy change, where new norms strengthen previously existing ones and at the same time expand the scope of policy intervention regarding women's equality one step further (Howlett & Rayner, 2013). Indeed, not only has the level of coercion gradually increased, but the very policy goals have become more specifically oriented towards the representation of women in parliament over time.

Yet, this growing focus on the promotion of women's equality and the acknowledgment that public funding can provide the viable instruments for pursuing it stand in sharp contrast to the concomitant evolution of the Italian public funding regime, of which GTPF tools form a part. Indeed, following a number of reforms that lowered the level of public funding to political parties from 2008 onwards, the latest amendment to the Italian funding regulations in 2014 repealed all forms of direct public funding to political parties²⁸. What has remained for parties in terms of state benefits are funds provided to parliamentary groups, tax breaks for private donations, free airtime with public broadcasting services, and a system that allows taxpayers

²⁸ Several reasons for this repeal of direct public funding to political parties can be mentioned: the economic crisis that exploded in 2008; the re-emergence of incidents of corruption and bribery; the polarization of the political debate on the issue and the pressing requests to abolish party funding by a newly emerged and highly successful political competitor, the 5 Star Movement. For a more detailed discussion of the evolution of the party funding regime in Italy, see Pizzimenti, 2018.

to earmark 0.2% of their taxable income as a contribution to one eligible political party. Following the 2014 reform, the latter has become the primary source for pursuing GTPF measures. Hence, whereas Italy used to rank third only behind Spain and Belgium among the European countries in the dependency of political parties on state subsidies (see Piccio, 2014, p.11), thus constituting an ideal setting for linking the provision of state funding to the promotion of women's equality, these instruments are now in place in a completely changed structure. This change open space for two opposite possibilities: one the one hand, it is possible that, given the significant lowering in parties' income share coming from the state, both sanctions and benefits provided by GTPF measures have become irrelevant for changing the incentive structure of political parties. On the other hand, it is possible to envision also the opposite scenario: if public funding is substantially reduced, but it still constitutes the most important source of income for political parties, the effects of incentives and cuts provided by GTPF instruments may be amplified. Political parties may have an hard time in renouncing to even a modest income.

Figure 9: The Italian legal framework on GTPF



2.4 Methodological note

In the analysis, I explore how Italian parties have complied with the GTPF measures between 1999 and 2021. The analysis combines documentary analysis with elite interviews' data. I employed parties' financial reports to build a dataset containing different piece of information about parties' financial expenses and income (see Appendix A1.2. for information about the variables included). The quantitative analysis of financial reports is aimed at verify if and how political parties have respected GTPF type 1 instruments. Then, I relied on parties' "official story", – parties' official financial reports, the explanatory memorandum produced by party

treasurers, and other official documents to assess qualitatively which type of activities parties have sponsored for the promotion of women's political participation. Second also included documents issued by the so-called Transparency Commission²⁹, to verify whether sanctions (funding reduction) and incentives (additional funding) have been effectively applied. I conducted a qualitative content analysis of the documents following Margit Schreirer's systematization of the method (2013). This method is very useful when it comes to systematically describe the meaning of qualitative data. It is based on a coding procedure aimed at data reduction – that is the selection of only relevant parts from the overall research material – but also a certain degree of flexibility so to ensure that coding categories and subcategories provide a valid description of the material (ibid., 171). All relevant information about the documentary data is available in the appendix (A1.1).

The mixed-method analysis of party documents was triangulated with elite interviews data, in order to get a more fine-grained understanding about how parties have dealt with GTPF instruments. For this reason, I chose to focus on key informants – political party treasurers, national MPs involved in the process of policy design and bureaucrats working for the bodies monitoring over the implementation of these instruments. In agreement with the interviewees, I anonymized the interviews when requested, by disclosing only the position and role they held. Further details are provided in Appendix A1.3. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, I encountered some obstacles in obtaining interviews with party treasurers of centre-right and radical right parties. The sampling strategy adopted and the sensitivity of the subject implied that some of the chosen interview partners could not be replaced. In fact, party financial internal practices are sensitive issues and usually managed among few people among the party bureaucrats. However, the triangulation between different data sources strengthens the validity of the analysis.

I focused on the major political parties that competed in Italian elections throughout the period observed, covering the entire left-right political spectrum. The Italian party system had still not recovered from the dramatic changes that took place in the early 1990s, when the

²⁹ The “Commission for the Guarantee of Statutes and for Transparency and Accountability of Political Parties”, as introduced by the new party finance law approved in 2014 (law 13/2014). Official Commission website: <https://www.parlamento.it/1057>

“cleans hands” judicial investigation revealed the diffusion of corrupt practices and led to the fall of almost all parties established after WWII. In the context of the long-term de-institutionalization of the Italian party system (Chiaramonte & Emanuele, 2015), many of the parties that were considered as relevant actors by the late 1990s experienced mergers, splits and processes of internal restructuring, while genuinely new actors –the most prominent being the Five Star Movement – emerged. This continuous reshuffling of individual parties makes tracing the way in which single party organizations have dealt with GTPF instruments over time quite complex. In order to trace the organizational continuity of the individual political parties, I adopt the largest successor/predecessor method (Mainwaring, Gervasoni & España-Najera, 2017). Accordingly, I consider the party resulting from a merger to be the continuation of the largest of the predecessor parties. Conversely, in the case of a split, I consider the largest successor as the continuation of the previously existing party. Indeed, it is often the case that parties resulting from mergers and splits inherit their organizational assets from the parties that preceded them, thus making it possible to trace organizational continuity between formally different organizations (Bartolini & Mair, 1990; Bolleyer, 2013). I therefore included the following parties: the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC); Left, Ecology and Liberty and its successor Italian Left (SEL-SI); the Democratic Party (PD) and its predecessor, the Democrats of the Left (1998-2007); the Union of the Christians of the Centre (UDC) and its predecessor, the Christian Democrats Centre (CCD) (1994-2002); Go, Italy! (FI)³⁰; the League (former Northern League, LN); and the National Alliance (AN) and its successor (from December 2013) Brothers of Italy (Fdi). Finally, I included the most prominent newcomer to the Italian party system, the Five Star Movement. Since its debut in institutional politics in 2009 the party refused all forms of direct state funding and is hence not required to comply with the GTPF rules (neither to present annual financial reports to the accounting bodies).³¹ I include the party nonetheless for an indirect comparison with other parties for

³⁰ Berlusconi’s party Go, Italy merged with the far-right party National Alliance in 2009, forming the People of Liberty party. However, the merger was short-lived, and by 2011 the two parties split again. FI was re-founded in 2013. For the analysis of GTPF type 1 we consider financial reports until 2009.

³¹ The party, after the numerous changes in its internal organization, leadership and ideological orientation (Padoan, 2022) has recently decided to accept indirect state funding but have not compiled financial reports for the years under observation in the chapter. This is way it is not included in the analysis presented in section 2.5.

what concern their respect of GTPF type 2 and type 3, which are connected to the number of female candidates and MPs elected in parliament.

2.5. Promoting Women's Participation in Party Activities

It should be recalled that according to the GTPF rule introduced in 1999 parties should earmark at least 5% (from 2014, 10%) of the public funds they receive to promote women's initiatives and report this spending item in their annual financial reports. No sanctions were attached to this measure until 2012, as explained in section 3. Indeed, as shown in table 2 (first column), of the six financial reports I was able to examine for 1999 (SEL formed in 2009), only four reported the amount spent for women's participation promotion (DS, CCD, FI and AN). Instead, it took two years after the measure entered into force for LN and three for PRC, to report the women's expenditures item.

Table 3: Public Funding and Women's Participation Promotion (Type 1), 1999-2021

Party	When women spending is first reported? (a)	Parties' overall compliance to the spending requirement (%) (b)
PRC	2002	73
SEL-SI (c)	2010	100
DS-PD	1999	93
CCD-UDC	1999	86
FI (e)	1999	20
LN-Lega	2001	73
AN- FdI	1999	23

Notes:

(a) Note that the obligation to report party spending for women's participation promotion was introduced in 1999.

(b) Compliance percentages are computed by dividing the number of times that the spending threshold was respected over the number of times in which parties should have reported the spending item in their annual financial reports. The years 2015, 2016 and 2017 are excluded because the data do not allow for a clear assessment of parties' compliance with the threshold.

(c) SEL was formed in 2009.

(d) Data for FI are considered until 2009 and from 2013 again. Between 2009 and 2011, FI and AN merged into the "People of Liberty" (PDL). The union lasted only few years, since in 2011 former members of AN left the party. FI was formally re-founded in 2013, after running 2013 parliamentary elections with the label PDL. I have not considered these transition years in our analysis.

Additionally, I found that reporting the spending item in their financial budgets does not imply that the parties acted in agreement with the GTPF type one rule. On the contrary, as shown in the second column of table 3, whether parties respected the spending requirement of 5% varied greatly from one party to the other, with compliance percentages ranging from full compliance to 23%. Also, table 3 shows that left and center-left parties have complied with the norm to a greater extent as compared to their radical right and centre-right competitors, except for the LN and CCD-CDU. This is in line with previous research on the different party families' commitment to gender equality, which showed that leftist parties are usually more sensitive to gender issues and minority rights (Kenny, 2013; Kittilson, 2006; Lovenduski & Norris, 1993; Verge & de la Fuente, 2014)³². In the Italian case, parties' opposition to positive

³² For a discussion on the predictive power of party ideology on women's representation and representation of women's interest in conservative parties see Celis and Child (Celis & Childs, 2018).

actions was very spread across the political spectrum in the 1990s. Parties like the Northern League (NL), National Alliance (AN) and parties of the Christian centre-right have historically opposed positive actions, and were also against the 2003 Constitutional Amendment. The party Forza Italia (FI) have had very divided positions, and it is interesting to note that the Constitutional amendment approved in 2003 was sponsored by the Minister of Equal Opportunities Stefania Prestigiacomo, elected with FI (Guadagnini, 2005). Despite this, LN and CCD-CDU respected the spending norm in 70% and 86% of the cases, demonstrating a fair compliance to the regulation in force.

The left party SEL-SI is the only party that has always respected the earmarking threshold (5% until 2013, 10 % since 2014) followed by the center-left Democratic Party (PD), which respected the threshold in 93% of cases. Considering that SEL-SI was a relatively new party, which was founded in 2010 only, it is fair to argue that the center-left PD, along with its predecessor, has been more inclined to engage in gender equality promotion compared to other leftist parties such as PRC, which respected the spending threshold in 73% of cases. As one of the interviewees, an elected representative of PD and former member of PRC and SEL, explained to me:

To be honest, this issue of gender parity is much more grounded within the Democratic Party rather than other leftist parties I engaged with in the past...I mean...as far as I can see, in words [the commitment] is higher in these [leftist parties], but only in words! In deeds however...the PD is better, also because it has more relevant numbers that mean that women have a different [political] “weight” in the decision-making. [GTPF_INT.4]

Figure 10 shows the funds earmarked for women’s activities from 1999 to 2021. It is possible to separate the analysis of the party compliance with GTPF type one in two periods: between 1999 and 2012, and between 2017 to 2021. (I report the time spans together in figure 10).³³

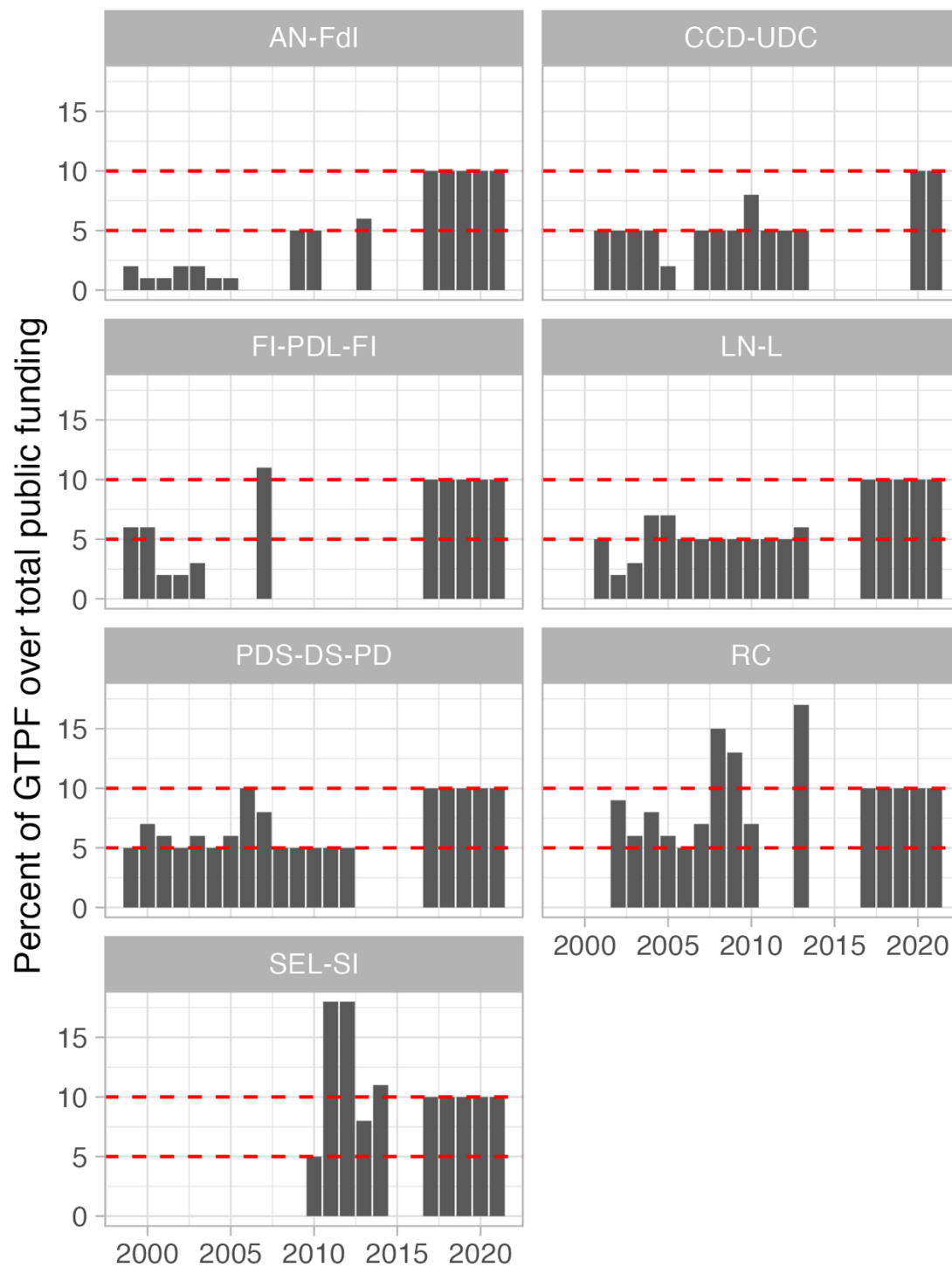
For the first period, until 2012, it is not possible to cannot highlight a clear trend shared by all parties, with the exception of a growing convergence over time towards the earmarking thresholds of 5%. In fact, from 2009 all parties reserved at least 5% of the state subsidies for

³³ I excluded the years 2014, 2015, and 2016 from the analysis because these were transition years between the direct and indirect public funding system of party finance and was not possible to derive the amount of money parties received from different public sources from their financial report.

the financial year on the promotion of women's participation. Some parties present a fairly stable trend over time, such as the LN-Lega and CCD-UDC, often respecting the 5% threshold and seldom exceeding it. AN-Fdi instead, systematically failed to reach the required threshold for over ten financial years. Only from 2009 did the party start respecting the 5% rule. On the left of the political spectrum, percentages of earmarking by PRC increased from 2008, after the party failed to enter parliament – which also implied a great reduction in the party budget. Thus, a higher percentage can also mirror the party's willingness to maintain the same level of spending for promoting women's activities, notwithstanding the financial restrictions the party incurred after its electoral defeat³⁴. SEL-SI is the party that has earmarked the highest percentage for such expenditures, as in 2011 and 2012 the party reserved almost one fifth of the subsidies it received for activities promoting women. The trend for the Democratic Party tends to stabilize over time around the 5% threshold. In 2006, the percentage reached 10%, coinciding with national elections.

³⁴ The treasurer of the Party of Communist Refoundation confirmed that the budgetary crisis that hit the party from 2008 onwards was a consequence of the reduction of the electoral reimbursements (Interview 2).

Figure 10: Percentage of public funding earmarked for women’s activities by party, 1999-2021



Source: Author’s elaboration from parties’ financial reports. Note: the red dashed lines indicate the threshold of public funding parties should earmark for activities promoting women’s participation in politics. Until 2014, the threshold is 5 per cent (first dashed line), from 2017 is 10 per cent (second dashed line).

In the second period, since 2017, the level of compliance with the new threshold of 10% is always respected by all parties, exception made for the centrist CCD-UDC (Figure 10). The level of compliance with the norm is caused by the establishment in 2012 of the so-called Transparency Commission, an oversight body with headquarters in the Italian parliament. The Commission has the task of checking on party statutes and on the soundness of financial reports.

As confirmed during an interview with one member of the Transparency Commission staff, the Commission carries out formal controls on the financial reports filed in by political parties, despite some structural problems that negatively affects its operations such as the lack of personnel (see below). In the words of the member of staff: “Since we [the Transparency Commission] exist and we are running our controls, party treasurers have been reminded on how to count” [GTPF_INT.6].

As a second focus of analysis, it is worth investigating which types of activities have been considered as “women’s political participation promotion”. In the law adopted in 1999, policy makers did not provide further information as to what this might entail. Unsurprisingly, parties have given a broad meaning to the regulation. It should first be underlined that both financial reports and additional annexes often provided only vague information on how state subsidies have been spent for women’s participation promotion.³⁵ Again, it is possible to distinguish two periods of time with respect this aspect. Before 2012, the treasurers’ statements attached to the financial reports are very scant, with negligible additional information provided on top of the sheer numbers. After 2012, given the overall increasing of requests for financial transparency, these reports provide more information about specific budget items, including spending for women’s political participation.

³⁵ Following a reform introduced in 1997, more complete explanations and evidence of different financial activities (including spending items) must be discussed and clarified in additional, compulsory reports that are attached to the parties’ financial statements.

Table 4: Type of activities financed

Activities	PRC	SEL-SI	DS-PD	CCD-UDC	FI	LN-Lega	AN-Fdi
Women’s wing events	✓			✓			
Tickets reimbursements for women party cadres for participation at different events	✓	✓					
Participation in European projects on gender related issues		✓					
Expenditure for the personnel of the party’s equal opportunity department				✓			
Events for wider public (e.g. 8 of March, 25 of November)			✓	✓			✓
Promotional materials	✓						✓
Electoral campaigns for women candidates				✓			✓
Electoral campaigns						✓	
No additional information					✓		

Source: author’s analysis from party financial documents

In Table 4, I provide an overview on how parties declared to have used these funds. A variety of different activities are reported in the documents, from the organization of open meetings for International Women’s Day; political campaigns, events and demonstrations; meetings of parties’ women wing; the participation of party delegates at a European Convention of Women; the payment for promotional materials. On the left side of the spectrum, these funds have been used more for internal activities. According to one of the interviewees, earmarked funds have mainly been used to cover costs for political campaigning activities or as travel reimbursements for the parties’ women delegates whenever they had to attend party meetings [GTPF_INT.2]. Centre-right and radical right parties instead have used the funds mainly to finance public activities and electoral campaigns. Fdi reports stands out, as they declare to have used earmarked funds for the campaigning activity of their leader Giorgia Meloni – and it is fair to ask whether the promotion of the party leadership, which happen to be a woman, can count as an activity “promoting women’s participation in politics” writ large. The League financial reports get as far as to question the validity of the policy instrument, as they consider that women’s participation in politics is already encouraged by the party in

multiple occasions during electoral campaigns.³⁶ FI is the only party never reporting further information on the employment of the policy instrument. This scattershot list confirms the lack of goal specificity provided by the Italian GTPF type 1 regulation.

More critically, one of the treasurers interviewed told me that *'political parties did not use earmarked funds at all for activities that may attract women into politics,'* [GTPF_INT.1], but they just arithmetically comply with the reporting requirement. According to another interviewee, clearer and more binding rules are needed to clarify the way in which earmarked funding for women's participation should be spent, otherwise party are left with too much leeway for action. She added that reforming these financial instruments was not a priority during the reform of the electoral law that led to the adoption of legislative quotas in 2017 [GTPF_INT.3].

The oversight mechanisms introduced in 2012 – the so-called Transparency Commission – seems to have tackled the issue of under- and mis-reporting. Indeed, PRC received some criticism from the Commission, which considered inappropriate the activities reported by the party under this spending. As PRC treasurer explained:

We received some criticism from the Commission in 2016, saying that certain activities cannot be part of this spending item. There should be some concrete activities in there. We cannot say anymore, as we did in the past that...say... the National Committee has 20 women, therefore we count their reimbursements as activities for women's promotion, as we more-or-less did in the past. [...] Now that we have received this criticism, we have adapted to it. [GTPF_INT.2]

The interviews also shed light on the peculiar oversight mechanism applied by the Commission. First of all, the secretariat of the Transparency Commission underlined in our exchange that the "[they] are in charge of a merely formal oversight", that is, their only obligation is to report on whether thresholds and spending items are duly reported [GTPF_INT.5]. When parties are notified by the Commission of their non-compliance with the spending item regulation, they are given the opportunity to revise their financial report ex post, changing the amount reported so that it fulfils the threshold requirement. In other words, political parties are given

³⁶"The sums allocated [by the League] for electoral campaigns and election events – in which candidates and elected take part – are considered to cover enough the initiatives aimed at increasing the active participation of women in politics" (League; REP_2018).

a second chance to revise their financial reports to amend mistakes and make ends meet without incurring sanctions. One of these instances occurred to the party CCD-UDC. In 2018, the party employed the funds set aside for women's participation promotion to cope with debts accumulated due to the considerable reduction in revenue received from the state. The Commission however sanctioned the party for this behaviour, and the party had to rectify its position the following year. Any activity beyond this formal oversight – such as a more qualitative assessment – is not mandatory and is left to the individual entrepreneurship of the individual bureaucrats in charge of the controls [GTPF_INT.5]. Clearly, this creates the opportunity for a greater level of inertia and inaction in the implementation of the controls.

Overall, the Commission's controls have been unsystematic even if decisively improving over the years. As mentioned above, one of the main problems preventing the Commission from effectively performing its oversight function was – and is – the lack of personnel, as lamented also the president of the Commission during a hearing in the Italian Senate (Senato, 2017). Moreover, new institutions always need some time to develop institutional practices and expertise. As one of the interviewees put it:

The Commission has modified its composition ... it needed some time to start operating and identify what to address and how to make its interventions more specific. This is [political finance in general] kind of a complicated matter. For what this specific measure is concerned (GTPF), I think it will make things harder for us [political parties], but it is also fair. If the aim of the measure is to improve women's participation, there should be more targeted activities. [GTPF_INT.2]

Overall, these findings suggest that the formal commitment to gender equality in the parties' statutes and discourses translates in actual deeds only to a very limited extent. The analysis showed that many of the parties observed failed to comply with the regulation especially in the immediate years following its introduction, while there has been an overall improvement since control mechanisms have been introduced. Moreover, and throughout the whole period, it showed that most parties have been reluctant to spend more than what is strictly required by the policy measure, thus transforming the minimum thresholds suggested by the decision makers into a maximum ceiling (for a similar result, see Mazur et al., 2020).

2.6. Promoting Women in Public Office: Women Candidates and MPs

The two other types of GTPF policy – reduction of public funding for parties with less than 30% (from 2014, 40%) of women candidates and additional funding for parties whose elected representatives include at least 40% women – were introduced in 2012 and 2014 respectively. In order to observe party compliance with these rules, I focused on the two most recent national parliamentary elections that took place in 2013 and 2018.³⁷ Table 5 shows the data for both.

Starting with the 2013 elections, the analysis reveals an overall high degree of compliance by Italian parties. Six out of the eight political parties I observed complied with the 30% gender quotas: the left and center-left (PRC, SEL and the PD), which generously overcame the 30% threshold³⁸, and the center (UDC), and right-wing parties (LN-Lega and FdI). The only two parties that had less than 30% of women candidates on their electoral lists were Go, Italy! (FI) and the newcomer 5 Star Movement (5SM). Both parties were sanctioned. Go Italy's electoral reimbursements for 2014, 2015 and 2016 were reduced by 5%, with an overall reduction of 280,118 euros (Gazzetta Ufficiale 2014). In the case of the 5SM, the sanction amounted to 330,788 euros. However, these were perhaps insignificant sanctions for both parties: FI could rely on significant amounts of private assets provided by its founder and president Silvio Berlusconi, while the 5SM in any case refuses direct state funding.

In addition, respect of gender quotas in candidate lists did not translate into an equally representative parliament. This can be seen clearly as we move to the second column of table 3, which presents the percentage of women elected from the parties in 2013. Only 1.3% and 1.4% of women were elected from the lists of UDC and FdI, the percentage perhaps being affected by the limited number of parliamentary seats these parties won. The case of the LN is even more striking, as no women were elected in 2013, meaning that all women candidates were relegated to the bottom of closed electoral lists (PR system). On the contrary, the Five Star Movement elected a very high number of women (30% of its parliamentary delegation), despite not respecting the GTPF type 2 measure. Overall, in 2013 there has been an overall

³⁷ Even though I completed the manuscript after the 2022 national elections I could not include the more recent data.

³⁸ It should be noted that the left-wing parties had already introduced voluntary quotas for women candidates in previous elections, confirming the greater commitment to gender parity among them.

increase in women’s descriptive representation compared to previous parliamentary terms, as showed in Figure 3 in the Introduction of the thesis.

Table 5: Percentage of Women Candidates and Women MPs in 2013 and 2018 National Elections*

Parties	2013		2018		
	Women candidates	Women MPs	Women candidates (PR)	Women candidates (SMD)	Women MPs
PRC ^(a)	37,8	n/a	50	44,2	n/a
SEL ^(b)	42,9	21,6	50	42,9	28
PD	43,5	37	50	39,8	33
UDC	32	1,3	50	40	0
FI ^(c)	27,7	32,7	50	40,3	36
LN	37,6	0	50	40,3	29
Fdl	33,4	1,4	50	40,3	31
SSM	15,3	33	50	42,0	43

Source: Ministry of Interior, www.interno.gov.it. * Chamber of Deputies only.

Note: the percentage of women’s MPs refers to the beginning of the legislature.

^(a) Figures refer to the percentages of women candidates presented by the two electoral lists supported by the Party of Communist Refoundation (PRC), namely Civic revolution (Rivoluzione Civile) in 2013, and Power to the People (Potere al Popolo!) in 2018. In neither case these lists managed to pass the electoral threshold for parliamentary representation.

^(b) For the 2018 elections, data refers to the newly founded electoral cartel “Free and Equal” (Liberi e Uguali), in which SEL merged.

^(c) For the 2013 elections, PDL.

The 2018 national were run under a new electoral law, which introduced electoral quotas for the first time. The law replaced the PR system with a mixed (closed lists) system and reintroduced single member districts for the election of 1/3 of the MPs. The same law introduced for the first time a 40% gender quota³⁹ as well as the provision of “zippered” candidates’ lists. The combination of these two measures led *de facto* to the establishment of gender parity for candidates’ lists in multinomial districts. The 40% gender quota is to be respected in single member districts too. Lists that do not comply with alternation in the candidates’ order are not admitted for contesting elections (Regalia, 2021). As shown in Table 5, all parties respected the legislative quota, and consequently also the GTPF regulation. Surely, the introduction of compulsory electoral quotas played a major and fundamental role

³⁹ The new electoral law introduced so-called “antidiscrimination measures”, based on which neither gender cannot be more than 60% of the total number of candidates.

in achieving this high compliance rate, more than what the GTPF measure would have done on its own. The two tools are complementary and have created an additive effect.

Even though women's descriptive representation significantly improved following the 2018 elections, electing the parliament with the highest number of women representatives so far, the striking gender parity achieved in the electoral lists is not mirrored in the number of women MPs. As well analysed by Pamela Pansardi and Andrea Pedrazzani (2022), the main loophole lies in the so-called "multiple-nomination mechanism". Used in order to guarantee election or re-election for some candidates (as it multiplies their paths to office), this mechanism also helped parties to reach the gender quotas required for their electoral lists, without challenging parties' male hegemony.⁴⁰ Most importantly for the purposes of this chapter, the fact that except for the 5SM (which in any case rejects these forms of state funding) none of the parliamentary parties elected more than 40% of women clearly shows that the additional public funding provided to parties under GTPF type 3 did not work as an incentive. The 2018 election took place against the background of the repeal of any form of direct state contribution to parties, which became effective as of 2017. As also stressed by our interviewees, the instrument itself seems to lack any appeal [GTPF_INT.2&3&4]. When asked, all of them considered this rewarding mechanism to be positive, but they also all agreed that the potential benefits appear too fuzzy for parties to evaluate their costs and benefits. Indeed, the law does not establish a fixed amount that virtuous parties may receive. Rather, the amount of the reward for virtuous parties depends on the amount that is subtracted from "disobedient" parties that fail to respect gender-balanced candidates' lists. However, as electoral quotas are now in force and all parties comply with the rule as they did for the 2018 elections, the amount available for such a provision is theoretically nullified. In fact, this instrument has not been put into place as of yet, as reported from the treasury of the Chamber of Deputies [GTPF_INT.7]. In general, however, if these financial incentives do not allow parties to know in advance the rewards they would get by complying with the rule, it seems unlikely that they would feel the incentive to change, even in a context of scarce economic resources.

⁴⁰ The same happened in 2022 national elections, held in September.

2.7. Conclusions

In this chapter, I focused on gender-targeted public funding for political parties, namely those measures that link the use and the distribution of state funding for political parties to the objective of gender equality. I argued that gender-targeted public funding is an under-researched yet promising policy instrument that has the potential to create new incentives for political parties, the key gatekeepers for political recruitment, to increase the presence of women into politics.

In the first part of the chapter, I conceptualized gender targeted public funding as policy instruments within the broader debate on gender representation policies, and proposed a typology that relates GTPF with other policy instruments aimed at increasing gender equality in the political sphere. In this context, I identified three different gender-targeted public funding measures, characterized by a different degree of state intervention and policy scope.

In the second part, I focus on the Italian case. At first sight, the evolution of GTPF instruments seems to follow an incremental logic and builds a coherent policy mix. However, the analysis highlighted many loopholes that hampered the outcomes of GTPF policies. First, the regulation seemed more of a recommendation than a rule as no sanctions were foreseen until 2012. Moreover, even when sanctions were introduced, the Commission conducting compliance review over the parties' financial accounts had a very limited oversight capacity due to the lack of personnel and a significant work overload. Even though formal compliance of all parties increased over time – together with the oversight capacity of the Transparency Commission – the minimum threshold requirement of 5% (later, 10%) became for many parties a maximum ceiling. Finally, the law does not provide any specific indication as to what should be done to increase women's participation in politics, resulting in a general misuse of these funds. On the contrary, linking public funding (introducing subsidy cuts) to the promotion of women candidates proved to be a more successful measure. In particular, most Italian parties respected the 30% quota for women candidates in 2013, when no further gender quotas were in force. The introduction of sanctions, then, seems to improve the effectiveness of the instrument. In fact, if political parties were to risk losing a large proportion of the funds they would otherwise have received, then they would have a significant incentive to run female candidates (see a similar trajectory in France Mazur et al., 2020). Not

coincidentally, perhaps, the two parties that did not comply with the 30% quotas are those that – for very different reasons – are the least dependent on public subsidies. In the 2018 national elections, GTPF instruments combined with electoral quotas. In this case, compliance with “women candidates’ promotion” measures was very high, suggesting that when different policy instruments are complementary with each other and share the same policy goals, their effect is maximized. For what concerns GTPF instruments type 3 – those promoting the number of women elected – it seems that, overall, these instruments are ineffective due to a highly weak design. From the interviews, it emerges that party would take into account the instrument if the amount of the incentive were clear, especially now that their financial situation has drastically worsened as an effect of the repeal of public funding. Under conditions of scarcity, even small, but clear-cut incentives can make a difference.

Overall, gender-targeted public funding – or gender electoral financing – is by no means a standalone policy instrument to tackle the persistence of gender inequality in the political sphere (see contributions in Muriaas et al., 2020). However, these measures can complement other policies, such as electoral gender quotas, in reducing gender inequality (see Muriaas et al., 2021). Alternatively, they could be used as a softer, and for many more acceptable, alternative to electoral gender quotas for enhancing women’s participation, as long as they are backed up with strong sanctions and benefits. Their efficacy is linked to carefully-drafted policies that create strong incentives from which parties can clearly benefit. The analysis reveals that this has clearly not been the case for the Italian GTPF instruments, which seem instead to constitute a perfect example of symbolic “image making” (Mazur, 1995, p. 2) reform policies. Notwithstanding the symbolic commitment to gender equality expressed through the introduction of this policy, the analysis shows the very little impact it has had on political parties throughout the entire timespan from their introduction in 1999 until 2021. Although in recent years I observed an higher level of compliance with the norm, this compliance remain formal, and not particularly substantive as evidenced by the qualitative analysis of the activities organized by Italian parties. The general inaction, until very recently, of the bureaucratic bodies in charge of controlling the policy implementation clearly plays a role in the overall poor results. To conclude, Italian political parties – regardless of the political leaning – lacked the political will to seriously engage with the new rules, and have done *less*

than the minimum possible when complying with these policies and, as I will analyse in the next chapter, *less than the minimum possible* when adopting these policies. In order to understand an underwhelming policy outcome, in the next chapter I will focus on the conditions under which these policies have been introduced to understand why these policies have been adopted with such a weak policy design.

2.8. Addendum

The picture that emerges from the analysis just presented is not quite rosy, as it confirms a certain resistance on the side of political parties – regardless of their ideology and political leaning – to take initiatives aimed at gendering their politics and organization seriously. This result is not surprising, and converge with that of other researches. As shown, gender targeted public funding fell short in acting as a virtuous incentive for Italian political parties. I would like to briefly recount here a positive exception to the rule.

In 2019, after I had worked on this research for a while already, I had the occasion to enter in contact with the vice-secretary of a small Italian party, +Europa. The party had recently-formed as the result of a re-branding, but its predecessor, the so-called Radicals had a long tradition in the Italian political landscape, as the main (left)libertarian party in the Italian party system. The vice-president was present during a presentation of this research, and she was intrigued by the legal existence of gender-targeted public funding, of which she was unaware. After some time, I was contacted again. The vice-secretary had decided to put the gender targeted public funding received by her party to good use for promoting women’s political participation. I was invited to participate in this project as a consultant, to contribute ideas for activities that could effectively “promote women’s active participation in politics”, as stated in the law. I accepted happily. I was moved, I think, from what has been fittingly defined as the “feminist imperative” inspiring feminist political science, which poses the question of how to (try to) change, rather than only observe, the gendered reality we focus on in our studies (Campbell & Childs, 2013).

The project in which I was involved resulted in the organization of a training programme for women political aspirants – not already active in the party – and in a small research project investigating Italians’ opinions and stereotype around women’s participation in politics. The

training program – called Prime Donne⁴¹ – included a host of activities to provide the participants with both expertise on different policy sectors and specific skills useful in political work. Upon successful completion of the training programme, the participants were invited to actively contribute to the party and offered to run for office at the local level, if interested. The results of the research project – consisting of a survey of the Italian population and focus groups with female politicians to investigate the varieties of obstacles they have faced in their political career, and how they went about it – were used to structure the contents of the training programme, and to build an awareness campaign on the obstacles women face when entering politics. The results concerning the persistence of gender stereotypes in the Italian population – sexism, in other words – were included in the awareness campaign, as well as employed during some internal activities to raise awareness of the gendered intra-party dynamics. In its own small way, this experience was successful, and to a certain extent transformative for the people directly involved – primarily the training program participants, but also the organizers.

This experience illustrates how financial instruments could be effectively employed for the gendering of party politics, going beyond the symbolic. In this case, one condition has been really crucial to the success of the activities: the presence of critical actors within the party that carry the burden of trying to instil change – and at the same time have enough authority within the organization in order to be conducive to actions. This was a crucial element. It goes without saying that the project also faced some resistance from other party cadres. More generally, I have been told, it was initially met with suspiciousness. Nonetheless, the perseverance bore fruits.

⁴¹ <https://www.piueuropa.eu/prime-donne-la-scuola-di-e-per-un-altro-genere-di-politica>

3: Why non-quota gender representation policies fail? An analysis of the policy process⁴²

As noted in the last chapter, Italy stands out as one of the few countries in Europe to have introduced policies linking public funding for political parties to measures to enhance women's political representation. However, such policies have proved to be flawed, failing to meet the objectives that they aimed to address. Starting from these observations, this chapter opens the 'black box' of the policy process and focuses on stage of policy formulation and adoption of these non-quota gender representation policies in Italy. Following an institutional approach, I shed light on the processes and actors that influenced the policy output. In order to do so, in the first part of the chapter I reconstruct the broader environment – shaped by the interaction of different change agents and 'support structure' – for the adoption of gender representation policies. The analysis identifies the parliamentary arena as the most relevant for the policy. Then, by analysing parliamentary votes and speeches, I analyse the alliances and the conflict that originated around the policy. While structural conditions prevented the adoption of a more intrusive policy, its poor design seems to have been the result of the resistances of some party actors on the one hand, and the lack of cross-party alliances among women MPs that might otherwise have promoted the legitimacy of affirmative action, on the other.

3.1. Introduction

Following the Italian general election in 2018, 35 percent of elected representatives were women, the highest percentage ever reached in the history of the Republic. This result, which for the first time placed Italy above the EU average, is primarily due to the gender quota mechanisms introduced in 2017 by the new national electoral law. Today, the use of quotas as 'temporary special measures' that serve to rebalance gender representation in the country's elected assemblies has become a common feature of all Italian electoral laws at all levels of government⁴³. The path leading to this outcome, however, has been tortuous and not without impediments (Donà, 2018). Until quite recently, Italy had resisted the 'quota

⁴² A previous, reduced, version of this chapter has been published as Feo and Piccio (2020a).

⁴³ For a comprehensive review of the adoption of gender quotas in Italy, see Donà (2018). For a discussion of the effects of gender quotas at local, European levels and national level, see (Donà, 2023; Weeks & Masala, 2022)

fever' (Dahlerup, 2005) that had invested a number of countries around the world. This factor is perhaps unsurprising, given the resilience of traditional and conservative gender roles in Italian society, with women's viewed as in charge of the private and reproductive sphere (as briefly shown in the introduction, but see also (Saraceno, 2003)). However, the Italian story of quota introduction is influenced by also other factors weaved with social conservative attitudes.

First introduced in the early 1990s for both local and national elections, gender quotas were in 1995 declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. Following this decision – which opened up a phase of great discussion ending with the amendment of art. 51 of the Constitution in 2003 – the possibility of introducing “affirmative action policies” (Bacchi, 1996) within the Italian legal system was binned. Norm entrepreneurs in the field of gender equality policies had to find other means for reaching their objectives.

It is in this context that a debate in the Italian parliament emerged on whether to promote gender equality in political office by using party funding as a lever. Gendered electoral financing or gender-targeted public funding (Muriaas et al., 2020; Ohman, 2018) implies the introduction of systems where the (public) funding mechanisms of political parties are tied some kind of gender conditionalities. These can include both economic incentives and sanctions, and may address all main stages of the political recruitment process (Krook & Norris, 2014). They can be used to promote women's participation in party activities and promote the presence of female candidates in the parties' electoral lists, as well as promoting the actual number of women elected to parliament for each party group (Ohman, 2018). This set of instruments recognizes the importance of political parties as a site for transformation in the process of gendering politics and political institutions, given the central role they play as gatekeepers of the political sphere. At the same time, they stress the responsibility of parties as active agents of change, and also unveil their defiance in accepting and internalize gender equality norms.

It should be noted that the idea of gendered party financing was quite innovative in the 1990s, when the discussion firstly emerged. Comparatively speaking, in the 1990s no other country in Europe had introduced such a measure, with only France at that time being in the process of adopting one. Since it was introduced in 1999, gender-targeted public funding became the

only (non-quota) political representation policy to be enforced in Italy at the national level after the 1995 Constitutional Court decision and until quota mechanisms were reintroduced in 2017. The policy instrument, added within the legislation on party funding⁴⁴, prescribed that all political parties eligible for electoral reimbursement should spend at least 5 percent of the public contribution they received for “initiatives to promote women’s active participation in politics”. In order to track the expenditures incurred for such initiatives, parties were obliged to introduce a specific budget item into their annual financial reports. However, penalties and sanctions in cases of noncompliance were not established until a subsequent reform in 2012 (see section 2.4 for an overview). In the previous chapter, I showed that, all in all, this policy instruments resulted in a poor policy outcome, as the result of the many loopholes in the policy design and implementation *and* the lack of political will of the main targets of the policy, political parties. Concerning the former two, the very meaning of ‘initiatives to promote women’s active participation in politics’ was not clearly defined, thus leaving ample room for interpretation by the parties themselves, the majority of which formally complied with the rules but informally circumvented them. Moreover, the analysis showed that bureaucratic actors in charge of overseeing parties’ compliance were not particularly active – as they were not required to. Last, concerning the political will of political parties in embracing these norms, in the conclusion of the last chapter I argue that these have done less than the minimum possible to comply with these measures.

Building on this evidence, in this chapter I turn to the analysis of pre-adoption phase of these policy instruments. The main question I raise in this chapter is: *why* such ill-defined measures were introduced in the first place? Which factors and dynamics influenced a poor policy output? In order to reply to these questions, I use insights from the literature on feminist institutionalism (Krook & MacKay, 2011; Waylen, 2017) for driving my analysis. In its “historical” variant, feminist institutionalism lenses are borrowed to understand the institutional legacies that affected the policy formulation and adoption, by impacting on the views of political parties and other actors involved about the “appropriate alternatives” for dealing with women’s under-representation in parliaments at the end of the 1990s. I equate

⁴⁴ Law 157/1999, ‘Nuove norme in materia di rimborso delle spese per consultazioni elettorali e referendarie e abrogazione delle disposizioni concernenti la contribuzione volontaria ai movimenti e partiti politici’.

the adoption of GTPF to gender quotas given the formal institutional recognition of gender differences and the similar gendered patterns of responses to legislative tools for gender inequalities (for a similar approach see Everitt & Albaugh, 2022).

First of all, in the first section I present a framework that will guide the analysis of the emergence of non-quota gender representation policies in the Italian case during the 1990s. This focuses on the interplay of recognized relevant actors for the adoption of gender representation policies. In section 3.3 I reconstruct the historical and political setting that led to the introduction of gender-targeted public funding in 1999, as well as relevant actors involved. In section 3.4, I analyse the parliamentary debates and voting behaviour of MPs, to shed light on the moment of policy adoption and on the choice of the *design* of gender-targeted public funding instrument. I conclude by arguing that if structural conditions prevented the adoption of a more intrusive policy, its poor design derives from the weak support met by the policy in the parliamentary discussion. In the midst of the resistance operated by certain party actors, especially on the right of the political spectrum, the policy lacked a cross-party alliance among women MPs that could promote the legitimacy of this specific affirmative action.

3.2. What drives feminist policy emergence? A brief overview

This chapter focuses on the formulation phase of a specific policy measure, which obliges political parties to earmark a percentage of the public funding they receive from the state to increasing women's participation in politics⁴⁵. As argued in the introduction, this policy measure fell short of its expected outcome, showing instead features of a merely symbolic reform. In contrast to 'material reforms' (Anderson, 1990), symbolic reforms or policies are characterized by the dissemination of symbols at the discursive level, yet have no tangible effects in terms of actual policy outputs (Edelman, 1964; also Mazur, 1995). The choice for a symbolic use of policy does not apply only to policies for women's political participation. However, feminist scholars point to specific policy formulation problems that are particularly at stake when issues of women's representation are involved. Feminist new institutionalism has often underlined that 'policies are "gendered" and "gendering" constructions, embedded

⁴⁵ On the distinction between the pre- and post-formulation phases of feminist policy development, see Mazur (2015).

in underlying norms and institutions that tend to perpetuate unequal power hierarchies between women and men' (Lombardo and Meier, 2015: 612). Representation policies inherently seek to challenge the status quo of gender relations. Thus, governments may not seek to embrace policies that challenge long-established patterns of behaviour on the side of the powerful. Instead, they may systematically pursue measures that are symbolic and that are not followed by concrete results (Cobb and Elder, 1983; Mazur, 1995).

Studies focusing on women's representation policies have attempted to identify the network of actors and their mutual interactions that positively affect their adoption. In particular, three main groups of actors have been identified: civil society actors, typically women's movements but also women's groups within parties; state actors, including national members of parliament, courts and national party leaders; and international actors such as international organizations and transnational networks. Krook also recommends to take into account the strategic advantages of quotas for political elites (Dahlerup, 2006; Krook, 2009). When questioning what triggered the incremental normative shift around gender quotas and parity in France, Lépinard introduced the notion of support structure, i.e. the 'institutional apparatus that supported the development of the parity claim' (2015, p. 6). In her description of the support structure in France, Lépinard pointed to the importance of active women's movements, pro-feminist party activists inside institutions, Women's Policy Agencies (WPAs), a public debate on women's political rights as well as a favourable international arena. I will review each of these factors briefly, before examining how they are situated in the Italian case.

The presence of active feminist movements proved to be a first important element for the introduction of women's political representation policies, among other policies (see for example M. Htun & Weldon, 2018). Of course, the adoption of such policies – in particular legislative quotas – did not figure at the top of the agenda for the radical feminist mobilizations of the 1970s. Over time, however, feminist movements increasingly started to address the institutional arena in a pattern of growing confrontation and exchange with the representative institutions and demanding greater (and better) representation of women (Kittilson, 2006). As feminist activists embraced a less mistrustful attitude towards the state, party activists inside the institutions – mostly women – progressively advanced the claims of

the feminist movements. Overall, the feminization of political representation, in both left-wing and right-wing parties, has been a lengthy, complex and not straightforward process (Lovenduski, 2005; Campbell and Childs, 2015; Piccio, 2019). For a long time, female party cadres and activists would consider women-related issues as less important compared to party political activity. Interviews with and the personal histories of women representatives in parties describe how women preferred to have tasks that were not specifically women-related to avoid being considered as 'second order actors' (Beckwith, 1985). The presence of women party activists pressing for feminist or women-friendly policies inside institutions should therefore not be taken for granted, especially in a context in which a male-dominated culture permeates parties and parliamentary institutions (Lovenduski, 2005). To summarise "feminist agency in social movements and within institutions is key to unlocking gender equality policy agendas" (Lombardo & Meier, 2022, p. 101).

Scholars working on state feminism (e.g. Outshoorn and Kantola, 2007; McBride and Mazur, 2010) have also acknowledged the importance of 'national mechanisms for gender equality' (more often referred to as Women's Policy Agencies, WPAs) in pursuing the adoption of gender representation policies. WPAs are comprised of official bodies for the advancement of women's rights, such as Ministries or Departments for women's affairs, but also independent advisory bodies, such as gender equality observatories or dedicated parliamentary committees. The mere presence of WPAs does not guarantee the adoption of feminist policies. Indeed, research has shown that the ability of a given WPA to be proactive in bringing forward feminist policies depends on the agency's individual characteristics and on the extent to which it is responsive to movements' demands. That it, an important factor for determining the actual presence of "state feminism" is whether or not the abovementioned structures offer procedural and substantive representation to the actors and demands of feminist movements. Thus, more resources, binding rather than advisory powers, proximity to the government and ties to the feminist movement are more likely to produce state feminism mechanisms and feminist policy outcomes (Mazur, 2002; McBride and Mazur 2010).

Equally relevant, according to Lépinard (2015), is the presence of a broad and lively public debate on women's political rights and the perpetuation of gender inequalities as well as debates in the media amongst intellectuals, activists and politicians. These factors impact on

the discursive opportunities for feminist policies, ultimately enhancing their legitimacy. Last, there is the influence of a variety of non-national factors, from the presence of international soft law instruments such as recommendations issued by supranational governance and international non-governmental organizations, to transnational emulation and the spillover effect of norms (Krook & True, 2012).

Another approach to exploring the determinants of the adoption of pro-women and pro-feminist policies focuses more specifically on the actual composition of parliamentary arenas and on the role of specific political actors. Studies have observed how the mere number of women MPs can explain feminist policy change, a trend captured in the concept of critical mass (cf. Wängnerud, 2000). A recent study on the policy effects of the adoption of gender quotas shows that a higher number of women in national parliaments have a positive effect on the representation of women's interests, in the form of, for example, more progressive reconciliation policies (Catalano Weeks, 2022). Yet, other scholars have underlined the importance of a number of additional factors. First, they observe how partisan ideology matters: political parties on the left are more prone to adopt feminist and women's claims as compared to conservative or rightist parties (Beckwith, 2000; Kittilson, 2006), even though conservative parties have also played a role in representing the interests of (conservative) women (Campbell & Childs, 2015; Celis & Childs, 2018). Others have pointed more broadly to the role played by the so-called 'critical actors' (Childs & Krook, 2009). Critical actors are 'male and female, who may attempt to represent women substantively, as a group' (*Ibidem*: 144) and who manage to find support across the different party families, carrying the particularly high burden of coalition-making. On this, it is also important to highlight that where women representatives (MPs) are able to come together across party lines, there is a greater likelihood that women-friendly policies will be advanced.

After having highlighted crucial factors and actors for the adoption of gender representation policies, in the following section, I reconstruct the Italian support structure (E. Lépinard, 2015) for the adoption of these policies in Italy during the 1990s. The analysis presented in the next section is based on documentary analysis of original sources and on semi-structured interviews with key-informants, that helped me reconstructing the characteristics of the

setting and the processes that led to the emergence of gender-targeted public funding as a policy idea.

3.3. Italy In the 1990s: a weak support structure for gender equality policies

The origin of gender-targeted public funding is, in the Italian case, deeply interconnected with the emergence and trajectory of legislative quotas. This is why I depart from the analysis of the emergence of legislative quotas as instruments for combating women's underrepresentation in politics in the 1990s.

The 1990s were a moment of deep political turmoil in Italy. Starting in 1992, a series of judicial investigations uncovered a systemic structure of corruption involving political elites and governing parties in particular. Clean Hands, as the investigation was called, was the last straw that transformed widespread discontent about inefficient and unstable governing into a full-fledged institutional crisis. Within a couple of years, all the major parties had dissolved with new ones emerging in their stead, and there was huge pressure for the adoption of new institutional rules to mend the representational crisis in Italian politics. This pressure resulted in a new electoral law in 1993 based on a majoritarian formula, the purpose of which was to increase governability – by creating stronger majorities – parties' accountability and alternation in government, contributing to a profound restructuring of the party system. The adoption of new institutional rules opened a window of opportunity for advocates of women's political representation. In the process of reforming the electoral laws for various levels of governance between 1993 and 1995, quota systems – zippered lists – were envisioned for electoral laws for local, national and regional elections⁴⁶. In particular, the introduction of a quota mechanism in the national electoral law was devised by its main promoters – Livia Turco and Tina Anselmi, leading figures of the Parties of the Democrats of the Left (PDS; the successor party of the Italian Communist Party) and the Christian Democratic Party, respectively – as a necessary measure to counterbalance the negative effects the new majoritarian formula would otherwise have had on women's descriptive representation in Parliament (Guadagnini, 2005; Guadagnini & Donà, 2007).

⁴⁶ I am referring, respectively, to: Law 81/1993; Laws 276 and 277/1993 for the election of Chamber of Deputies and Senate of the Republic; and Law 43/1995

Reflecting on the process that led to the adoption of legislative quotas at the beginning of the 1990s, Livia Turco reconstructed in this way the emergence of the policy idea:

In the 1980...say around 1985, the idea of quotas came from the women of the socialist party (PSI), who were very much pragmatic and acquainted with this idea of getting “to power”. We [the women of the Italian Communist Party, FF] had other things in mind at that time...it was the period during which we were slowly building the participatory process that led to the “Carta delle Donne” [Charter for Women]⁴⁷, we had this internal discussion within our party about the role and presence of women, we were really focused on a different paradigm! [how to] Structurally change the ways of politics, a focus on bringing the practice of relations between women⁴⁸ within the spaces of the party...we were not thinking about these [issues] in terms of “getting to power” [NONQUOTA_INT.3]

During the interview, Livia Turco also clearly identified the moment in which legislative quotas became a more general priority for women politicians, also among the women of the Communist party:

I clearly remember this moment. The first day of the legislature starting in 1987. We were joyful, we had fought and won the battle with our men [the Communist male party members] to get more space in parties’ elected delegations...and also in the party internal structure...and we get there [in the halls of the Chamber of Deputies, FF] and I remember the uneasiness of watching over the Chamber and discovering that we were basically the only ones!! [because there were so little women elected by other parties, FF]. We were the only “colourful side” of the hall, among the predominant black of men’s suits, to use an expression I heard by Giulio Andreotti [prominent leader of the Christian Democracy, FF]. There it was clear to me...but it was clear to all of us, that we needed mechanisms to bring more women in [...] we needed more women as interlocutors across all political parts...if...if...we were to build a “pact among women” [NONQUOTA_INT.3]

⁴⁷ The Charter for Women, released by the Female Section of the PCI in 1987, symbolized the highest moment of interaction between the feminist movement and the Italian Communist Party, as well as the highest “feministization” of the women of the PCI. Following principles and practices of the feminism of difference, the charter had gender pride at its core, the recognition of the value of women’s specificity and autonomy for the construction of an autonomous political force, and considered the practice of relations between women as a means for bringing out the value of women. (see Piccio 2019)

⁴⁸ This practice was basically the essential practice of relation in feminist spaces of the Italian separatist feminist movement.

The adoption of more reformist stances – in the sense of an overall acceptance of the mechanisms of institutional politics, and a reformist, not radical, path to change institutions – created a first fracture between the Communist women politicians and the feminist movement. The latter, at least the majority of groups within it, never sustained the adoption of quotas, which they considered as a “betrayal” of the feminist project, because it side-lined the relationship between women and the construction of new female social relations. Some parts of the movement were not as critical and accepted the “necessity” of quotas, but nonetheless considered legislative quotas not worth of their engagement, while also criticizing the Communist women for having abandoned a project aimed at *changing* the functioning of institutions [NONQUOTA_INT.2]. Moreover, critics of legislative quotas were also found among women elected representatives, who rejected the very idea of legislative quotas based on a framing of these measures as norms *protecting* women, thus diminishing women’s authority and legitimacy. Emma Bonino, prominent member of the Radical Party (a left-libertarian party) was – and still is – one of the main champions of this position.

Hence, legislative quotas, when adopted at the beginning of the Nineties were mainly supported by an alliance between the post-communist, socialist and Demo Christian women MPs, as well as members of the Italian Women’s League (Unione Donne Italiane, UDI), the oldest women’s association in Italy, but lacked the substantial support of the feminist movement (Guadagnini, 2005; Guadagnini & Donà, 2007).

These achievements were, however, short-lived, as legislative quotas were deemed unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court in 1995⁴⁹. On that occasion, the Court framed the quotas as preferential measures that contradicted ‘the principle of formal equality, and the principles that regulate political representation in a pluralistic democracy’ as these are found in articles 3 and 51 of the Constitution. This pronouncement came unexpected. According to Livia Turco:

The act of the Constitutional Court was really a shock for us [the promoter of legislative quotas]. We really did not see it coming. Honestly, we did not think it was possible, given the clarity of the structural nature of the problem we wanted to tackle with these norms.

⁴⁹ Pronouncement 6-12 September 1995, no. 422, available at: www.cortecostituzionale.it (accessed 5 January 2021).

[NONQUOTA_INT.3]

The pronouncement of the Constitutional Court had various effects: on the one hand, it opened up the space for a renewed discussion and reflection among women's associations, constitutionalists, and women's elites – but not the feminist movement – that led to a Constitutional reform, allowing for the adoption of positive actions in 2003.⁵⁰ On the other hand, it indefinitely put off any other proposal aiming at introducing quotas into the electoral rules (clearly the more straightforward way to tackle the problem of the under-representation of women) and shaped the institutional debates that followed.

Yet, women's political representation remained high on the agenda for a wide-ranging network of women. As shown below, however, this was mainly an *élite-level network*, as the issues of political representation was not particularly salient in public opinion.

After the change of government in 1996, the newly elected centre-left coalition strengthened the structure of Italian state feminism with the creation of new WPAs, a Ministry for Equal Opportunities and the associated eponymous Department, which paralleled the activities of the already existing CNPPO (Donà, 2018). The CNPPO itself experienced in those years 'effervescent times', according to its former President Silvia Costa, as it was the main department in charge of developing the process of gender mainstreaming in Italian policy-making [NONQUOTA_INT.1]. In fact, especially in those years under a centre-left government (1996-2001), the Commission was highly involved in the international network advocating women's rights. This participation had a spill-over effect, as it allowed the CNPPO representative to 'bring back home' discussions and issues that had been matured through these international experiences [NONQUOTA_INT.1] (see also Taricone, 2006). However, the ability of the CNPPO actually to contribute to, or shape, policy processes was very limited, as it only had an advisory role. One of my interview partners, a feminist activist who was also involved in the activities of the CNPPO in those years holds a particularly negative opinion about the whole functioning of the structure. During the interview, she suggested that women representatives – especially of centre-right parties – involved in the workings of the Commission often took this role reluctantly, as they considered these activities as secondary

⁵⁰ Constitutional law reform 1/2003, modifying art. 51 of the Italian Constitution.

and their career penalized by this experience [NONQUOTA_INT.2] (for a similar argument see Beckwith, 1985). In subsequent years, the overall impact of the newly instituted Ministry of Equal Opportunities was also limited and, hampered by lack of funding and coordination [NONQUOTA_INT.5].

Evaluating the presence of a 'support structure' for feminist policy formulation as discussed in the previous section, Italy in the period under examination seems to basically have lacked one. In contrast with other cases, such as the French one (Lépinard 2015), no real debate around gender representation was generated beyond insider elite circles. The transnational debate on mainstreaming women role in politics had hardly reached civil society. Representation in Italian public opinion was still considered as a 'women problem' and not as something that would strengthen democracy (Guadagnini, 2000). The women's movement, as illustrated above, was not a central actor either. The public visibility phase of the strong feminist mobilization that characterized Italy in the 1970s had ended, and feminist activism had mainly relocated at the local level (della Porta, 2007). More prominently for the debate under discussion, the largest portion of the feminist movement was not interested in the debates about women's political representation. Very rooted in the tradition of the "feminism of difference", the Italian feminist movement mostly remained mistrustful of party politics and political institutions more generally (M. A. Bracke, 2014; Martucci, 2008), rejecting the idea of quotas and other sorts of affirmative action altogether.⁵¹ The debate around women's representation therefore remained confined mainly to the elite, in the dynamics just analysed. Lastly, the pronouncement of the Constitutional Court in 1995 played a crucial role in shaping the subsequent debates until the Constitutional reform took place in 2003. More specifically, it narrowed down the spectrum of "appropriate" possibilities for tackling women's underrepresentation.

In the next section I open the 'black box' of the policy process and focus on the elite debate that led to the introduction of gendered party funding. The analysis is based on parliamentary

⁵¹ We define affirmative action as 'a generic term for programmes which take some kind of initiative [...] to increase, maintain or rearrange the number or status of certain group members usually defined by race or gender, within a larger group' (Johnsons, 1990: 77, quoted in Bacchi, 1996).

data, combining a qualitative content analysis of the relevant parliamentary debates available in verbatim transcriptions with an analysis of the relevant roll-call votes.

3.4. Promoting women's participation in party activities: The parliamentary debate

As a result of the Constitutional Court pronouncement, measures for the promotion of women's participation in politics were not introduced by means of a specific parity law, but as part of the new party finance law (law 157/1999), which reintroduced direct public funding for political parties – in the form of electoral reimbursements – after the failed attempt at shifting to a predominantly private funding regime in 1997 (Pizzimenti, 2017). The debate on the law was heated: as recently as 1993 a popular referendum had ruled out public funding for political parties, following the long wave of corruption scandals that affected Italian politics at the beginning of the 1990s. Many MPs saw the proposal to reintroduce electoral reimbursement as a way of circumventing the clear outcome of the referendum. Indeed, after only few weeks of discussion, the bill was approved, and public funding restored.

Given the primary scope of the law (i.e. the establishment of new party funding rules), the first drafts of the proposal did not envisage any gender-related measures. It was only at a later stage of the policy formulation process that four different amendments targeting this goal were proposed⁵². These amendments were considerably more radical than the one that was finally adopted – and would possibly also have been much more effective in terms of feminist policy advancement. Three out of the four amendments linked electoral reimbursements to the parties' capacity to meet a gender quota in their parliamentary groups. Parties failing to meet this quota (established at 28.8 per cent based on the European average of female MPs in 1999), would be denied a percentage of the electoral reimbursement fund as a sanction⁵³. Beyond sanctions, rewards and incentives were also envisaged: two of the proposals envisioned that the amount unused for electoral reimbursements (i.e. saved by sanctioning

⁵² The four amendments were: Amendment 1.01, proposed by Maria Teresa Armosino (Forza Italia); Amendment 1.03, proposed by Anna Maria de Luca (Forza Italia); and Amendments 1.08 and 1.09, proposed by Argia Valeria Albanese (Popolari e Democratici). Parliamentary proceedings available at the Chamber of Deputies website: A.P., Camera dei Deputati – xiii Legislatura, sed. 27 luglio 1999, n. 577 – resoconto stenografico, p. 123; See also (Maestri, 2018).

⁵³ The electoral reimbursement would be reduced proportionally by the gap between the percentage of women representatives reached by the party and 28.8 percent. In other words, the further from European standards, the greater the sanction.

parties that failed to meet parliamentary gender quotas) would be reallocated to ‘virtuous’ parties (i.e. those that managed to fulfil the quota requirements) to support the activities of their women’s wings. According to the parliamentary debate, these amendments were the results of ‘months of discussions with the CNPPO’ and took their cue from ‘a joint declaration of the Council of the European Regions, issued in November 1998’ (Atti Parlamentari 1999: 41). The amendments found ‘all female MPs in agreement, from the left and the right’ (*Ibidem*). Moreover, one of the interview shows that, despite the agreement on the amendment, this proposal did not generate “particular enthusiasm”, and had emerged out of the window of opportunity presented by the party finance reform [NONQUOTA_INT.3].

The parliamentary progress of the four amendments was thwarted after the first reading. In particular, a request was made to postpone their discussion to a later stage, in order to prioritize other articles and respective amendments in their place. This proposal was met with disagreement, in particular from the centre-right female MPs, who accused the centre-left government of seeking to avoid a discussion on relevant matters such as women’s representation in order to proceed to rapid approval of the party finance reform (Atti Parlamentari 1999). Against this argument, the president of the Chamber of Deputies (a man) justified the delaying the discussion as an opportunity to consider the proposals more carefully, as they could enter in potential conflict with the pronouncement of the Constitutional Court by referring openly to quota mechanism. In other word, the policy instruments proposed were not deemed appropriate. Secondly, he exhorted the various proponents to submit a composite amendment to be discussed in the plenary session.

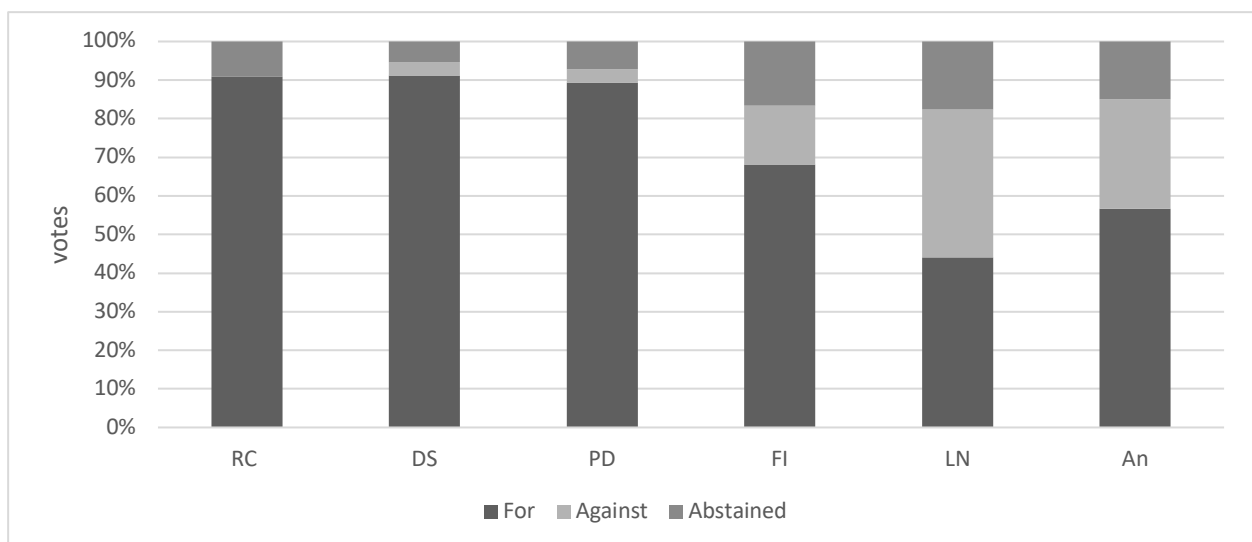
The newly proposed amendment (amendment 2.05, which was the one finally approved) was supported and signed by 23 female MPs from across the political spectrum, with the exception of the Lega Nord (Northern League, LN)⁵⁴. The amendment prescribed that parties should spend at least 5 per cent of the public funds they received on promoting women’s initiatives and report this spending item in their annual financial reports. This was clearly a watered-down compromise compared to the earlier proposals. First, references to quotas disappeared. Second, the measure did not affect party income, but only referred to party spending. Third,

⁵⁴ The party’s official name was and still is ‘Lega per l’Indipendenza della Padania’ (League for Padanian Independence).

the new amendment was extremely vague with regard to the definition of the kinds of ‘initiatives to promote women’s active participation in politics’ that the parties were to implement. Finally, and perhaps most strikingly, no sanctions were provided for in the event of non-compliance.

In this milder formulation, the amendment was approved by a large majority. Of 375 MPs, 274 voted in favour, 52 voted against and 49 MPs abstained⁵⁵. Noticeably, although the composite amendment presented to the Assembly was supported by a coalition of MPs belonging to many different parties, divisions among and within parties emerged at the moment of the final vote.

Figure 11: Voting on the gendered party financing amendment, by parliamentary group



Source: Chamber of Deputies database. Author’s elaboration.

As shown in Figure 1, among the parties on the left and centre-left, Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Refoundation, RC), the Democratici di Sinistra (Left Democrats, DS) and the Popolari e Democratici (PD), the lion’s share of the votes were cast in favour of the amendment, with over 85 per cent of these parties’ MPs voting in favour. As for the parties on the right and centre-right – Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance, AN), the LN and Forza Italia (Go Italy!, FI) – their support was decidedly lower (about 45 per cent on average). FI, 65

⁵⁵ Roll-call vote information is available at the Chamber of Deputies Archives Website. Available at: <http://bdp.camera.it/init/ve13/index> (accessed on 15 May 2020).

per cent of whose MPs supported the amendment, appears as an exception. This is not striking since, as mentioned above, the most substantive proposals for gendered party financing advanced in the first stage of policy formulation were actually championed by female FI representatives, who were also among the supporters of the new amendment. When comparing the voting trends by gender, I note that 90 per cent of female MPs supported the amendment, as against 70 per cent of male MPs. In other words, women, regardless of their party, tended to vote in favour of the amendment, whereas men were much more divided over, and in opposition to, the issue.

Yet, it would be wrong to claim that female MPs formed a united front in favour of the amendment. Distinguishing by gender and by party reveals interesting variations in the level of support (see Figure 2).

Figure 12: Voting on the gendered party financing amendment, by gender and parliamentary group



Source: Chamber of Deputies database. Author's elaboration.

While all the female MPs of the left and centre-left parties and FI supported the proposal, disagreements among female MPs emerged within the AN and LN parliamentary groups (Figure 2). In the case of the LN, none of the three female MPs supported the law. This reflects

the fact that no LN parliamentarians figured among the signatories. These factions become clear when analysing the parliamentary debate that preceded the vote (Atto Parlamentare 1999, pp. 84-ff). Overall, a shared understanding was developed among the centre-left and FI MPs in considering these interventions as desirable instrument for tackling the issue of women's political representation. Some MPs stressed the fact that they would have preferred a more 'articulate and strict' measure that would have forced behavioural changes on the parties in the same vein as the previous amendments, and that 'more had to be done'. Yet, the amendment was generally welcomed as a measure and supported by a large cross-party coalition of female parliamentarians as something that could stimulate 'a minimum of cultural effort by political parties, and their concrete sensitization with regards to the civic, cultural and political growth of women'⁵⁶.

In AN, divisions appeared over the appropriate means to achieve equal access to political office. Generally, the party was – and its successor Brothers of Italy still is – ideologically against the idea of legislative quotas. The party's spokesperson "praised" the introduction of gender-targeted public funding (GTPF) for the encouragement it would give political parties to promote women's participation and for no longer referring to 'hideous and unconstitutional quotas'. On the other hand, another AN representative voiced her disagreement with the proposed amendment by stressing the belief that women, like men, should be responsible for their own empowerment and should not expect any privilege, let alone to be treated as a 'protected species'.⁵⁷ In other words, GTPF was accepted because it is a weaker intervention compared to quotas, which were instead resisted on the basis of arguments based on "false universalism" (Krook, 2016).

Many critical voices lined up during the debate, too. One female MP from the LN explained her position by insisting on the uselessness of this measure for improving women's political participation⁵⁸. This concern was also expressed in numerous other speeches. For example, the amendment was described as a 'charade', due to the lack of sanction mechanisms. Or it

⁵⁶ These positions were advanced by Stefania Prestigiacomo (FI), Ida d'Ippolito (FI), Maura Cossutta (RC) and Claudia Mancina (DS) and Luciana Sbarbati (Italian Republican Party).

⁵⁷ The two divergent positions were expressed by Alessandra Mussolini and Angela Napoli.

⁵⁸ 'This law is a farce because it will end up being a simple spending item amongst the many others in the parties' financial reports' (Giovanna Bianchi Clerici, LN). Interestingly, all fifteen votes in favour from the LN were from male MPs.

was provocatively dismissed by defining the earmarking of money for women's activities as 'monetary compensation [to women] for having accepted discrimination'⁵⁹. It is noticeable that these very negative and dismissive interventions were all expressed by male MPs.

Yet another issue that emerged as extremely central in the discussion, particularly for male MPs, was party organizational autonomy. Italian parties lacked – and still lack – regulations that govern their activities, as political parties are considered private associations. Thus, any form of state intrusion into party 'affairs' was viewed with suspicion. During the debate, this element often steered the conversation away from the actual subject matter, and many MPs – especially from FI – condemned the amendment for imposing spending constraints on parties⁶⁰.

The emergence of these alternative themes, which in a way prevented a genuine debate about gendered party financing, seems to suggest that the focus of attention and concern was about something else throughout the process. Despite the genuine efforts of female MPs, supported by the CNPPO, the obstacles to a focused and content-based discussion were insurmountable. Additionally, female MPs appeared divided on how to reach the goal of gender equality, most importantly over the very legitimacy of affirmative action.

3.5. Conclusions

As Krook has argued, 'tracking the origins of public policies is crucial for understanding how and why they come to be adopted, and in many instances, the particular forms they ultimately take' (2009: 22). In light of the analysis just presented, it is possible to conclude that non-quota gender representation policies introduced in 1999 in Italy failed for a number of contextual and factual elements.

To be sure, the introduction of more effective women's representation policies was hindered by structural constraints. Indeed, the 1995 Constitutional Court pronouncement prevented any quota mechanism from being introduced, even if framed in terms of economic

⁵⁹ The two speeches were made by Gianfranco Anedda (AN) and Marco Taradash (FI).

⁶⁰ Deputies Marco Taradash and Vittorio Sgarbi, both from FI. It should be noted, however, that the actual constraints for parties were minimal. As argued before, the measure that was finally adopted was vague to the point that parties could (and still can despite the further modifications to the law made in 2012 and 2014) list the most diverse activities as 'initiatives for promoting women's participation'.

instruments, in the shape of incentives or sanctions. Thus, linking the allocation of public funding to a given percentage of women candidates or female MPs was not a viable option. The institutional legacy of the Court's pronouncement forced legislators to adopt less rigid and less intrusive measures in terms of the degree of policy intervention, such as the one finally adopted.

If the Court ruling explains why a more forceful, free-standing policy was not introduced in the first place, what remains to be explained is why, given the constraints imposed by the Court, did Parliament adopt such ill-defined legislation on this matter. Why introduce a policy measure at all if no sanctions are attached to it and if its wording allows for circumvention of the rules?

Reconstructing societal and institutional developments in Italy in the years that preceded the adoption of this law, I pointed to the fact that the support structure necessary for bringing forward well-targeted, comprehensive policy aimed at rebalancing women's representation in elected offices was simply too weak. The debate on the importance of introducing norms that could contribute to the effective equality of women in politics remained elite-driven, without meaningful echoes in the public debate and in the media. Second, the analysis of the parliamentary debates as well as the interviews conducted point to a lack of the political will to make women's participation in politics a shared priority. It was certainly not a priority for male MPs – a striking majority in the Chamber of Deputies at the time (88.7 %). This is shown by the fact that only women signed the amendments proposing a measure to increase women's political participation; by the lower percentages of male MPs favouring the adoption of the amendment, and by the fact that women's participation entered through the backdoor within a politically crucial law that obscured the discussion of its women-related effects completely. It was also not a shared priority for female MPs, whose positions on affirmative action policies diverged considerably along party lines.

A new window of opportunity for policies promoting women's representation was soon provided by the Constitutional reform passed in 2003. After this reform, which subverted the 1995 Court pronouncement, gender quotas progressively found their place in the electoral laws. Yet, at none of the electoral levels did the outcomes meet expectations (cf. Donà, 2023; Legnante & Regalia, 2020; Pansardi & Pedrazzani, 2022; Weeks & Masala, 2022). As far as

political parties go, mirroring society, they remain gendered institutions in which the grammar of homosocial capital gets the upper hand.

4. Framing policies against LGBTI hate crimes: A discursive analysis of the Italian parliamentary debate

After having focused examined resistance to gender equality policies using the example of non-quota gender representation policies in the last two chapters, I now expand the scope with an analysis of resistance in the making of LGBTI hate crime policy. As introduced in chapter 1, policies promoting sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) rights have been at the centre of the mobilization of a renewed conservative front questioning gender equality progress. In Italy, proposals for measures against LGBTI hate crimes have so far always been stopped in parliament before adoption, generating highly polarized discussions among promoters and opponents. In this chapter, I focus on the discursive politics of contestation and resistance around the latest attempt at introducing legislation against LGBTI hate crimes, the failed “Zan bill” debated during the parliamentary term of 2018-2022. The analysis focuses on how contentious elements of the debate were framed by supporters and various fractions of opponents, and specifically how distinct strategies of resistance were employed by the different parliamentary groups. Besides reconstructing how resistance was articulated, the chapter also shows how these strategies and the political constellations motivating them contributed to the failure of this instance of sexual equality policy-making.

4.1. Introduction

Italy lags behind other European countries in recognising LGBTI rights. According to the ILGA Europe Rainbow index of 2021 (see fig. 1), the country is ranked 22nd among the 27 EU-member states concerning the legal guarantees that directly impact on LGBTI people’s human rights, with a low score of 24.76 out of 100 (ILGA, 2022). While some progress has been achieved in recent years, such as the adoption of same-sex unions (SSU) in 2016,⁶¹ Italy, as one of only a small number of EU members like Poland and Czech Republic, stands out by not having adopted any piece of legislation penalizing hate crimes against LGBTI people.

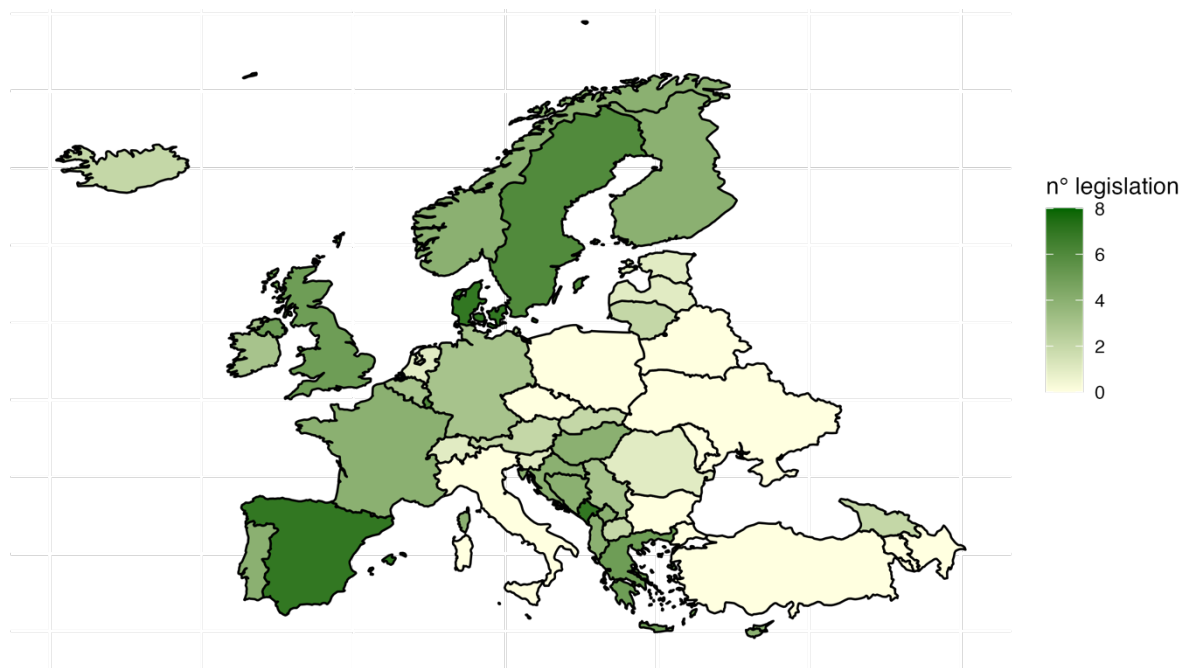
⁶¹ The adoption of SSU can be considered only a small improvement of current LGBTI rights: the output of parliamentary negotiations resulted in a downward compromise. The adopted law fails to equate homosexual unions with heterosexual marriages and to include crucial clauses regarding the offspring of homosexual couples, as requested in the beginning of the legislative process. For a detailed account see (Donà, 2021; Lasio et al., 2019; Ozzano, 2020).

Hate crimes are defined as offenses committed on a bias motive,⁶² such as homophobic prejudice and hatred towards LGBTI persons in the case of LGBTI hate crimes (Godzisz, 2019). The characteristic of these offences is that their targets are chosen because of some real or perceived personal characteristics, such as their gender identity or sexual orientation, or their perceived membership in a particular group. From the perspective of the perpetrator, victims are deindividualized and interchangeable (Pap, 2021). Hate crimes can be considered as one of the most cruel and violent form of discrimination and oppression of minorities (Swiebel & van der Veur, 2009). In fact, these offences not only harm the individuals directly affected by violent incidents, but “reinforce the boundaries of difference” (Pap, 2021, p. 223), sending a message of hate and exclusion to the social groups with which victims are identified (Winkler & Strazio, 2011). The intimidation resulting from hate crimes pose great obstacles to the full societal participation of LGBTI persons. It is thus clear how the adoption of anti-LGBTI hate crimes policies could convey both tangible results – legal protection – and an important cultural message: that in liberal democracies beliefs like homophobia, xenophobia and racism, cannot be tolerated.

Scholarship on LGBTI rights and policies in Europe have usually not focalized hate crime policies, in light of their lower level of contentiousness vis-à-vis, for instance, same-sex marriage laws (exceptions are Ayoub, 2015; Concannon, 2022; Godzisz, 2019; Godzisz & Knut, 2018; Godzisz & Pudzianowska, 2016). In fact, LGBTI hate crimes policies raise considerations about “law and order” matters, which resonate with conservative views, making it easier for policy promoters to create broad coalitions in support of these policies (Mucciaroni 2008). In other words, the fact that LGBTI hate crimes policies are primarily concerned with the protection of the physical integrity of (LGBTI) individuals theoretically ensures that these policies are discussed in a more favourable environment than other policies granting SOGI rights.

⁶² As a more general legal category, hate crimes are all offences based on bias motives that are connected to individuals’ characteristics – be it their religion, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, disability or others.

Figure 13: LGBTI hate crimes in Europe – pieces of legislation adopted in each country



Source: Author's elaboration based on ILGA-Europe Rainbow map 2021.

Notes: ILGA-Europe rainbow map monitors advancements and drawbacks in LGBTI rights legislation in 49 European countries. The final index contains a variety of indicators measuring the extent to which LGBTI rights are recognized across different policy areas. The graph shows the scope of LGBTI hate crimes-related pieces of legislation adopted in different countries. 8 categories are included: 1. Hate crime law (sexual orientation); 2. Hate speech law (sexual orientation); 3. Policy tackling hatred (sexual orientation); 4. Hate crime law (gender identity); 5. Hate speech law (gender identity); 6. Policy tackling hatred (gender identity); 7. Hate crime law (intersex); 8. Policy tackling hatred (intersex). Additional information about the ILGA-Europe rainbow map is available here: <https://rainbow-europe.org/about>

Yet, the assumption that hate crime legislation is uncontentious does not seem to hold true in the case of Italy. Here, despite many attempts to introduce anti-LGBT hate crime policies, and despite the recent adoption of same-sex partnership, such efforts never materialised. Appendix A3.1 provides an extensive overview over anti-LGBTI hate crime legislation efforts in Italy from 1996 to 2021, all of which ended in failure, that is, in the non-adoption of the policy.⁶³ In this chapter, I analyse the discursive politics around the latest attempt to adopt a

⁶³ Policy non-adoption can be considered a non-controversial instance of policy failure. However, the definition of “policy failure” is highly debated in the public policy literature, especially when it comes to the policy assessment in the post adoption phase, where failure can be conceptualized in relation to the policy process, the policy output (the program), or both aspects. For an overview see (McConnell 2015). Scholars focusing predominantly on gender equality policy-making have stressed the importance of taking into account in the evaluation of policies the extent to which these incorporate intersectional scopes in their content and empowerment along the policy process (Engeli and Mazur 2018). In this understanding instances of policy

LGBTI hate crimes policy, the so-called Zan bill, devoting particular attention to the different strategies in support and against these policies employed by parliamentary groups across the political spectrum. I approach the contention around LGBTI hate crimes policy in the parliamentary arena as part of a broader process of contestation concerning the advancement of LGBTI rights. As discussed above, contestation has grown widely in the last decade due to a conservative response to the gains of the feminist movement (Corredor, 2019; Graff & Korolczuk, 2022) leading to the incorporation of gender and sexual equality in the value systems of supranational institutions and nation states (Eigenmann, 2022).

The contentious politics around LGBTI rights have been extensively researched. However, existing research have privileged analyses of the protest arena rather than the institutional one, thus focusing on anti-gender movements or campaigns (Garbagnoli & Prearo, 2018; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017). When taking into account policy processes and institutional actors, the majority of existing studies privileges one specific set of policies: same-sex partnerships (Knill, Preidel, & Nebel, 2014; Mariani, 2020; Mooney & Schuldt, 2008; Vossen, de Pooter, & Meier, 2022). Moreover, analyses limited to conservative opposition in legislatures are much more common (e.g. Kantola & Lombardo, 2021; Lasio, Congiargiu, De Simone, & Serri, 2019; Mucciaroni, 2011; for a review see Roggeband, 2018) than studies focusing on the discursive interactions between opposite fronts (but see Ahrens, Gaweda, & Kantola, 2022; Mariani & Verge, 2021; Mucciaroni, 2008; Mucciaroni et al., 2019). By looking closer at an understudies set of policies, this chapter contributes to the emerging literature on the discursive politics of LGBTI rights by theoretically combining concepts from constructivist approaches to morality politics (Mucciaroni, 2011) and the literature on the varieties of support for and opposition to gender+ equality politics (Verloo, 2018c, 2018a).

Employing a qualitative approach, I identify “points of contention” (Corredor, 2019, p. 218) and frames mobilized by various political actors involved in the debate over the so-called Zan bill against LGBTI hate crimes. I pay particular attention to the varieties of strategies (direct or indirect, principled or pragmatic) that are employed by promoters and opponents. The

failures fall short on either one or both dimensions. For a review of the debate on policy failure in the field of gender+ equality policies see (Engeli and Mazur 2018; Krizsan and Lombardo 2013).

research questions with which I look at the debates about LGBTI hate crimes policies are the following:

1. What is the *problem* represented to be (see also Bacchi, 1999)?
2. Which discursive *strategies* are employed to support and oppose these policies?
3. How do strategies differ across the political spectrum?

The chapter is organized in six sections. Firstly, I develop a conceptual framework that situates the study at the crossroad of the literature on the opposition to gender+ equality politics and the literature on morality politics. Secondly, I briefly introduce the trajectory of LGBTI hate crimes legislation in the Italian context. Thirdly, I describe the methodology and data. In the fourth, I present the results of the frame analysis of the parliamentary debates. In the fifth section, I show how different strategies (direct/indirect) were mobilized by different parliamentary actors. In the concluding remarks I expand on the findings and suggest avenues for further research.

4.2. Conceptualizing support for and opposition to LGBTI hate crimes policies: Frames, strategies and actors

Literature on how parliaments and parties deal with LGBTI rights generally emphasize the role of the varieties of opposition they face (Verloo 2018). However, different forms of both contesting and supporting strategies exist that help explaining the political trajectories of sensitive and contentious policies such as LGBTI rights. Instead of focusing exclusively on opponents (e.g. Lasio et al., 2019) or proponents (e.g. Hildebrandt, 2016), it is critical to investigate the use and mobilization of argumentative frames across all parliamentary groups to map the multidimensionality of LGBTI hate crimes issues and the discursive dynamics in place between opposing actors.

LGBTI politics has historically always been framed by gender, as particularly male homosexuality was understood as a profound challenge to hegemonic masculinities underpinning patriarchal domination in the family and in wider society (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Customary moral proscriptions of sexual behaviour and family life – often modelled by religious doctrines and precepts – were central to this nexus of gendered sexual domination, and thus turned into central sites of political struggle when challenged by

egalitarian movements and a secular erosion of certain patriarchal norms (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). For this reason, gender, LGBTI and morality politics are intricately intertwined.

This interconnection also explains why in the field of public policy LGBTI-related policies are often studied through the lens of morality policies. Morality policies deal with a “set of public issues that provoke fierce debates over the ‘right way’ of living” (Euchner, 2019, p. 1); topics, in other words, that raise conflicts around first principles, core values, norms, worldviews, religious beliefs.⁶⁴ A “nominal approach” to morality policies is mainly concerned with the matter of the regulations, and the extent to which this is affected by value concerns. This approach defines *a priori* the range of issues falling into this category (Heichel, Knill, & Schmitt, 2013). Issues concerning sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), others pertaining the beginning and end of life – from Artificial Reproductive Technologies (ART), abortion, and assisted suicide – and others relating to addictive behaviours – from drugs consumptions to gambling – are the “usual suspects” for morality policy-making⁶⁵. In this approach, studies focus on the determinants of policy change for morality policies (Engeli et al., 2012), or the specific arguments that actors engaged in those debates produce in supporting or opposing morality politics (Hurka et al., 2018; Mooney & Schuldt, 2008).

Other studies, adopting a constructivist approach to morality policy focus on how participants involved in these conflicts *frame* the issues, and use this as benchmark for considering issues as instances of morality politics (Mucciaroni, 2011). This approach implies that morality issues do not have to have a moral character per se (Mourão Permoser, 2019) to be framed in a moral way – that is, through judgements about what is right and wrong, or through arguments that endorse normative standards. Inversely issues customarily considered as morality issues can also be framed in non-moral ways, e.g. by resorting to rational, instrumental framings and cost-benefits arguments. In other words, morality frames are only *one* of the possible frames through which the conflicts over morality issues are articulated. The element emphasized here

⁶⁴ Earlier definitions of “morality policies” took into account a narrower understanding of morality, primarily inspired by religious morality (Haider-Markel & Meier, 1996). In this sense, categories such as “sin” vs. “virtues” were primarily employed to identify morality debates (for example, the case in which homosexuality was addressed as a sin). The literature today is prone to consider other kind of moral judgements in the definition.

⁶⁵ Different classifications of the subfields of morality policy are proposed in the “nominal approach”. The list presented here is drawn from (Heichel et al., 2013), but other issues, such as school prayers, sex education, pornography, prostitution, capital punishment and others are also commonly analysed with this conceptual lenses. See Studlar (2001) for a review.

is that morality issues are multi-dimensional, allowing for concurrent policy frames promoted by various actors (Engeli & Varone, 2011). To make an example fitting our case, LGBTI hate crimes as a policy issue can be framed by speaking about rights, but also by speaking about security. One of the tenets of the constructivist approach is that “the prevalence of ‘morality talk’ varies with the context of the debate” (Mucciaroni et al., 2019). Interesting questions are then in which occasions, and by whom, “morality talk” is employed.

The inspiring studies of Guy Mucciaroni (2008, 2011) illustrate this point well. Analysing the legislative debates about different LGBTI-related policies at the federal and state level in the US, he finds that both proponents and opponents of progressive LGBTI policies often: a) employ the strategy of referring to *procedural arguments*; b) use *governmental morality frames*, with which they depict “the actions (or inactions) of public officials and agencies as right or wrong, good or bad, when they promote or impede substantive moral principles like justice, fairness, freedom, equality, order, and security” (Mucciaroni 2011, 194).⁶⁶ Specifically on debates about the adoption of LGBTI hate crimes laws, the author shows that opponents often frame the debate procedurally, denouncing “federal interference” in the legislative function of US states (Mucciaroni 2008). At the same time, they also develop *governmental morality frames* when they frame LGBTI hate crime legislation as an act of government that would create “special rights” – thus treating citizens unequally – and create a “crime of opinion”, by restricting citizens’ freedom of expression (Mucciaroni, 2011, p. 200). Varone and Engeli (2011) show that procedural frames allowed the agreement on certain morality issues in the case of Switzerland, while in other debates a moralised debate among opposing factions led to policy failure. To summarise, a constructivist approach to morality policy contributes to unveil the actual multidimensionality of the political debates on LGBTI-related policies and it shows that moralizing arguments are but one strategy to frame the contentious issues touched upon in the debates.

⁶⁶ What these studies highlight is that the opponents to progressive LGBTI policies in parliamentary arenas never use *private behavior morality frames* in which private behaviors such as homosexuality and the like are considered as “unnatural” or “sinful” and, as a consequence, they request the state to ban or restrict these conducts (Mucciaroni 2011, 194). The obsolescence of these frames, are linked to the increase social acceptance of homosexuality as a result of secularization processes.

Similarly, the studies on the institutional opposition to gender+ equality policies emphasise the existence of a variety of strategies at the disposal of oppositional actors (Paternotte, 2018; Verloo, 2018b, 2018a), primarily differentiating between direct and indirect strategies (Ahrens, 2018b).⁶⁷ Kantola and Lombardo (2021) analyse the framing strategies of populist radical right (PRRs) groups in the European Parliament (EP) in opposing gender equality, and find that they exploit both strategies. In their understanding, PRRs for instance *directly* oppose gender equality when they reject the very idea of gender outright during the parliamentary debates, using a “gender as ideology” frame. Among the *indirect* opposition strategies employed by PRRs, the authors identify the mobilization of procedural arguments – such as the issue of EU subsidiarity.⁶⁸ Berthet’s study on the ratification of the Istanbul convention⁶⁹ in the EP (2022) illuminates how opponents to the Convention, but also supporters, employed both direct and indirect discursive strategies during the convention’s adoption. In this case, the direct strategies of both “norm proponents” and “norm antipreneurs” resorted to direct strategies based on principled considerations – whether the convention’s adoption was good or bad – while an indirect strategy of support was based on legal considerations or, in other words, on procedural considerations.

This distinction is not unique to institutional settings like parliaments. Martijn Mos analysis of two European Citizens’ Initiatives by Christian conservatives illustrates how the sponsors pursued conservative goals, yet relied on “technical, rather than moral or religious, arguments” (Mos, 2018, p. 325). In particular, the petitioners framed their issues as ones of human dignity and within EU legislative competence while dismissing their opponents’ claims as national ones. They claimed to be treated as ‘second-order-citizens’ and thus victims. And

⁶⁷ To clarify, the definition of indirect strategies proposed by Petra Ahrens (2018) refers to the different strategies of resistances performed by civil servants in EU institutions regarding the *implementation* of gender mainstreaming in the European Union, but it has lately been used also to analyze the discursive strategies of various actors in gender equality policies’ pre-adoption phase. See (Berthet, 2022; Kantola & Lombardo, 2021; Krizsán & Roggeband, 2021).

⁶⁸ Other indirect strategies Kantola and Lombardo identify are bending, self-victimization, depoliticization (2021, Table 1).

⁶⁹ The Council of Europe’s treaty to prevent violence against women. Extended name: The Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>

they refrained from referring to LGBTQI rights but instead used frames like child welfare (Mos 2018, 332f.).

As a first strand of conceptual background, I thus argue that the literature on morality politics can help us clarify the content of direct and indirect strategies used by both promoters and antagonists in the field of LGBTI politics: direct strategies predominantly use “moralized talk”, around LGBTI; while indirect strategies tend to mobilise procedural arguments more prominently.

A second important point for understanding dynamics in debates about LGBTI rights is the relational nature of contention, conceptualized in the literature on movements and counter-movements. Scholars observe an isomorphism of the framing used by opposing movements (Benford & Snow, 2000; Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996; for a review see Roggeband, 2018). For the arena of LGBTI politics, Ayoub and Chetaille (Ayoub & Chetaille, 2020, p. 25) show a mechanism of mirroring strategies, a “process by which the movement sustains itself by adopting the symbols and imagery used by their opposition”. A very clear example of this strategy is the adoption of a liberal legal language by the conservative right, used to counteract frames formulated by LGBTI rights activists (Lewis, 2017; Mariani & Verge, 2021).⁷⁰

A third element for the analysis is a certain agnosticism about which actors are relevant for opposition and support. Surely, as also noted in the introduction, positions in favour or against LGBTI rights usually reflects parties’ positioning on the GAL-TAN cleavage (Hooghe & Marks, 2018). In Western Europe, the Christian conservative mainstream parties have increasingly accepted some SOGI rights, supporting legal changes that move towards greater inclusion and equality. Against this trend, (populist) radical right parties in many states have discovered anti-SOGI rights as a new agenda (Graff and Korolczuk 2022)—while populist homonationalism is still more the exception than the rule (S. Bracke, 2012; Spierings, 2021). The radical rights has thereby redefined itself as the true conservatives and defenders of Christian values in Europe,⁷¹ in particular against Muslim immigration, but also against SOGI rights. So, (populist) radical right parties are usual suspects for the ranks of the opposition to LGBTI rights, while

⁷⁰ As Verloo’s puts it, opponents have to construct a fit between their own views and the frames of the change agent(s) (Verloo, 2005, p. 15).

⁷¹ The Italian Brothers of Italy is a case in point: they privilege self-adopted labels is that of “Conservatives”, as also demonstrated by the affiliation in the EP parliament in the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR).

centre-left and progressive parties are usually seen as supportive for these kinds of policies. However, contextual factors play a crucial role and can induce different configurations beyond these expectations. Political parties and their parliamentary branches are strategic actors, and policy congruence is not the only motivations driving their parliamentary activities, which can be influenced by various considerations (Müller & Strøm, 1999). This is why, instead of deciding a-priori which party families and individual parties fit the two opposing categories (Gaweda, Siddi, & Miller, 2022; Kantola & Lombardo, 2021), I treat this point as a question for empirical investigation.

4.3 The Italian debate on LGBTI hate crimes

Although the debate on LGBTI hate crime policies had already started in the 1980s, parliamentary initiatives on the issues started only in the 1990s, after the adoption of the Mancino law against hate crimes (1993). Until the end of the 15th legislature (2006-2008), the issue of LGBTI hate crimes remained very marginal, and attempts to put it on the parliamentary agenda were advanced only by MPs of the radical left (Party of the Communist Refoundations). More specifically, from activists of the LGBTI movement elected in the PRC lists – such as Titti De Simone, co-founder and president of the association “Arcilesbica”, the flag-ship association of lesbian activism at the time. In the following parliamentary terms, the main promoter of LGBTI hate crimes laws became the Democratic Party, which actively put on the agenda both LGBTI hate crimes legislation and the issue of same-sex partnerships, already started during the short-lived centre left Prodi government (2006-2008).⁷² The policy entrepreneurship on these issues is mostly led “critical actors” within the PD – as in the previous case of PRC, MPs with ties to the LGBTI movement.

While overall the party promoted these legislative processes, the Catholic factions within the PD opposed them throughout.⁷³ Some attempts to promote LGBTI hate crime legislations were made by centre-left actors under the right-wing government led by Berlusconi between 2008 and 2011, but these attempts were blocked already at the Committee stage by the

⁷² I refer to the work of Ozzano and Giorgi (2015) and Lavizzari (2020) for the evolution of the debates on same-sex partnerships.

⁷³ As recounted in the introduction, a distinctive trait of the Italian political system is the direct influence of the Church on both right-wing, and left-wing mainstream parties, as a result of the political legacy of the Christian Democracy. See section 1.3.1 in the introduction.

opposition of centre-right parties including the Northern League and the small Catholics parties (see appendix A3.1 for a detailed account of past legislative processes). During the parliamentary term starting in 2013, a new bill on LGBTI hate crimes was proposed. The bill was smoothly approved in the Lower House, but was never discussed in the Senate. As one of my MP interviewees explained [ZAN_INT.3], the anti-hate crime law was “abandoned” by its own proponent to focus efforts on a bill on same-sex marriage proposed simultaneously, amidst a wave of strong anti-gender mobilization. This mobilization marked the breakthrough of the Italian anti-gender movement also shaping the debates analysed below.⁷⁴

During the 18th parliamentary term (2018-2022), the so-called “Zan Bill”, named after its parliamentary rapporteur, the Democratic Party Member of Parliament (MP) Alessandro Zan, put LGBTI hate crimes again on the parliament’s agenda. Had it been approved, the bill would have explicitly penalised violence, instigation to violence and hate speech on grounds of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability⁷⁵, equating these offences to those crimes motivated by xenophobia and racism – already taken into consideration in the Italian criminal code (Mancino Law, 1993). The explicit recognition of bias motives for these crimes implies penalty enhancements for the perpetrators. Beyond modifications to the criminal law, the bill additionally called for the institution of a ‘National day against Homophobia, Lesbophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia’, urging schools and public institutions to promote more inclusive citizenship and counteract prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Art 6). Lastly, the bill envisaged the opening of anti-violence centres to provide assistance and support to victims of discrimination, integrating the existing network of women’s shelters (Art 8), and the creation of databases on homotransphobic assaults (Art 9) (Feo, 2022). The bill resulted from the combination of different proposals

⁷⁴ In 2013, the presentation in Parliament of a bill on LGBT-hate crimes and other two bills aimed at granting public and institutional recognition to LGBTI individuals gave the go-ahead to a new cycle of contention that saw both traditionalists and progressive social forces mobilizing either against or in favour of the expansion of LGBT-rights in the country (Lavizzari, 2020), generating high polarization both within and outside the parliament. The bills were: The so-called Scalfarotto bill on the introduction of the crime of homo-trans-phobia, an antecedent of the Zan bill discussed in this chapter. The so-called Cirinnà bill concerning the institution of same-sex partnerships; the so-called Fedeli bill, concerning the inclusion of gender-oriented curricula in schools of all levels.

⁷⁵ Disability was introduced into the bill during the discussion at the Chamber of Deputies, as a compromising element with right-wing parliamentary groups.

advanced by various left-wing parties (M5S, PD, SEL) and also one single bill coming from the centre-right FI. (See Appendix A3.1).

The Bill, as is evident from the above description, proposed a more comprehensive intervention to tackle LGBTI hate crimes, combining an enhancement of penal instruments – punishment for perpetrators – with anti-discrimination provisions tackling the sociocultural dimension of hate crimes. In particular, the institutionalization of the National day against homo- and transphobia to promote discussions on sexual diversity and inclusion; and the establishment of a web of activities to make more visible the phenomenon of LGBTI hate crimes: from initiatives to address the issue of under-reporting of these crimes, to the creation of state-sponsored of annual statistics and report on the issue.

The bill was the object of heavy discussions. In particular, the inclusion of gender identity as a category of discrimination – which opened up a battle over the meaning of the term – but also the articles of the bill envisaging initiatives for school education. The Catholic Church, via the CEI openly expressed its discontent with multiple public statements.⁷⁶ Despite the criticism, the bill was approved in November 2020 by the Chamber of Deputies, under the new centre-left coalition government formed by the Democratic Party (PD) and the Five Star Movement (M5S). The discussion in the Senate, however took place in a changed setting – a new technocratic government led by Mario Draghi – which altered the equilibrium of parliamentary coalitions.

On 27 October 2021, amidst the applause of a part of its members, the Italian Senate de facto rejected the bill by adopting a motion presented by right-wing parliamentary groups, which halted the further discussion of the bill's articles. The bill was then terminated, after three years since the start of its discussion and despite the fact that it had already been approved in the Lower House a year earlier.⁷⁷

⁷⁶On the 10th of June 2020: <https://www.chiesacattolica.it/omofobia-non-serve-una-nuova-legge/>

On the 2th of April 2021: <https://www.chiesacattolica.it/nota-della-presidenza-cei-sul-ddl-zan-troppi-i-dubbi-serve-un-dialogo-aperto-e-non-pregiudiziale/>

⁷⁷ The Italian parliament is an example of symmetrical bicameralism: the two chambers have equal legislative powers and laws' adoption is conditional to the approval of the same version of a bill in both houses (Mastropaolo & Verzichelli, 2006).

4.4. Methodology and research material: qualitative analysis of the plenary debates

To understand the discursive politics of LGBTI hate crimes in the Italian parliament I focus on the debates around the Zan bill because, as recounted in the previous section, it was discussed at length in parliaments' plenary sessions, thus providing for rich textual material to understand the discursive politics around it.⁷⁸ The analysis is based on all parliamentary relating to the bill's discussion held between 2019 and 2021 (N=15). I combined the analysis of the verbatim transcripts available on the parliament's websites with the plenaries' video recording to better grasp the speeches' nuances. The analysis was conducted with the software MaxQDA, a computer-assisted tool for qualitative data analysis. As shown in the introduction, this debate was characterised by a high level of complexity, as its scope extended beyond the conceptual boundaries of hate crime regulations so to include a broader set of elements aimed at tackling the issue of LGBTI discrimination in a comprehensive way, beyond the merely penal element. To take into account this complexity I take as a point of departure for our study a point underlined by feminist policy analysis, which highlights how the meaning of gender in policy debates is very often fixed, bended or stretched via the distinctive framing strategies employed by the actors involved in such debates (Lombardo, Meier, & Verloo, 2009a; Verloo & Lombardo, 2007). The first step of analysis, thus, deals with understanding what is discussed during these debates in relation to LGBTI hate crimes and then identifying the concurring framing strategies employed in relation to these contentious points.

I first conducted thematic analysis on the plenary debates (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Generally, a theme "represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). The aim of this first analysis was that of identifying contentious themes, those issues whose meaning and understanding was highly contested between different actors. I developed an initial thematic coding scheme covering topics mentioned in the parliamentary debates. I derived some broad themes deductively, either from the literature that analysed framings of LGBTI rights (Ahrens et al., 2022; Lavizzari, 2020; Mos, 2018; Ozzano &

⁷⁸ In terms of data availability, it is worth signalling that the Italian parliament provides verbatim transcript of the plenary sessions only. This implies that the discussions taking place in the parliamentary Committees are only available in shortened and summarized formats, which are not suitable for a qualitative analysis of discourses.

Giorgi, 2015) – such as “Rights”, or “Religion”, – or deriving them from the specific content of the articles of the draft bill⁷⁹ – “(anti)violence”, “schools”, “crime prevention”, “statistic database”. I further defined the code inductively to exclude themes that were not contentious and discussed at length – such as issues and instruments around crime prevention and the creation of statistic databases – and include others that were clearly central in the debate. This first round of coding also served to exclude from the analysis all the interventions not pertinent for the discussion of the Zan bill – discussion around the parliamentary agendas, announcements by the president, etc. – as well as for coding MPs parliamentary groups affiliation. In total, 394 interventions were kept for further analysis.

After identifying four central themes presented below – rights, victimhood, children and procedures – I explored the framing strategies utilised by different actors in relation to them in a subsequent round of analysis. I also corroborated the selection of the themes by running a dictionary-based quantitative text analysis to the parliamentary debates based on a list of “signifiers” for each theme to detect their presence across party groups. I selected for further analysis the themes that were articulated by all parliamentary groups (analysis not reported here, but see appendix A3.3.).

Framing is the process of attributing meaning and sense to ongoing situations. The analysis of frames, therefore, “aims to identify the cognitive schemes through which individuals attribute meaning to reality and communicate about it” (Goffman, 1974; cited in Lombardo et al., 2009a, p. 11).⁸⁰ While it is true that a certain situation can acquire completely different meanings depending on the “lens” used to look at it, it is also true that framing activities from

⁷⁹ Parliamentary sessions usually follow the bill articles’ order for the discussion, to get to a moment in which the individual articles of the bill are adopted or scrapped.

⁸⁰ The literature focusing on the discursive politics of gender+ equality policies usually resorts to the methodology of critical frame analysis (see Van Der Haar & Verloo, 2016). This methodology adapts the analysis of strategic framing from social movements studies (Benford & Snow, 2000; McAdam, D. et al., 1996), to the study of public policies in the arena of gender equality, adding additional attention to processes of unintentional framing performed by actors. According to this view, frames are the results of strategic choices, but they are at the same time influenced by structural factors – routines and rules unknown to the framing subject – that render part of the framing action unintentional (Bacchi, 2005). While I agree that a complex understanding of framing as rooted in explicit agency as well as structures is more fitting for analyses that are sensitive to existing power inequalities in the framing actions (Lombardo et al., 2009a), here I opt to perform a frame analysis closer to the social movement tradition. This choice is mainly linked to the type of data analysed: in fact, engaging in party plenaries is usually a pretty strategic and calculated action performed by elected representatives, given the public format and high visibility of these settings.

different actors influence each other because they set up a vocabulary, and a specific discursive arena for certain issues (van Hulst & Yanow, 2014). In addition to it, the strategic aspect of framing (McAdam, D., McCarthy, & Zald, 1996) implies that oppositional actors would often use certain frames in relation to each other. They can mirror other frames (Ayoub & Chetaille, 2020), or try to de-emphasize and debunk the opponents' frame (McCaffrey & Keys, 2000).⁸¹ The relational element in framing activity remains.

Instead of constructing dyads of opposing frames (Lavizzari, 2020; Ozzano & Giorgi, 2015), in the analysis I traced a variety of frames employed by different actors when referring to the themes identified through the thematic analysis. This first analysis of how contentious themes of the debates were framed is presented in section 4.5.

As a last step, I turn to my last research question, to explore the partisan dimension of support and opposition to the Zan bill: Which set of strategies do different actors across the political spectrum mobilise? To answer this question, I deductively coded MPs speeches in four different categories, each identifying different discursive strategies: "direct support", "indirect support", "direct opposition", "indirect opposition". These different strategies were determined by grouping the frames detected during the analysis, according to the conceptualization presented in section 2. The coding scheme is illustrated in the appendix (A3.4.). In this step of the analysis, each of the 394 interventions by MPs was assigned to only one category. Sometimes, especially in long interventions, I could detect frames and arguments belonging to more than one category; in these cases, I assigned the category that was predominantly represented in the speech. In order to verify the soundness of this coding procedure, I asked a second coder with expert knowledge in the field to code a subsample of the interventions following the same coding instructions.⁸² I then calculated intercoder reliability, which resulted above accepted standards (K coefficient = 0.82, calculated in MaxQDA). The results of this second analysis are presented in section 4.6.

⁸¹ According to their study on competitive framing processes in abortion debates, McCaffrey and Keys define "*frame debunking*" as the deliberate engagement of a group with their opponents' claims for the purpose of undermining their resonance (McCaffrey & Keys, 2000, p. 44).

⁸² I thank Massimo Prearo for his invaluable help with this task.

4.5. First step: The framing of contentious themes in the debates

4.5.1. Rights

The first and most prominent contentious element emerging in the plenary debates concerns the *rights* secured or potentially infringed on by the Zan bill. The language of rights is mobilised by both supporters and opponents of the bill and acts as a master frame for all actors involved in these debates (see also Ozzano & Giorgi, 2015). As is to be expected, the framing of rights is addressed and mobilized differently between actors. Among the supporters, LGBTI rights are framed as integral and universal human rights. Consequentially, violence and discriminations against LGBTI are framed, as in the statement by Stefano Ceccanti (PD), as a “violation of human dignity, a violation of the principle of equality and a harm to human rights as they hamper the full development of human personalities” (C_406; par.15).⁸³ The bill’s reach is mostly described in universalistic terms, meaning that it is considered to bear positive social consequences for the whole of society, which will benefit from a greater diversity. In the words of the rapporteur Alessandro Zan (PD) the bill “[broadens] the boundaries of democratic citizenship, [and] contributes to designing a political community that is freer, fairer, more inclusive and supportive”. (C_385; par.5)

While the frame of “rights” is often associated by the supporters to the idea of justice – that is, the idea that granting more rights to the LGBTI community is just and in line with the principle of equality among citizens stated in the Italian constitution – many other MPs among the supporters frame the bill as a “civilizing norm” (Ahrens et al., 2022, p. 7). In this idea, and that of civil rights as progress, the recognition of sexual equality rights is treated as a matter of “civilization vs. obscurantism”, a conception that underlines a teleological understanding of human rights. Seen from this angle, the advancement of civil rights is considered as a marker of societal modernity, and this model of modernity to strive for is represented by the supranational level of the EU. Such understandings are clearly visible e.g. in the following interventions of supporters of the bill:

With this regulatory intervention, we are finally trying to catch up with other European countries, with the aim of making our society more inclusive, more equal, and freer. It is

⁸³ All translations of quotes from the Italian debate are mine.

a law that we have been waiting for for years (Lucia Annibali (IV); C_385, par. 10)

This is an opportunity, first and foremost, to ensure protection and equal dignity to all those people who have been waiting for it for so many years, but also to continue along the path of the principle of equality, provided for in Article 3 of our Constitution. Moreover, it is also an opportunity to place Italy among the great and advanced countries of the European Union, in terms of rights, freedom and civil progress. (Laura Boldrini (PD); C_385, par. 15)

Naturally, the frame of rights is employed very differently by the critics. First, opponents criticize the universalistic approach espoused by the supporters, while pointing to groups whose rights would be *harmed* by the bill. The universalistic “human rights” frame employed by the supporters, which implies universalistic and positive social consequences, is debunked with the use of the frame of “special rights” (Lavizzari, 2020; Mucciaroni, 2011). Opponents argue that LGBTI hate crimes legislation would treat citizens unequally, creating special groups that would be granted more rights and guarantees than others:

You are trying to confuse our ideas, saying that homosexuals deserve special treatment, as if they were sick, when our legal system already provides for penalties for crimes of violence and incitement to hatred against people, against *all* people, no distinction. You are violating the principle of equality enshrined in Article 3 of our Constitution” (Francesco Marattin, FdI, C_385; par. 31).

The attack on “special rights” is rooted in a liberal understanding of formal equality as non-distinction or genderblindness, rather than substantive equality across differences.⁸⁴ The universalist framing employed by the supporters is additionally counteracted with the idea that the bill would create “conflicting rights”. In this frame, the right not to be discriminated against is pitted against freedom of expression: more specifically, through this frame the

⁸⁴ “We live, fortunately, in a liberal system: a system in which laws guarantee equal rights, penalise acts of violence and discrimination of any kind and for any reason. You see, colleagues, this is precisely what distinguishes the liberal system from other visions of law, the state and society: citizens, for us, are individuals, each of whom is a bearer of rights by the mere fact of being a person. We do not divide society by classes nor by ethnicity nor by religious choices or lifestyles. We believe that rights are inherent in the very condition of citizenship, in the very human condition, and that it is up to the state to guarantee them through general laws. (Andrea Orsini, FI; C_385, par.21).

opponents underline how the expansion of LGBTI rights could limit the freedom of speech and freedom of (religious) conscience:

If the Zan proposal becomes law, we will no longer have the opportunity to express our thoughts freely because the constitutionally guaranteed right of freedom of opinion and expression will be lost under the threat of homophobia. (La Pietra, FdI, S_346; par. 72)

Such a framing strategy also denotes a specific zero-sum interpretation of human rights on the side of the opponents. This interpretation is based on the notion that the amount or quantity of rights guaranteed in a society is finite, so much so that any expansion for certain groups necessarily causes the reduction of rights for another. Noticeably, this notion of “conflicting rights” symmetrically mirrors the claim of the proponents, which is based instead on a “positive-sum” interpretation: “When rights are expanded, these are not taken away from others” (De Petris, LEU; S_345, par. 42).⁸⁵

The idea that the Zan bill, if adopted, would create “special rights” for some is further sustained in opponents’ discourses by the identification of specific groups’ rights at risk due to the expansion of LGBTI rights. Besides references to children (see below), such to “women’s rights” by both supporters and opponents deserve special attention. As shown in the previous section, the text of the bill discussed during the parliamentary sessions, art. 1, proposes to extend the legal guarantees for hate crimes also to offences motivated by discrimination and hatred on the ground of sex and gender, and not only on sexual orientation and gender identity. This leads to the inclusion of measures against gender-based violence amongst the objectives of the bill. The supporters thus framed the bill as important for enhancing women’s rights (their right to be free from violence) as well as LGBTI rights. This “bridging” of categories – which refers again to the positive-sum understanding of rights exposed above – is also motivated by the supporters on the ground that misogyny, homophobia and transphobia share a common source in gendered power relations. This position is articulated by Laura Boldrini, MP for the Democratic Party:

Hatred towards women [...] is the result of the same cultural atmosphere that fuels hatred

⁸⁵ “This bill harms no one and does not take away rights from anyone; if anything, it adds one more piece to the mosaic of equality in our country” (L’Abbate, M5S; S_347, par.15).

and violence towards LGBTI+ people. [...] An atmosphere that is rooted in the patriarchal matrix of our culture and society, and that affects anyone who moves away from that model, anyone who questions it. So, to speak of misogyny in a law that deals with homo-lesbo-bi-transphobia does not mean to reduce women to a minority among others, no, but to recognise that an important component of hate crimes is directed against women. [...] This is not a law that protects minorities, this is a law that wants to introduce equal dignity, protection and security into the legal system. [...] There is security when society breathes. There is security when society is open and inclusive. (Laura Boldrini, PD, C_385; par.15).

What is interesting here is again a double mirroring dynamic: The universalist framing of an alignment of LGBTI and women's rights can be understood as a direct a response to the 'special rights' frame of the right, which complains about undue privileges for LGBTI minorities. Voices on the right, on the other hand, also pick up the theme of women's rights by depicting the bill as detrimental to women. This is particularly prominent where right-wing opponents cite arguments of gender-critical feminism⁸⁶ during the debate, which views the very concept of gender identity as a danger to women's struggles. This frame is particularly telling of a strategy seeking to amplify divisions in the support coalition. In fact, the idea of including not only gender identity and sexual orientation, but also sex and gender in art.1 of the bill⁸⁷ was heavily discussed also among the proponents of the bill (especially within the Democratic Party), where some saw the mixing of the *non*-minority of women with minority rights as antithetical to feminist principles.

All in all, we see how various forms of rights frames are used in a moralized way by both proponents and opponents. Rights frames highlight what is (most) worthy of state protection and work with a framework of equality before the law that historically has been central to liberalism and progressivism. The fact that such frames now also figure prominently in the moral discourse of opponents of gender+ equality stands for a significant shift in public debates around LGBTI issues (Lewis, 2017). In the past, the moral critique of conservative opposition to gender and sexual rights operated with an open devaluation of LGBTI lifestyles

⁸⁶ also known as the Trans Exclusive Radical Feminism (TERF)

⁸⁷ The article updating the existing framework for hate crimes in Italy, so to extend this special framework to LGBTI hate crimes.

as deviant. The current strategy of choice instead highlights how such rights put other rights in jeopardy, thus operating within the egalitarian and legalistic logic of rights. The bill's opponents present their interventions as moral appeals to the government, demanding that an expectation of equality and fairness is upheld – in the sense of avoiding favouritism, unjust advantages or special treatment.

4.5.2. Victimhood

In a second important theme, contention arises also regarding the identification of *victims* in relation to hate crimes regulation. The supporters of the bill clearly frame LGBTI people as victims of the current lack of a legislation against homophobic and transphobic hate crimes. They support this frame with evidence-based arguments, mentioning figures about LGBTI hate crimes to stress the urgency of intervening in this policy area. A connection is made between the higher rate of hate crimes and the polarization of public debate fuelled by exclusionary discourses. The opponents question this framing of victims operated by the supporters, employing a framing strategy labelled as “the social construction of non-problematicity” (McCright and Dunlap, 2000). It proceeds by minimizing the victimhood of those affected by homophobic and transphobic hate crimes, and by denying its importance as an urgent social problem. As Lega MP Luca Paolini puts it:

There is no emergency. Even the data provided by homo, lesbian, trans, etc. associations – which do not have an interest in minimizing but rather in accentuating, if anything, this need for protection – bring numbers that are very modest: 219 cases in 2019; but beware: these 219 cases, [...] are not all serious cases like the ones mentioned, but also include instances of small insults, slightly coarser words [...] So, there is no emergency.” (C_385; par. 27)

Brothers of Italy uses the same frame, making clear that, for them, LGBTI hate crimes are not a social problem and do not need to be further addressed by state intervention.⁸⁸ In relation to victimhood, I further identify a framing of self-victimization, through which the opponents portray themselves as the indirect targets of the Zan bill. Citing George Orwell's 1984, the bill

⁸⁸ “To date - we must remember – there is emergency linked to the problem of homotransfobia in Italy, i.e. an alarming spread of violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation. There is no need to make further policy-making actions” (Maffoni, FDI; S_347; par.17)

is said to penalize as a “thought crime” (C_385; par. 13) the disagreement of religious people, and specifically Catholics, with gay lifestyles: “This law calls into question the very right to affirm, defend, propose different lifestyles based on a different cultural, religious, or civil visions” (C_385; par 21). Lastly, the Italian citizenry as a whole is portrayed as the true victim of far-away politicians who ignore “real problems” in favour of insignificant “minority” issues, busying the parliament with untimely discussions while citizens suffer (see also Kantola and Lombardo, 2021):

We think that in these hard times, the Parliament should spend every minute at its disposal working tirelessly to give answers to the Italians on the many concrete daily problems on which they ask us for support; it is therefore out of context and out of place at this time to have occupied the main part of the Committee’s work in recent months with this ideological debate. (Ciro Costa, Fdi; C_385; par. 13).

This strategy of opposition by deflection – the attempt to move the discussion somewhere else while questioning its importance – emerges very often throughout the debates.

4.5.3. Children

Another central theme of both the opponents’ and supporters’ discourses are children, who come to stand for an entire field of moralized contention over education, values, and secularism. This frame emerges particularly during the discussion about the bill’s articles tackling the sociocultural dimension of LGBTI discrimination, especially the article about the institution of the ‘National day against Homophobia, Lesbophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia’ (art.6). The theme of an innocent childhood threatened by moral and sexual corruption is a common discursive strategy for the opponents to the expansion of LGBTI rights, as was observed e.g. for debates on the adoption rights for same-sex couples (Bellè, Peroni, & Rapetti, 2018; Ozzano & Giorgi, 2015; more generally see Robinson, 2008). As my analysis suggests, it is, in fact, a master theme that pervades the discourse on LGBTI politics also in a seemingly different contexts like that of hate crime legislation. One of the functions of discourses on children, as an ultra-deserving group, is to establish a hierarchy of concern that deprioritizes and trivializes the claims of social outsiders: “The rights of children come before the whims of an adult claiming this or that identity!” (Augusta Montaruli, Fdi, C_385; par. 35).

Traversing the previous themes identified here, for the opponents, children are the victims par excellence, as the bill threatens to jeopardize their right to a “gender-free education” (ignoring the fact that many citizens that would have benefitted from the law were gender-nonconforming minors).

Central to this contention is the place of gender in school education and the role of family. The supporters employ a universalist frame regarding gender education and education against discrimination, writ large. According to this frame the adoption of antidiscrimination programmes in school is desirable to infuse new generations with positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion:

What we are including in this law is precisely all that is needed to protect our young people and to teach them respect, to teach them tolerance and to oppose all forms of discrimination and violence. Mr. President, there is no better place where we can learn the values of respect and the values of equality than the school benches, because it is in the school benches that people are formed, citizens are formed, those who will be the men and women of tomorrow are formed! (Carla Giuliano, M5S; C_421; par. 91).

For the opponents the theme of education is mainly framed and articulated in relation to the spread of what they call “gender theory” or “gender ideology”. In this framing, the institution of the National Day against homo- transphobia is considered a trojan horse to bring gender ideology in schools. Hence, “the ddl zan wants to impose the propaganda of gender ideology in schools, even on first grade children” [Ciro Maschio, FdI; C_422; par. 13]. Childhood is idealized as an ideology-free zone of moral purity not to be invaded by adults with a political agenda. At the same time – and in a quiet contradiction to the former – children are thematized as dependent subjects in need of normative guidance and socialization in the “normal”, common sensical customs of societal life.

There is a subtext in which this moral panic over children is linked to concerns of secularism. Sociocultural provisions, such as the inclusion of LGBTI orientations in the sex education in schools, are seen as threatening the normative autonomy of the family as the core institution for the socialization of children. In the words of Calandrini (FdI): “[the left is] claiming to take education away from families and parents to set up a day of gender ideology in our schools”

[Calandrini, FdI; S_346; par. 68]. The antithesis between a state sanctioned agenda of diversity and religious value sets is highlighted, pointing to a subtheme of secularism relating to the question of education. The common thread is a struggle over the moral primacy of families and the church (as stand-ins for traditional forms of patriarchal authority) or secular state institutions. While the latter held up by supporters as securing universal equality through education, opponents see state institutions as overstepping their normative mandate by forcefully re-educating its most vulnerable citizens. Again, we see a mirroring of arguments whereby the socialization of the “men and women of the future” in the spirit of diversity and recognition lauded by the bill’s supporters appears on the eye of the opponents (mainly right-wing parliamentary groups) as the menace of state indoctrination. The moralized discourse about children is central in both strategies of direct support and direct opposition to the bill’s adoption.

4.5.4. Procedure

The themes identified so far are examples of direct opposition and support that operate by frames that make reference to *moralized* figures (rights-holders, victims, children). However, the analysis also reveals the prevalence of *procedural* frames, more precisely: frames that build on the procedural aspects of the policy process. Supporters deploys such frames mostly by appealing to the procedural necessity of fulfilling European directives as a strategy to indirectly support the bill:

[the bill] responds to the numerous requests received at the supranational level that move in the direction of combating the various forms of discrimination, including those based on sexual orientation or gender identity. In particular, those requests coming from the European Parliament resolution on homophobia in Europe in 2006 that has so far remained unheeded by our legal system. In light of this, many EU Member States over time have adopted specific laws on the subject; Italy has not yet done so.” [Lucia Annibali, IV; C_385; par. 11)

Critics use procedural frames for an apparently more neutral critique of the bill. Importantly, there is also the phenomenon of neutrals or apparent sympathizers that seek to water the bill down in what can be read as a form of indirect opposition (see next section). One of the core

procedural complaint for the opponents is that penal law, which the Zan bill is concerned with, should not be used for substantive and partisan aims. Lega MP Pillon asks:

Are we sure that using the penal instruments in this case is the right way to go? You see, we have perhaps got into a bad habit, using the criminal instrument as if it were the best way to educate the people. (Applause). I do not believe that this is the right way: the penal instruments should be marginal in policy-making actions; there should be fewer criminal regulations. (Pillon, S_345; para. 34)

Besides the swipe at attempts at “educating the people”, the law is here constructed as above the fray of politics. The concepts of gender and gender identity are not just rejected on the basis of political principle – as part of the “gender ideology” frame, wherein gender is framed as aiming at the negation of the natural aspect of sex. In procedural frames, gender and gender ideology are depicted as matters out of place in the legal sphere:

In the Zan bill, alongside sex [...] other characteristics of the persons are given: gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. These definitions are not legal, they do not have a legally recognizable quality (ibid.)

As illustrated here, procedural frames also criticize the legal form of the bill as flawed or superfluous.⁸⁹ It is claimed that the bill violates the constitution’s non-discrimination principle by designating specific groups as deserving of special protection. In line with the opponents’ formal understanding of legal equality, critics argue that sufficient provisions against hate crimes are already in place in existing laws against violence and perjury, making the proposed law unnecessary. As argued by Senator Marin (Lega): “Therefore, as it is now presented to us, [the Zan bill] is an unnecessary list of crimes that are already addressed in other important measures” [Marin, Lega; S_347; par.45].

Finally, in a narrower sense of proceduralism – understood in reference to the parliamentary procedures – opponents also slam the mode in which proponents try to pass the bill as running counter to the customs of consensual policy-making.⁹⁰ Specifically, we see references to

⁸⁹ “The point is to make sure that those juridical are problems that we actually want to resolve here, or not” (Ostellari, LEGA, S_345; par. 13).

⁹⁰ This charge is returned by the supporters of the bill, who accuse the right of obstructing debate and voting on the bill in what amounts to an illegitimate form of filibustering.

procedural norms of policy-making in calls for pragmatism and consensus: “Do you want to turn these halls into a place where ultras brawl with each other and in the end no results are obtained?”, Matteo Renzi (S_345, par. 38) asks, and implores his colleagues to reach a consensus on the law: “I am asking all parliamentary groups to not only move towards each other, but to make a political pact” (ibid.). The centre-left parliamentarian Julia Unterberger (SVP) makes a similar statement, citing an implicit normative legacy in Italian policy-making mandating that reforms in morality issues fields should be based on broad consensus:

It has always been like this: In major reforms, whether divorce, abortion or civil unions, there has always been a more progressive and a more conservative part of the population. Although I clearly belong to the progressive one and would vote for the Zan bill without any problems, I acknowledge that this is not the case for everyone. I really wonder, then, whether we really want to continue in this way, considering everything else we have on our to do lists, from civil procedures to expiring decrees. (Julia Unterberger, SVP; S_345; para. 25)

In most cases, such interventions are coupled with the demand of watering down the proposed law, especially in the sense of scrapping the reference to gender identity and anti-discrimination in education. Unterberger continues:

I wonder: do we really want to continue in this polarized climate, or do we all take a small step back and perhaps give up a word? [...] Since it is so contested, we can give up a word [i.e., gender identity, FF], but not the concept. Can we look for other words for this concept, so that we can find the solution? I appeal to everyone to make an effort to find an agreement without continuing this war. (Julia Unterberger, SVP; S_345; para. 25)

As the next section explores, resorting to procedural arguments and pragmatism can be understood as a form of indirect opposition distinct from both support and direct opposition.

4.6. Second step: strategies of opposition and support across party lines

In this section, I analyse the partisan dimension of support and opposition to the Zan bill, showing how different parliamentary groups resort to different strategies of support and opposition. The frame analysis conducted above already showed frames being articulated by different groups, but here I present a systematic analysis of the distribution of these discursive

strategies across party groups. In the absence of an open ballot during the last vote that determined the failure of the bill, the systematic assessment of the parliamentary groups' discursive behaviour potentially allows to grasp more about how the bill failed, and by whom it was opposed and supported. Out of the 394 interventions coded, 65 fall into the direct support strategy, 201 into the direct opposition strategy and 128 into the indirect opposition strategy.⁹¹ The distribution of strategies across party groups is shown in figure 14.

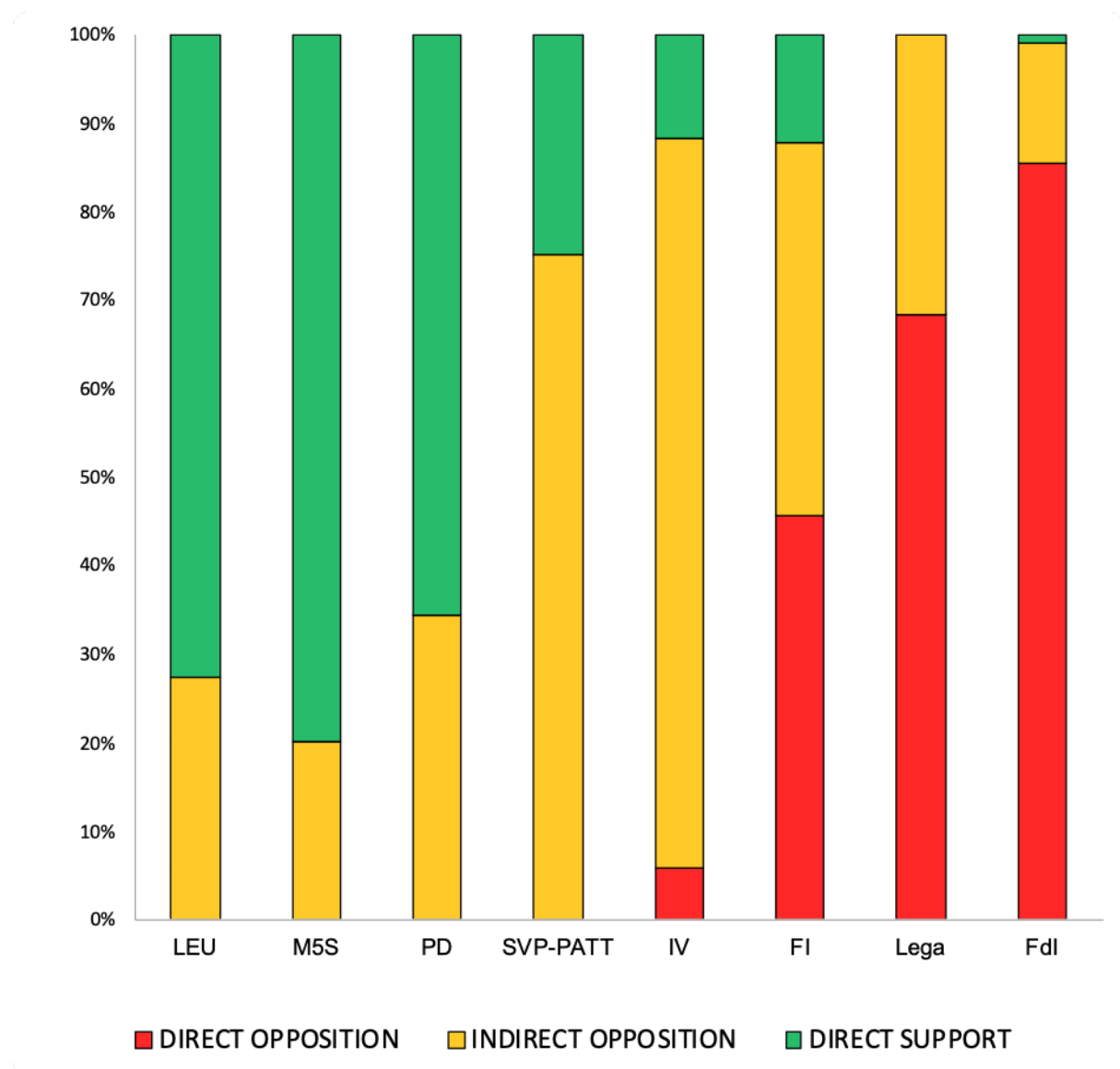
The first element to notice is that, overall, we can clearly identify two distinct camps. There is a significant area of supporters among the ranks of the left and centre-left. LEU, PD and M5S figure among the more supportive groups – notably, these are among the groups who sponsored the various bills that were grouped together into the Zan bill (see appendix A3.1), as well as the main promoter of the bill in the public sphere. However, even among these groups there is no unanimous convergence on a direct strategy of support – an observation that also contributes to explain the difficulties the bill encountered during the parliamentary process, which ultimately lead to its final rejection. As shown in picture 14, within these parliamentary groups there is a small presence of interventions articulating a strategy of indirect opposition. It is the case of MPs making a plea for reaching a compromise on the bill. Also, the presence of disunity in the Democratic Party, the main force of the centre-left, is due to certain lines of conflicts within different sensitivities within the party, which also find some space in the parliamentary debate.

On the other side, the members of the centre-right coalition, and especially Brothers of Italy and Lega, are consistent in deploying direct opposition strategies to counter the Zan bill. As illustrated in the frame analysis, the two parties were particularly against the articles of the Zan bill addressing the sociocultural dimension of LGBTI discrimination. In general, these are the groups that resort more evoke the “gender ideology” trope in relation to the bill, while relegating the problem of violence against LGBTI subjects as “secondary” or “made up” by LGBTI associations and political forces sympathetic to the cause. These groups also resort to indirect strategies of opposition, especially via appealing to procedural arguments or

⁹¹ No speeches fell into the fourth strategy of “indirect support”. While frames falling with the indirect support strategy were detected – such as the support for the Zan bill adoption as a way to fulfil European directives – they were never predominant in the MPs interventions. In other words, indirect support strategies were employed as side arguments in direct support strategies.

advocating the shrinking of the bill's scopes, while suggesting an overall agreement with the bill's main objective (the fight against hate, violence against LGBTI subjects).

Figure 14: Opposition and Support Strategies by Parliamentary Group



Source: Author's elaboration.

The third member of the centre-right coalition, Forza Italia, requires particular attention: as shown in figure 14, FI MPs deploy all three strategies. This is mainly due to the high division between the liberals and the conservatives occupying the party's parliamentary benches. Within FI, there is a clear divide between MPs that strongly oppose the bill, considering it an

“illiberal” policy for its supposed consequences on freedom of expression, and MPs that, instead, are fully in favour of the adoption of LGBTI hate crimes policies. The former are in any case the majority of FI elected representatives. This intra-party conflict is not new in FI, and relates closely to the core liberal ideology of the party (Ozzano & Giorgi, 2015). Among the centre-right, FI is the only party that have been proactive in proposing bills and legislation around LGBTI rights, even if holding more moderate positions compared to centre-left parties (see Figure 15 in the appendix A3.1).⁹² The intra-party disagreement of FI was also highly mediatized and addressed publicly by some of FI MPs, who even left the parliamentary group in disagreement with the conservative party line. The analysis confirms that this intra-party conflict was also articulated on the parliamentary floor.

Lastly, two other parties, Italia Viva (IV) – a splinter party of the Democratic party, headed by PD former secretary Matteo Renzi – and the small SVP (the Südtiroler Volkspartei)⁹³ made predominant use of indirect opposition strategies. Both parties were nominally in favour of a policy change introducing a law fighting against LGBTI hate crimes, but both of them predominantly employed procedural and pragmatic frames in their speeches. They mainly advocated for the reaching of a consensus that would exclude the use of different gender and sexual categories in the bill – in particular the reference to sex and gender identity. All in all, their strategy is one of indirect opposition because it mainly wished for a *shrinking* of the meaning and scope presented in the original proposal.

4.7. Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter I focus on an Italian case of policy-making against LGBTI hate crimes, a type of policy neglected in the broader study of LGBTI rights policy-making, skewed towards same-sex partnerships and marriage equality. These policies, albeit considered less conflictual than others addressing different LGBTI rights, have a high record of failure in the Italian case. Using qualitative methods of analysis, I first focus on themes and frames used in the parliamentary debates on the policy. I subsequently identify the presence of three discursive strategies, each

⁹² On Forza Italia policy-making activities around same sex partnerships, see (Lavizzari, 2020, Chapter 3)

⁹³ The Südtiroler volkspartei (the South-tirolean people’s party) is a party representing the German linguistic minorities in the North-Est of the country. It is considered as a centre-left party and it usually run elections in coalition with the Democratic Party in the region of Trentino Alto Adige.

using specific forms of framing the policy and the policy process: direct support, direct opposition and indirect opposition. The strategic interaction of these discursive strategies and the constellation of the actors behind them explains how the ZAN bill failed.

Direct support and direct opposition were predominantly marked by moralized arguments. The support strategy casts the law as just, because it protected the endangered rights of a group depicted – not without moments of condescension – as defenceless victims (“these kids”, as they were addressed by centrist former PM Matteo Renzi). In a feminist intersectional framing, LGBTI rights to full protection and citizenship were also cast as benefitting women, affected by similar forms of patriarchy and societal prejudice. The direct opposition strategy shifts the attention to the dangers to the rights of those adversely affected by the *bill* itself: The real victims, the argument here goes, are children robbed of their right to “freedom of education of the family”; biological women whose rights are being sacrificed to the leftist “ideology of gender identity”; and conservative citizens penalized for their opinions by a totalitarian and “Orwellian” “ethical State”. As highly valued moral goods, rights, victimhood, and children are central objects of struggle in this episode of morality politics.

Each of these objects offers an opportunity for arguments (“protect the children”, “protect victims”, etc.) whose strong moral charge makes them hard to counter. At the same time, all of these moral referents are shown to be open to extensive re-framing depending on the political context. The way this happens in the ZAN debate shows interesting characteristics of a movement and counter-movement dynamic also present in this institutional setting: Frames are shaped by – or even directly emulate – the frames of opponents (e.g. in the case of references to human and women’s rights). The strategic interaction between direct support and direct opposition resembles the wider landscape of morality politics and LGBTI attitudes in Italy reviewed in the introductory chapter (section 1.2) as the simultaneity of a liberalization articulated in the language of human rights, a backlash driven particularly by religious conservatives and the radical right, and attitudinal polarization in the wider population. Anti-LGBTI hate crime policies are discussed along the same opposition between liberal and illiberal scripts as other issues in the arena of gender and sexuality policies, where the illiberal side accuses efforts at greater gender+ equality of pushing an individualization of society as well as an erosion of community and moral cohesion. In other words: despite the objective

peculiarities of anti-LGBTI hate crimes policies compared to other LGBTI rights policies, expressed in the discussion around the theme of “victims”, it seems that the debate analysed has been heavily influenced by the context in which it took place. Further research should analyse, in an historical institutional perspective, how the discursive strategies deployed by LGBTI policy promoters and religious-conservative antipreneurs have evolved since the start of public debates around LGBTI hate crimes policies in the 1990s, to highlight moments of discursive shifts.

By choosing to link hate crime legislation to the protection of gender identity and an agenda of sociocultural reform via school education, and later on refusing to disappoint civil society actors and movements by watering down the law proposal, the progressive proponents of the ZAN bill consciously waded into a territory of fierce and moralized opposition. Yet, as the analysis also shows, the fact that progressives lost out in this confrontation resulted from the prominence of a *third* strategy. This was the strategy here identified as an indirect opposition, appealing to pragmatism and consensus, as well as procedural and juridical arguments. The analysis of the partisan distribution of strategies reveals that direct strategies of support and opposition are adopted the party in line with their position on the GAL-TAN dimension. However, parties on the left side of the political spectrum are not consistently adopting direct support strategies, denoting a heterogeneity of views and sensitivities among their elected representatives. Parties on the right are more united and consistent in the oppositional approach, exception made for Forza Italia. Forces that adopt Indirect opposition strategies, often presenting themselves as sympathetic to the cause, were particularly located at the centre of the political spectrum (but also found among centre-left actors, which did not consistently support the bill). Exacerbated by a change of government majorities in the course of the debate, the quiet obstructionism of these actors fractured the supporters’ alliance and made it vulnerable to the attacks of a more cohesive right-wing opposition. While the final vote sinking the bill was secret, it is clear that the bill was rejected by a number of MPs from the camp which had originally supported the bill. What this illustrates is how also in a very visible arena such that of parliamentary debates, considered the “stage” of parliamentary politics, loud opposition is accompanied by quieter and less visible – but no less powerful – forms of resistance to the extension of gender+ equality. Extending the analyses of policy

failure in the previous chapters, quiet opposition is here shown as informing distinct discursive strategies at the stage of policy formulation.

5. Conclusions: Institutional resistance to gender equality+ policies between false universalism and procedural blockades

In this chapter I present the dissertation's findings and highlight the overall contributions.

The thesis starts by noticing that, despite the intensive efforts in gender+ equality policy-making, these efforts are often met with resistance, which ultimately hampers progress on the front of gender+ equality. Taking stock on the emerging literature on opposition to gender+ equality policies and feminist politics (see Verloo, 2018d), the empirical chapters of the thesis analysed different instances of what are, ultimately, cases of policy failure: cases in which either the policy outcomes were poor, or, cases in which the policy failed to materialize altogether, because resistances were so strong to impede policy adoption. The overarching research questions – articulated with specific research questions suiting each empirical chapter – I aimed to explore were:

Q1: How are policies for gender+ equality in the domain of citizenship resisted in the institutional sphere?

Q2: Which factors contribute to the failure of gender+ equality policies?

The dissertation focuses on the case of Italy that, as elucidated in the introductory chapter, is considered a paradigmatic case to explore and analyse varieties of resistances to the adoption and implementation of gender+ equality policies. Italy is a fitting example of a conservative gender regime. The combination of a Catholic legacy in the political and the societal sphere; the presence of a “traditionalist syndrome” in social attitudes towards gender inequality despite ongoing processes of secularization; the structural weakness of state feminism; and the current predominance of populist radical right in power in the midst of a deep-seated crisis of mainstream political parties, make instances of resistance to inclusionary policies very likely to occur. As the findings of this thesis resonate strongly with those made in other contexts, they can be useful for a comparative perspective on patterns of contention over gender+ equality in the current conjuncture. In particular, we see a renewed radical conservatism as a forceful transnational phenomenon drawing on similar frames taken from the matrix of anti-genderism.

In the empirical chapters I specifically focus on gender+ equality policies operating in the domain of *citizenship*. Consequently, at the centre of the analysis are policies that target the persistence of gender hierarchies in civil, political, and social rights. I focus on two different policies: non-quota gender representation policies and LGBTI rights policies, in particular anti-LGBTI hate crimes policies. These policies have so far not attracted extensive attention, especially compared to other policies such as same-sex marriage or gender quota regulations. A focus on the two policies allows for the exploration of resistance occurring at different stages of the policy process. In the case of gender representation policies, I analysed the phase of policy implementation (chapter 2) as well as the pre-adoption, in particular the moment of policy formulation and that of parliamentary decision-making (chapter 3). In the case of LGBTI hate crimes measures, I focused on the policy (non)adoption stage (chapter 4). One important element worth underlining here is that I have narrowed my attention to processes happening within institutional settings (be them parties or parliaments), thus on forms or opposition discursively articulated, performed and enacted by formal political actors. It is clear that, however, institutional actors (also) articulate claims of other political subjects situated outside of institutional politics, and so especially discursive forms of resistance can reflect and reverberate beyond the institutional sphere.

Returning to the imagery of the Penelope episode from the introduction, the studies of this thesis observed a dynamic of making and unmaking on a number of dimensions. In chapter 4, this was observed in the back and forth of the numerous failed attempts at policy-making in the field of LGBTI hate crimes; echoing a bumpy trajectory characterizing the Italian track record of gender equality policies sketched in chapters 1 and 3. On another level, discussed in chapter 2, we saw how parties make progress in gender representation as *law-makers*, but quietly unmake them as *law-takers* in those circumstances where they themselves are the object of regulation (see below). This demonstrates the ambivalent role that parties have as potential change agents *and* gendered institutions at the same time. Moreover, we saw a Penelope-like gap between stated goals and actual practices: Chapter 2 explored this in the case of symbolic politics signalling a will to change without actually creating the necessary policy instruments. Chapter 4 showed actors in the indirect opposition to the Zan bill declaring sympathy but quietly hitting the brake on (and eventually sinking) the legislation process. A

third theme is that of choices under conditions of political and discursive constraint: As Chapter 3 elucidates, the dynamics that led to the adoption of gender-targeted public funding in 1999 are shaped by the constraints imposed by the anti-quota ruling of the Constitutional Court in 1995, which restructured the definition of what were to be considered “appropriate” interventions to tackle women’s underrepresentation. In Chapter 4, the parliamentary debate discussing the Zan bill clearly show how the debate has been influenced by the current political conjuncture characterize by a backlash against LGBTI rights infused with anti-gender rhetoric; on the other hand it also shows the way opponents to the bill choose their moves in the strategic interaction of parliamentary debates, by emulating the human rights rhetoric of proponents.

What the analyses presented here clearly show, perhaps unsurprisingly, is that resistance to gender+ equality takes many shapes. It differs in the modes of resistance, in the dynamics that articulate them and, ultimately, in the main actors performing it, and even contributing to it while not being direct agents of opposition.

More specifically, table 6 summarizes and brings together the results of my empirical chapters in relation to my overarching research questions, bringing together findings on forms of institutional resistance to gender+ equality policies, factors contributing to the failure of these policies, as well as the actors central to resistance and failure. As argued by Roggeband (2018), the question who is opposing feminist politics and gender+ equality policies is an empirical one, as a wide variety of actors and frames can be expected to be found in actual oppositional dynamics, depending on the context.

Table 6: Summary of the findings

	How are GEPS resisted?	How do they fail?	Relevant actors
Chapter 2	Quiet resistance: Symbolic policy-making without will to change Inertia of bureaucracy	Lack of effective mechanisms in policy design (e.g. oversight) Sabotaging by parties in implementation	Political parties as law-takers Bureaucrats
Chapter 3	Quiet resistance: Logic of appropriateness excluding stronger instruments Loud resistance: Questioning validity of gender equality as norm	Historical legacy generating closed opportunity structure Lack of support structure (allied movements, civil society)	Judicial court Parties as law-makers Female MPs Femocrats
Chapter 4	Loud resistance: anti-genderism, morality politics Quiet resistance: obstruction by procedural points and 'pragmatic' appeals to consensus	Consisted and united framing by right-wing opponents Indirect opposition, especially from the centre Divisions and opportunism in support coalition	Right-wing parties, Vatican, Catholic civil society Centrists Supporters

Table 6 presents the outline of an entire complex of obstruction that prevents egalitarian efforts from succeeding. Component forms of this structure range from the loud to the quiet, involve different actors from political parties to civil society and bureaucracy, and are embedded in broader structural changes as well as the agency of individual actors. Taken together, the table shows a host of dynamics of resistance and factors leading to the failure of gender+ equality policies, as well as the institutional actors central to this failure.

Chapter 2, exploring the implementation of non-quota gender representation policies since 1999, shows a specific form of what I defined as quiet resistance: symbolic policy-making. Central protagonists of the resistance here are political parties as targets of the law. Almost regardless of their political leaning, the in-depth analysis of the implementation shows that, overall, parties lacked the political will to stick to the spirit of the policy, complied only formally when forced to do so, and thus effectively sabotaged the policy. In this process, we also see as a form of resistance the inertia of bureaucrats in charge of monitoring the policy implementation (although this attitude gradually improved over time). What this hints at is

that forms of quiet resistance can also consist in an inability of seeing gender equality as priority (Ahrens, 2018b). The analysis adds nuanced findings on the obstacles encountered in the gendering of male-dominated institutions, and the quiet forms of resistance enacted by defenders of the status quo of male privilege.

Adding to this, chapter 3 highlighted the importance of historical institutional legacies and contextual elements of the political opportunity structure for understanding resistance to gender+ equality policies. The chapter unveiled a complex interaction of resistance and failure of support: Resistance played out in the subtle limitation of opportunities via an understanding of appropriateness on the side of the courts and constitutionalist elites, excluding strong and more effective instruments for gender equality. The effectiveness of resistance was also increased by a lack of interest in the issue on the part of the feminist movement, resulting in a weak support structure for the policy; a fracture between femocrats and activists, and the failure of a cross-party alliance among women MPs to materialise during the phase of policy adoption in parliament. This constellation made it easier for the loud resistance of right-wing political actors, questioning the validity of gender equality as an institutional norm, to succeed in watering down the policy.

Chapter 4 continues this constellational analysis, while shifting the focus to another battlefield in the arena of gender+ politics and another stage of the policy cycle – the discursive struggle involved in the formulation of LGBT hate crime policy. Here, the study found a duality of direct and indirect forms of resistance: Oppositional actors on the radical right, supported by the Vatican and religious civil society actors, mobilised frames of morality talk and anti-gender movements. But the policy was also resisted by raising procedural points and calling for cross-party consensus in a way that effectively led to the obstruction of policy adoption. Here again, divisions in the support coalition of the policy weakened the effort for sexual equality in the face of a unified right-wing resistance. Chapter 4 highlighted the importance of frames and discursive interactions, a theme that was also touched upon in chapter 3. While the arguments in the two cases of *loud resistance* in chapters 3 and 4 differ, a common thread of arguments is what Krook (2016) calls “false universalism”: Arguments of resisters here deny the structurally gendered nature of citizenship and political institutions and reject the legitimacy of action against gendered inequality on the basis of a formalistic understanding of equality.

An example was the rhetoric against affirmative action seen in chapter 3 claiming that women do not need to be treated as a “protected species”. This rejection of forms of “special treatment”, which draws on egalitarian rhetoric to push back against egalitarian politics, was also seen in chapter 4, in the form of the accusation of unjust advantages and special rights for LGBTI people.

The results thus offer an extensive overview of dynamics of institutional resistance to gender and sexual equality policies as arenas that display a considerable degree of overlap in frames and dynamics. Moreover, the diachronic perspective taken in this study (moving from the debates of 1999 to those of 2021) revealed considerable continuity in the *actors* relevant for the resistance to gender equality, even where frames changed and the specific battlegrounds of policies shifted. Beyond the political right, the studies further add new insights on the continued gendered nature of Italian political parties as institutions; shown by the quiet ways in which parties circumvent regulations and fend off challenges to their own entrenched sexist structures. As a factor explaining the stagnation of gender representation in Italy, this is amplified by an alignment of forms of quiet resistance in the state and party bureaucracies. What is exemplified here are the intricate institutional interconnections at play in the implementation of gender policies, and the importance of feminist presence not only in politics but also in the bureaucracy.

By proxy, the shape of the resistance also reveals shortcoming of Italian feminist politics, namely the lack of connections between movements and institutional actors: With a feminist movement not interested in the rules and regulations of institutional politics, the femocrats, feminist lawmakers and bureaucrats, engaged in policy-making received only very little backing from civil society. This contrasts with the strong *parité* movement in France, where actors pushing for institutional reform were buoyed to success by a forceful mobilization on the streets; as well as the current alliance of feminist civil society and government officials in Spain. In this sense, the case studies of this thesis show that the institutionalization of the feminist movement, and its power in the arena of party politics, is a crucial factor for the success of gender equality policies. The absence of institutionalized feminism emboldens resistance to gender equality both in political debates and in the day-to-day workings of bureaucracies and institutions.

Conceptually, the studies here can be read as a plea for a holistic perspective in feminist policy studies, connecting the arenas of gender and sexuality politics as closely linked (if only by the common opponents of equality in both fields). The studies also show the value of broadening the focus beyond the far right. Although the radical right is a central actor in processes of democratic backsliding and backlash playing out in the field of gender politics, these processes also allowed to happen by an indifferent centre, and carried out in more mundane ways by persistent sexist and heteronormative structures in institutions like parties and bureaucracies. What loud and quiet resisters are fighting against is the spread of sexual democracy as introduced at the outset of this thesis: gender and sexuality are out of the box of the private and natural and in the sphere of politics and contention. At the same time, the gendered nature of institutions is not (yet?) common sense and there is considerably defensiveness against feminist gains pervading institutions and society. This is what enables a rhetoric of opposition to “gender ideology” to resonate, defending a gendered status quo by painting a genderblind idea of institutions as inherently neutral and only gendered by feminists and other radical activists. Gender equality policies are thus woven into a contradictory conjuncture of struggles over gender and sexual democracy. To continue achieving progress that goes beyond the merely symbolic, the cause of equality must be sustained by robust alliances between institutional actors and feminist movements, as well as precise scientific knowledge of the multiple ways in which resistance manifests itself.

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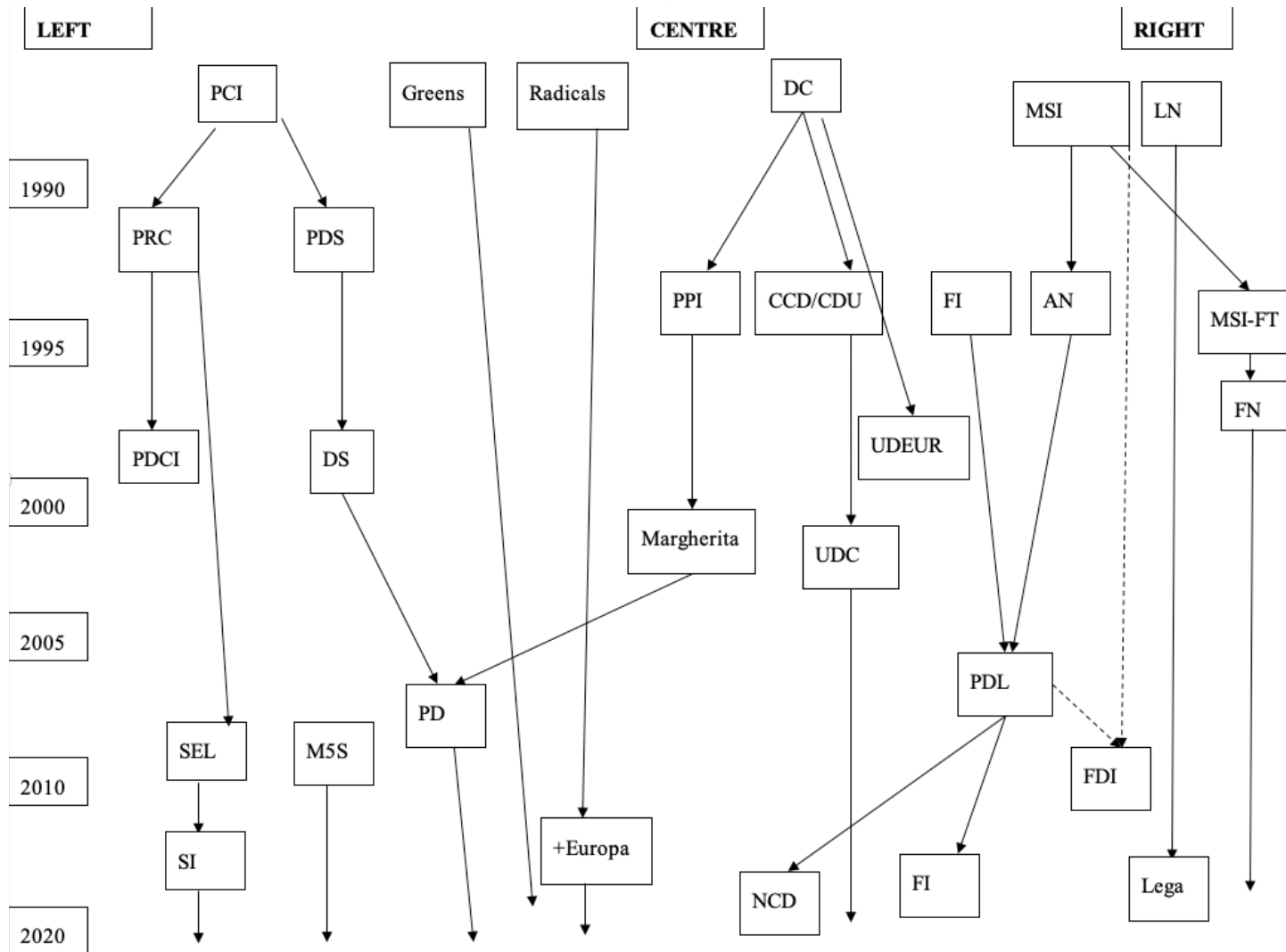
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Appendix Zero (A0) – A map of the Italian Party System



Source: Adapted from (Ozzano and Giorgi 2015)

Appendix One (A1) – Material for chapter 2

A1.1. – Official documents and additional sources

In the following, readers will find relevant information and reference to the original sources employed in chapter 3. I am listing references employed to present the comparative overview on gender target public funding in EU-27 countries and the list of party official documents consulted for the analysis and the construction of the GTPF datasets.

State of the art: Gender-targeted public funding legislation in EU-27

Below are listed relevant information about the presence and types of Gender-Targeted Public Funding (GTPF) implemented in EU countries, as of 2021. As a reminder, GTPF type 1 consists of measures promoting women’s (active) participation in politics and party life; GTPF type 2 incentivizes women’s candidacies; GTPF type 3 prizes the increase in women elected to parliaments (number of MPs). A synthetic description of national legislations’ mechanisms is followed by direct references to laws and secondary sources employed to map the presence of GTPF measures in EU-27 member states. Table 2 in the text is based on these sources.

Country	Year	Description	GTPF TYPES
Croatia	2003	Quota law imposing fines on parties failing to meet quota requirements	2
	2008	Quota law imposing fines on parties failing to meet quota requirements – increased fines and quota compliance (30% → 40%)	2
France	2000	Financial penalties for parties not respecting parity (50% ± 2%) in electoral lists	2
	2007	Financial penalties for parties not respecting parity (50% ± 2%) in electoral lists – increased rate	2
	2014	Financial penalties for parties not respecting parity (50% ± 2%) in electoral lists – increased rate	2
Ireland	2012	Quota law specifies financial penalties (public funding) to encourage parties to field female candidates	2
Italy	1999		1
	2012		2
	2014		3
Portugal	2006	Quota law imposing fines on parties failing to meet quota requirements	3
Romania	2006	State funding will increase in proportion to the number of seats won by female candidates (Law no. 334/2006).	3

Links to legislative resources:

Croatia:

- Gender Equality Act, Narodne novine 082/2008.
- Gender Equality Act, Narodne novine 069/2017, amendements to the 2008 legislation, available at: <https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Zakoni/2018/Act%20on%20Gender%20Equality%20ENG.pdf> (accessed in June 2022)

France:

- Loi n° 2000-493 du 6 juin 2000 tendant à favoriser l'égal accès des femmes et des hommes aux mandats électoraux et fonctions électives, available at : <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGIARTI000006355732/2000-06-07#LEGIARTI000006355732> (accessed in June 2022)
- Loi n° 2007-128 du 31 janvier 2007 tendant à promouvoir l'égal accès des femmes et des hommes aux mandats électoraux et fonctions électives, available at : <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGIARTI000006259863/2007-02-01#LEGIARTI000006259863> (accessed in June 2022)
- Loi n° 2014-873 du 4 août 2014 pour l'égalité réelle entre les femmes et les hommes, available at : <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000029330832/> (accessed June 2022)

Ireland:

- The Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012, available at: <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2012/act/36/enacted/en/html>, (accessed in June 2022)

Portugal:

- Lei Organica Law 3/2006, available at: <https://dre.pt/dre/legislacao-consolidada/lei-organica/2006-34530775> (accessed in June 2022)

Romania:

- Law No. 334/2006 on the Financing of the Activity of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns, available at: https://europam.eu/data/mechanisms/PF/PF%20Laws/Romania/Romania_law%20on%20the%20financing%20of%20political%20parties_2006_amended2015_RO.pdf, (accessed in June 2022).

Datasets consulted:

- EUROPAM dataset, available at: <https://europam.eu/?module=legislation>
- Party Law in Modern Europe dataset, available at: <http://www.partylaw.leidenuniv.nl/>
- Political Finance Database, International IDEA, available at: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/political-finance-database>

Secondary sources consulted:

- Bodiroga-Vukobrat N and Martinović A (2017) Gender Equality policies in Croatia – An Update. *Policy Department on Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs*. Brussels: EU parliament

- Buckley F and Gregory R (2020) Gendering Candidate Selection in Ireland: Incentivizing Parties Through State Funding. In: Muriaas RL, Wang V, and Murray R (eds) *Gendered Electoral Financing*. Abington, UK: Routledge.
- Espírito- Santo A (2018) From Electoral to corporate board Quotas. The case of Portugal. In: Lépinard É and Rubio-Marín R (eds) *Transforming Gender Citizenship: The Irresistible Rise of Gender Quotas in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mazur AG, Lépinard E, Durovic A, et al. (2020) Party penalties for parity: less than meets the eye. *French Politics* 18(1–2): 28–49.
- Muriaas R, Mazur A, Hoard S (2021) Payments and Penalties for Democracy: Gendered Electoral Financing in Action Worldwide. *American Political Science Review*, 116(2), 502–515.

Italian Parties' Financial Reports

Since 1981, Italian political parties are required to compile annual financial reports, accounting for their financial activities, revenues and expenses (art. 4, law 659/1981 and following modifications). After that, the annual financial reports were published on the State Gazette (Gazzetta Ufficiale dello Stato - G.U.).

Over the course of time, different reforms have interested the Italian political finance regime, after the first adoption of public funding for political parties in 1975 (for an overview, see Pizzimenti (2017)). Most of these reforms concerned the amount of public funds allocated to parties, and the division between electoral reimbursements or funds for the ordinary running of party organizations. Especially after 1993, years in which a popular referendum abolished direct public funding for political parties as a result of the illegal and corruptive practices emerged during the Clean Hands scandals, subsequent reforms pertained the allocation and management of electoral reimbursement. Only since 2012 (law 96/2012) have the reforms of the party finance regime also concerned the transparency of parties' financial operations, establishing conditionality mechanisms. These transparency requirements include the publication and archiving of parties' financial documentation on their websites, thus making it possible for a wide range of users to consult it directly. In the following, I list the sources consulted for each party between 2012 and 2021, available on their websites. For the period between 1999-2012, I relied on a personal archive of official documents and financial reports that I collected for previous studies, based on the publications available on the State Gazette and archival research (Feo, 2016; Ignazi, Feo, & Pizzimenti, 2016). Original documents in PDF format are available by the author upon request.

PRC

- 2012: Rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://web.rifondazione.it/archivio/direzionepolitica/130629/rendiconto2012prc.pdf>
- 2013: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: http://www.rifondazione.it/rendiconto_al_31_dicembre_2013.pdf
- 2014: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: http://www.rifondazione.it/rendiconto_31_12_2014.pdf
- 2015: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: http://www.rifondazione.it/rendiconto_31_12_2015.pdf
- 2016: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.rifondazione.it/primapagina/rendiconto2016dapubblicare.pdf>
- 2017: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.rifondazione.it/primapagina/rendiconto2017.pdf>
- 2018: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.rifondazione.it/primapagina/rendiconto2018.pdf>
- 2019: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.rifondazione.it/primapagina/rendiconto2019.pdf>
- 2020: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.rifondazione.it/primapagina/rendiconto2020.pdf>
- 2021: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.rifondazione.it/primapagina/rendiconto2021.pdf>

SEL-SI

- 2011: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.sinistraecologialiberta.it/partito/tesoreria/>
- 2012: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.sinistraecologialiberta.it/partito/tesoreria/>
- 2013: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.sinistraecologialiberta.it/partito/tesoreria/>
- 2014: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.sinistraecologialiberta.it/partito/tesoreria/>
- 2015: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.sinistraecologialiberta.it/partito/tesoreria/>
- 2016: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.sinistraecologialiberta.it/partito/tesoreria/>
- 2017: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto d'esercizio, available at: <http://www.sinistraecologialiberta.it/partito/tesoreria/>
- 2018: Rendiconto e bilancio, available at: <https://www.sinistraitaliana.si/bilanci-e-rendiconti/>
- 2019: Rendiconto e bilancio, available at: <https://www.sinistraitaliana.si/bilanci-e-rendiconti/>
- 2020: Rendiconto e bilancio, available at: <https://www.sinistraitaliana.si/bilanci-e-rendiconti/>

- 2021: Rendiconto e bilancio, available at: <https://www.sinistraitaliana.si/bilanci-e-rendiconti/>

PDS-DS-PD

- 2012: Bilancio e relazione del tesoriere al rendiconto, available at: <https://www.partitodemocratico.it/trasparenza/storico-bilanci/bilancio-2012/>
- 2013: Bilancio e relazione del tesoriere al rendiconto, available at: <https://www.partitodemocratico.it/trasparenza/storico-bilanci/bilancio-2013/>
- 2014: Bilancio e relazione del tesoriere al rendiconto, available at: <https://www.partitodemocratico.it/trasparenza/storico-bilanci/bilancio-2014/>
- 2015: Bilancio e relazione del tesoriere al rendiconto, available at: <https://www.partitodemocratico.it/trasparenza/storico-bilanci/bilancio-2015/>
- 2016: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto di esercizio, available at: <https://www.partitodemocratico.it/trasparenza/storico-bilanci/2016-2/>
- 2017: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto di esercizio, available at: <https://www.partitodemocratico.it/trasparenza/storico-bilanci/2017-2/>
- 2018: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto di esercizio, available at: <https://www.partitodemocratico.it/trasparenza/storico-bilanci/2018-2/>
- 2019: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto di esercizio, available at: <https://www.partitodemocratico.it/trasparenza/storico-bilanci/2019-2/>
- 2020: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto di esercizio, available at: <https://www.partitodemocratico.it/trasparenza/storico-bilanci/2020-2/>
- 2021: Documentazione relativa al rendiconto di esercizio, available at: <https://www.partitodemocratico.it/trasparenza/storico-bilanci/2021-2/>

CCD-UDC

- 2011: Bilancio UDC, available at: <https://www.udc-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Bilancio-UDC-2011.pdf>
- 2012: Rendiconto Completo UDC, available at: <https://www.udc-italia.it/view/bilancio/>
- 2013: Bilancio UDC, available at: <https://www.udc-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/BilancioUdc2013Completo.pdf>
- 2014: Bilancio UDC 2014, available at: <https://www.udc-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Rendiconto-Esercizio-2014-UDC.pdf>
- 2015: Bilancio UDC 2014, available at: <https://www.udc-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Rendiconto-Esercizio-2015-UDC.pdf>
- 2016: Bilancio UDC 2016, available at: <https://www.udc-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/UDC-BILANCIO-2016.pdf>
- 2017: Bilancio UDC, available at: <https://www.udc-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Bilancio-UDC-2017.pdf>
- 2018: Bilancio UDC, available at: <https://www.udc-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/UDC-Bilancio-2018.pdf>
- 2019: Bilancio UDC, available at: <https://www.udc-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/bilancio2019.pdf>

- 2020: Bilancio UDC, available at: <https://www.udc-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/BilancioUdc2020.pdf>
- 2021: Bilancio UDC, available at: <https://www.udc-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Bilancio-Udc-2021.pdf>

FI-FI

- 2013: rendiconto di esercizio FI, available at: http://www.forzaitalia.it/notizie/11223/Rendiconto_dell_esercizio_2013
- 2014: rendiconto di esercizio FI, available at: http://www.forzaitalia.it/notizie/11762/Rendiconto_dell_esercizio_2014
- 2015: rendiconto di esercizio FI, available at: http://www.forzaitalia.it/notizie/11788/Rendiconto_dell_esercizio_2015
- 2016: rendiconto di esercizio FI, available at: http://www.forzaitalia.it/notizie/11794/Rendiconto_dell_esercizio_2016
- 2017: rendiconto di esercizio FI, available at: http://www.forzaitalia.it/notizie/11829/Rendiconto_dell_esercizio_2017
- 2018: rendiconto di esercizio FI, available at: http://www.forzaitalia.it/notizie/11860/Rendiconto_dell_esercizio_2018
- 2019: Rendiconto di esercizio FI, available at: http://www.forzaitalia.it/notizie/11863/Rendiconto_dell_esercizio_2019
- 2020: Rendiconto di esercizio FI, available at: http://www.forzaitalia.it/notizie/11873/Rendiconto_dell_esercizio_2020
- 2021: Rendiconto di esercizio FI, available at: http://www.forzaitalia.it/notizie/11886/Rendiconto_dell_esercizio_2021

LN-League

- 2012: Bilancio, available at: <https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/BilancioLegaNord/Bilancio%202012.pdf>
- 2013: Rendiconto della gestione, available at: <https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/BilancioLegaNord/Bilancio2013/Bilancio%202013.pdf>
- 2014: Bilancio, available at: <https://www.leganord.org/component/phocadownload/category/222-bilancio-2014>
- 2015: Bilancio, available at: <https://www.leganord.org/component/phocadownload/category/251-bilancio-2015>
- 2016: rendiconto, available at: <https://www.leganord.org/component/phocadownload/category/253-bilancio-lega-nord-2016>
- 2017: rendiconto, available at: https://static.legapersalvinipremier.it/files/rendiconto_2017/Bilancio.pdf
- 2018: rendiconto, available at: https://static.legapersalvinipremier.it/files/rendiconto_2018/Bilancio_2018_Lega_per_Salvini_Premier.pdf

- 2019: rendiconto, available at: https://static.legapersalvinipremier.it/files/rendiconto_2019/Bilancio_2019_Lega_per_Salvini_Premier.pdf
- 2020: rendiconto di gestione, available at: https://static.legapersalvinipremier.it/files/rendiconto_2020/Bilancio_2020_Lega_per_Salvini_Premier.pdf
- 2021: rendiconto di gestione, available at: https://static.legapersalvinipremier.it/files/rendiconto_2021/Rendiconto_gestione_2021_Lega_per_Salvini_Premier.pdf

Fdl

- 2012: relazione di gestione esercizio, available at <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Bilancio2012.pdf>
- 2013: bilancio, available at: <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/bilancio-2013/>
- 2014: bilancio, available at: <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/bilancio-2014/>
- 2015: bilancio, available at: <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/bilancio-2015/>
- 2016: bilancio, available at: <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/bilancio-2016/>
- 2017: bilancio, available at: <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/bilancio2017/>
- 2018: bilancio, available at: <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/bilancio-2018/>
- 2019: bilancio, available at: <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/bilancio2019/>
- 2020: bilancio, available at: <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/bilancio-2020/>
- 2021: bilancio, available at: <https://www.fratelli-italia.it/bilancio-2021/>

Third Party Reports

The annual reports issued by the “Transparency Commission” consulted are available at the following website: <https://www.camera.it/leg18/1234>

A1.2. Dataset

The financial reports were employed to build a dataset on the financial activities of Italian political parties between 1999 and 2021. The dataset contains 142 party-year observations.

Below, I list the variables employed in the analysis for chapter three:

- PARTY – name of political party
- PARTYID – party label, accounting for predecessor/successor party if present
- YEAR – year of observation
- GTPF – amount of gender targeted public funding reported in the observation year
- PF – amount of direct public funding received in the observation year
- 2XMILLE – amount of indirect public funding (tax returns) received in the observation year
- TOTINC – total income of the party accounted for the observation year
- CUTOFF – value (5 or 10) of the percentage of public funding that should be earmarked for women’s participation activities in the observation year
- GTPF_REV – amount of gender targeted public funding reported in the observation year, revalued at Euro 2020
- PF_REV – amount of direct public funding received in the observation year, revalued at Euro 2020
- TOTINC_REV – total income of the party accounted for the observation year, revalued at Euro 2020
- 2XMILLE_REV – amount of indirect public funding (tax returns) received in the observation year, revalued at Euro 2020

A1.3. List of Interviews

ID	Interviewee	Status	Source	Format	Length
Type: Elites interviews					
GTPF_INT.1	Antonio Misiani, Treasurer of the Democratic Party (2009-2013)	Conducted in person 02/05/2018	Interview list	Semi-structured, Only field notes	45 min
GTPF_INT.2	Marco Gelmini, Treasurer of the Party of the Communist Refoundation (PRC) (2011-2019)	Conducted in person 17/05/2018	Interview list	Semi-structured	66 min
GTPF_INT.3	Marilena Fabbri, MP member of the women's inter-parliamentary group at the Chamber of Deputies. Involved in the quota laws policy-making process	Conducted via phone 30/05/2018	Referred by Antonio Misiani	Semi-structured	65 min
GTPF_INT.4	Simona Piazzoni, MP member of the women's inter-parliamentary group at the Chamber of Deputies. Involved in the quota laws policy-making process	Conducted in person 19/01/2018	Interview list	Semi-structured	46 min
	Party treasurer FI (2015-2021)	Accepted on 28/04/2018, then no response	Interview list		
	Party treasurer PDL (2008-2013)	No response	Interview list		
	Party treasurer LN (2012-2013)	No response	Interview list		
	Party treasurer LN_the League (2014-2021)	No response	Interview list		
	Party treasurer FdI (2014-2018)	No response	Interview list		
	Party treasurer FdI (2018-to date)	No response	Interview list		

Type: Expert Interviews					
GTPF_INT.5	Secretariat of the Transparency Commission	Conducted via email	Interview list	Structured	NA
GTPF_INT.6	<i>[Non allowed to disclose identity]</i> , Officer at the Secretariat of the Transparency Commission	Conducted via phone on 12/07/2022	Redirected by the Secretariat	Semi-structured, only field notes	20 min.
GTPF_INT.7	Fabio Battista, Officer at the Treasury Department of the Chamber of Deputies	Conducted via phone on 12/07/2022	Redirected by the Treasury Department of the Chamber of Deputies	Semi-structured, only field notes	20 min.

Appendix Two (A2) – Material for chapter 3

A2.2. List of interviews

ID	Interviewee	Status	Source	Format	Length
Type: Elites interviews					
NONQUOTA_INT.1	Silvia Costa, MP President of the national commission for equality and equal opportunities for man and woman (CNPPODU) between 1996-2000	Conducted in person, 16/01/2020	Interview list	Semi-structured	100 min
NONQUOTA_INT.2	Alessandra Bocchetti, Feminist activist, founder of the cultural center Virginia Woolf (Rome) and member of the CNPPODU (1996-2000)	Conducted online, 13/07/2022 then in person follow-up 22/08/2022	Interview list	In-depth	115 min + 125 min
NONQUOTA_INT.3	Livia Turco, MP President of the national commission for equality and equal opportunities for man and woman (CNPPODU) between 1995-1996 Proponent of first quota law introduced in 1993	Conducted online 05/09/2022	Interview list and referred by Alessandra Bocchetti	Semi-structured	77 min
	Emma Bonino, MP activist of the radical party since the 1970 and member of the +Europa party	Refused on 04/07/2022	Interview list		
	FI politician, Proponent of one amendment introducing conditionality mechanisms for women's participation in politics in the law 57/1999	No response	Interview list		

	FI politician, Proponent of the amendment introducing conditionality mechanisms for women's participation in politics in the law 57/1999	No response	Interview list		
	PPI politician, Proponent of the amendment introducing conditionality mechanisms for women's participation in politics in the law 57/1999	No response	Interview list		
Type: Expert Interviews					
NONQUOTA_INT.4	Filomena Gallo, President of the association "Luca Coscioni" and lawyer, advocates for reproductive rights	Conducted online 31/07/2022	Referred to by Emma Bonino	Semi- Structured	56 min
NONQUOTA_INT.5	Annalisa Rosselli, Professor at University Roma Tor Vergata, author of EU-report "The Policy of Gender Equality in Italy"	Conducted online 18/07/2022	Interview list	Semi-structured	50 min

Appendix Three (A3) – Material for chapter 4

A3.1. LGBTI hate crimes legislative processes: a longitudinal overview

Having set the context in which debates about LGBTI hate crimes and anti-discrimination laws have emerged, we can also notice that these proposals have a somewhat unfortunate trajectory in Italian parliamentary history. Since the 1990s there have been many attempts to adopt measures that would specifically target gender-based discriminations and hate crimes, all of them resulting in long, thwarted and ultimately fruitless parliamentary processes. At their core, all attempts tried to intervene on those laws and regulations that form the backbone of Italian norms to prevent hate crimes. More specifically:

a) Law 654/1957 – so-called “Reale law” – ratified the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination signed in New York in 1966. The law sanctions (art.3) the *propaganda of ideas* based on racial or ethnic superiority and hatred, as well as the *incitement to commit*, or the *commission, of acts of discrimination* on the grounds of race, ethnicity, nationality or religion, with imprisonment of up to one year and six months or a fine of up to € 6000. It also sanctions the *incitement to commit* or the *commission of violence* or acts that could provoke violence on racial, ethnic, national or religious grounds, with imprisonment from 6 months to 4 years. Likewise, the law aims at counteracting the spread of discriminatory and violent behaviours. Consequentially, it sanctions the *participation in organizations* – movements, groups and associations – whose purpose is to *promote discriminations* or incite to commit discriminations and violence on racial, ethnic, national or religious grounds, with imprisonment from 6 months to 4 years. Harsher penalties – imprisonment from 1 to 6 years – are assigned to people that directly lead and promote these types of organizations.

b) Law-decree 122/1993 – so-called “Mancino law” – modified the Reale law by imposing more severe punishments for the various types of hate speech and crimes and discriminations identified therein. Moreover, it introduces (art.1) accessory penalties for people found guilty of committing hate crimes or acts of discriminations on the grounds of race, ethnicity, nationality or religion. These additional penalties include the obligation to perform unpaid social work; the obligation to stay at home within specified hours; the suspension of driving licences or passports; the prohibition to possess weapons and the prohibition to participate, in any form, in electoral propaganda activities. The law also takes in account and sanctions the disposal of discriminatory symbols during sportive competition and, more generally, during public gatherings. The Mancino law also introduced (art.3) “aggravating circumstances” that, more generally apply to all kind of offences/crimes moved by discriminating motives: in other words, for any offence committed

by a perpetrator with the purpose of discrimination – with the exception of those punished with life imprisonment – the related penalty is increased by (up to) half.

c) Article 604*bis* and 604*ter* of the Penal Code considers as criminal offences the *propaganda* of ideas based on racial or ethnic superiority or hatred, as well as the *committing of discriminatory or violent acts* on racial, ethnic, national or religious grounds, together *with incitement to commit* such acts. This article replaced art. 3 of the Reale Law (see point a above) in 2018.

Taking the Italian framework for hate crimes as a starting point, all reform attempts tried to extend the range of application for these laws – either the Reale-Mancino law or specific articles of the penal code – so to include gender-based discriminations beside other motives of discrimination such as race, ethnicity, nationality or religion. The range of thus extending the grounds of discrimination to sexual orientation and later also to gender identity and disability. As we shall see, in some cases the scope of the proposals is not limited to the “update” of Italian legislation for hate crimes prevention, but they combine criminal prosecutions aimed at achieving security for sexual and gender minorities with the articulation of other prevention measures, targeted to operate on a social and cultural level. In the following we describe the different proposal in more details, following a chronological perspective, and then provide a comparative overview.

The 13th legislature (1996-2001)

The first attempt to address LGBTI hate crimes dates back to the 13th legislature (1996-2001), in which several governments backed by a centre-left majority followed one another. During these years, a first bill was tabled in 1996 by Nichi Vendola, MP for the Party of the Communist Refoundation (PRC) – and first openly gay representative in the Italian parliament. The draft bill (C. 2551, 1996) proposed to extend the effects of the so-called “Mancino law” adopted in 1993 – to crimes based on sexual orientation.

A second bill was presented in 1999 by Antonio Soda, the first signatory, and other members of the parliamentary group of the Democratic Left (Sinistra democratica- l’Ulivo, SD-U). The draft bill (C. 5865, 1999) provided a wider spectrum of measures aimed at preventing and punishing discriminations on grounds of sexual orientation, compared to the bill proposed by MP Vendola. First, this proposal intervened, beside the already mentioned “Mancino law”, also on the so-called “Reale law” approved in 1975. Beside the penal dimension, it also

touches on the cultural dimension, intervening on sexual education programmes to contrast sexual discriminations in schools. Lastly, the Soda bill also aimed at introducing the “right to sexual privacy” by forbidding investigation into the sexual life and sexual orientation of citizens.

The two bills were combined during the initial discussion in the Constitutional Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house of the Italian Parliament, herein CoD). Interestingly, the deputy Paolo Palma, rather than the proponents, acted as a speaker during the committee process. His belonging to a small party, – the Popular party of Italy, PPI – of the “post-Christian democratic galaxy” (Pizzimenti, 2007) within the centre-left coalition of DS-U made of him a better/safer speaker compared to the bills’ sponsors who came from leftist traditions.

In September 1999, the Constitutional Affairs Committee discontinued its assessment on the bill after a few meetings. The halt was motivated by the fact that the government (D’Alema II) had announced the willingness to put forward a comprehensive bill on discrimination prevention. In these changed circumstances – with the government taking the lead on the proposal – the bill’s speaker decided to resume the Committee workings after receiving the Government proposal to shorten the legislative procedure (Camera dei Deputati, 1999). However, the D’Alema government was replaced a few months after, the Government proposal on LGBTI antidiscrimination never came off the ground and the legislative process came to a standstill.

The 14th legislature (2001-2006) and 15th legislature (2006-2008)

The 14th, which saw the return to government of the centre-right coalition formed by FI, AN and LN, was an important one for gender equality policies in the country. In 2003, in fact, the amendment of art. 51 of the Constitution allowed for the provision of affirmative actions in the country. However, the centre-right government coalition did not set a particularly favourable environment for the advancements of LGBTII rights. Only one proposal about the introduction of LGBTI hate crimes was tabled in parliament in 2001, by MP Titti De Simone, elected in the lists of the Communist Refoundation. Titti De Simone was also a prominent

figure of the Italian LGBTI movement, being among the founders and then the president of the association “Arcilesbica”, the flag-ship association for lesbian activism in the country.

The bill tabled by De Simone set up a broader focus on LGBTI discriminations, including also the reform of the law Reale-Mancino to address hate crimes on the ground of gender identity and sexual orientation. The bill, however, was never scheduled for discussion.

15th legislature (2006-2008)

In the following parliamentary term, which saw the alternation in government of a new centre-left government, the bill presented during the 14th legislature was proposed again by its first signatory De Simone. While a discussion around another bill presented by De Simone addressing same-sex partnerships was initiated, now discussion was held on the topic of LGBTI hate crimes in parliament. The abrupt ending of the legislature ceased all further attempts of reform.

The 16th legislature (2008-2013)

Another window for the discussion of LGBTI anti-discrimination regulation opened during the 16th legislature, under Berlusconi’s fourth government (2008-2011) backed by a centre-right majority, which was then followed by a “technocratic” government led by Mario Monti (2011-2013). We can recall three different and consequential attempts to promote LGBTI anti-discrimination laws, two under Berlusconi’s government, and the last under Monti’s one. At the beginning of the legislature, the CoD Justice Committee started examining two bills – bill C.1658, presented by Anna Paola Concia and other deputies of the Democratic party (PD), and bill C.1882 presented by Antonio di Pietro, MP for the Italy of Values (IdV), a centre-left liberal niche party with a strong focus on anti-corruption. The proposals aimed at providing protection against discrimination based on individual's sexual orientation or gender identity by integrating the relevant articles in the so-called Reale law and in the Mancino law with these additional categories (see above for reference). Most notably, both bills referred to both homophobia and transphobia in their scope.

Following a wide-ranging debate in the Committee, the breadth of the bills was reduced and the resulting text presented by the Justice Committee (AC 1658-1882-A), did not aim to amend the Mancino and Reale laws, but instead to modify the Penal Code (art. 61), introducing

aggravating circumstances for crimes motivated by the sexual orientation of the offended person – mentions to gender identity were scrapped. MP Anna Paola Concia, from the democratic Party, was nominated rapporteur. The proposal passed to the plenary discussion in the CoD (13th October 2009) in this reduced version – which most notably had no mention of gender identity, and opted for a legal instrument providing lower levels of protection against discrimination. Yet, during the session, the bill was rejected after the Union of the Centre (UDC) party proposed to discard the bill appealing to procedural reasons. As explained by one of the interviewees, the adoption of a “weaker” text compared to the bills presented by Concia and Di Pietro after the Committee discussion was a necessary compromise to bring the proposal to the parliamentary floor for a plenary discussion. Being in the parliamentary opposition, the actors in favour of the bill acted under considerable constraints [ZAN_INT.2].

In 2011, the issue came again to the attention of the CoD Justice Committee with a bill presented by Antonello Soro and other MPs of the Democratic Party (C. 2802). The bill, partially taking up the content of AC 1658-1882-A (see above), proposed to add homophobia and transphobia to the list of “aggravating circumstances” in the commission of crimes, considered under Article 61 of the Penal Code. Beyond that, the bill proposed to set up annual reports by the National Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR) for mapping the advancements the actions taken, the objectives achieved and the guidelines followed to contrast LGBTI discrimination. In other words, to increase Government’s accountability on LGBTI issues. While the majority of the members of the Committee wanted to reject the bill as a whole, the rapporteur for the centre-left in the Committee, the Democratic Party MP Anna Paola Concia, presented an alternative text in the attempt to find a minimum consensus, what she called “a last-resort agreement to make the law happen” [ZAN_INT.2], which resulted from the joint work with some centre-right MPs from FI who were in favour of the bill, in particular the Ministry for Equal Opportunity Mara Carfagna, deviating from their party line. This alternative text, however, was not approved in the Committee, where LN, PDL and UDC voted against. As suggested during the interview, however, some resistance came also from the centre-left MPs: on the one hand, the proposal was considered ineffective and not responsive to LGBTI movement’s demands. On the other, this resistance was rooted in strategic considerations. In fact, an overt collaboration with FI on policy issues usually owned

by the left and centre-left was perceived as counterproductive [ZAN_INT.2]. After the rejection of this compromise, the original bill proposed by Soro (C. 2802) moved to the plenary in the spring of 2011 (23 of May 2011) but, similarly to the previous proposal, it was rejected without any discussion after constitutionality issues were raised by the PDL, Lega and UDC parliamentary groups (Camera dei Deputati, 2011). In a last attempt, the CoD Justice Committee returned to work on the issue of LGBTI hate crimes in 2012, after the centre-right government led by Berlusconi was replaced by a new “technocratic” government led by Mario Monti and supported by a large majority. Two bills were tabled this time, again presented by IdV MP Antonio di Pietro and others (C. 2807), and by Anna Paola Concia and other PD representatives (C. 4631). Both proposals propose to exclusively amend the so-called Mancino-Reale law, in two slightly different ways. While Di Pietro's proposal uses the terms homophobia and transphobia, Concia's proposal returns to the original wording of sexual orientation and gender identity (as the very first proposals tabled during the 16th legislature). The two bills were lumped together in a unified text by adopting Di Pietro's proposal as the starting point. However, the Committee discussion lasted shortly, blocked from opposition coming from the Lega and FI parliamentary groups, which questioned a) the necessity of creating a specific case of LGBTI hate crimes; b) resorting to a reform of the so-called Mancino Law to do so, preferring general revisions of art. 60 of the Penal code. As highlighted in the interviews, [ZAN_INT.2; ZAN_INT.3], the League has historically been contrary to the adoption of the Mancino law. The law is deemed a too restrictive a law, limiting freedom of speech, and in many occasions the League tried to repeal it.

A newly appointed rapporteur received the mandate to report the Committee's antagonism to the plenary assembly that, accordingly, decided to not start a discussion of anti LGBTI hate crime measures in the plenaries (Camera dei Deputati, 2013).

The 17th legislature (2013-2018)

The 17th legislature sees the return of the centre-left in government, which resulted in some advancements regarding the institutional recognition of LGBTI subjectivities. Most notably, a law legally recognizing same sex unions was approved in 2016 (Donà, 2021; Lasio et al., 2019; Ozzano, 2020), and a school reform led to the introduction of gender-inclusive education in

scholarly programmes. In this somewhat favourable context, which actually induced the rise of a remarkable anti-gender mobilisation cycle (Lavizzari, 2020; Prearo, 2020), the centre-left government picked up again the issue of LGBTI hate crimes. On this issues, three bills were presented, right at the beginning of the parliamentary term:

a) The first bill, presented by Scalfarotto and signed by almost all members of the PD parliamentary group (C.245), is in line with previous draft bills that proposed to extend the application of the Reale-Mancino law to gender-based discriminations. In particular it proposed to tackle discriminations based on “sexual identity” – defined as the interaction of biological sex, gender identity, gender roles and sexual orientation.

b) a second bill, presented by Fiano and other members of the PD parliamentary group (C. 280), also proposed to extend the application of the Reale-Mancino law to discriminations based on disability.

c) a third bill, presented by Brunetta and another two MPs of the parliamentary group Forza Italia (C.1071), which proposed to amend art. 61 of the Penal Code (the article that instructs aggravating circumstances) so to include sex, sexual orientation and disability.

The three bills were combined in a unified text, then approved in the CoD Justice Committee. Building on PD’s proposals the unified text proposed to act on the so-called Reale-Mancino Law by adding homophobia and transphobia to the lists of discriminations covered by the law. The Committee’s bill was adopted in September 2013 by the CoD after a relatively short parliamentary discussion. Notwithstanding the swift approval, the Scalfarotto bill has not been discussed in the Senate of the Republic. This no-action was due to two different factors: on the one hand the centre-left majority at the Senate was much weaker, numerically, compared to the centre-left majority in the CoD, an element of “real politik” which envisaged a more complex parliamentary process for the bill. On the other hand, the centre-left government at the time was also supporting the approval of other pieces of legislation concerning LGBTI rights, as mentioned above – same-sex partnerships and gender-inclusive education in schools. As explained by one of the interviewees, in this case “the anti-LGBTI hate crimes bill died because of the Left” [ZAN_INT.3] because the government decided to prioritise

the same-same partnerships bill, and the individual senators in charge of LGBTI issues within the PD stepped away from bringing the bill's discussion forward [ZAN_INT.3].

The 18th legislature (2018-2022)

In the current parliamentary term, the Italian parliament has again tried to approve LGBTI anti-discrimination measures, in light of the “half-success” reached during the previous term. For the first part of the legislature, a government formed by the Five Star Movement (M5S) and populist-right the League did not prioritise LGBTI hate crimes, even though different bills had been presented by different parliamentary groups. The issue only entered the parliamentary schedule in October 2019, after the populist-right La Lega left the government and a centre-left coalition government between the Five Star Movement and the Democratic Party was appointed in September (Feb 2022). Different bills were combined during the preliminary activities of the CoD Justice Committee:

a) one bill presented by Laura Boldrini (C. 107) and another MP of the parliamentary group of Free and Equal (LeU), a splinter of the PD. The bill proposes to extend the application of the Reale-Mancino law to gender-based discriminations. Like the Scafaro bill in the 17th legislature (see above) it proposed to tackle discriminations based on “sexual identity” – defined as the interaction of biological sex, gender identity, gender roles and sexual orientation. The bill did not limit its action to penal regulations, but it also foresees the introduction of an independent authority to monitor over hate crimes occurrences, provide assistance to hate crimes victims and promote antidiscrimination prevention.

b) one bill, presented by Alessandro Zan (C.569) and other MPs of the PD, proposes to modify the Reale-Mancino law and extends its application to crimes committed on the base of gender identity and sexual orientation of the victims.

c) one bill presented by Ivan Scalfarotto (C.868) and other MPs of the PD. Similarly to the previous bills, it proposes to intervene on the Reale-Mancino law and extend its application to crimes committed on the grounds of homophobia and transphobia.

d) one bill sponsored by Mario Perantoni (C.2171) and other members of the Five Star Movement (M5S) parliamentary group. Likewise other proposals, the bill tabled by the M5S also prioritize the revision of the Reale-Mancino law so to extend its application to crimes on

grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation of the victims. The bill also proposes to increase the number of anti-violence centres, to reinforce the current infrastructure available at the local level for victims of gender-based violence; to develop nationally updated databases concerning the occurrence of LGBTI hate crimes through the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT); to establish the “National Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia” following the international the international anniversary of this day on the 17th of May. The measure is conceived to provide recognition to LGBTI community, while at the same time raise awareness around anti-LGBTI violence and LGBTI rights violations, writ large.

e) one bill presented by Giusi Bartolozzi (C. 2255), member of the parliamentary group Forza Italia. Like others, it proposes to amend the Reale-Mancino law and extends its application to crimes committed on the grounds of gender.

After some time and a round of informal hearings the bills were unified in a single proposal and MP Alessandro Zan was nominated rapporteur – reason why the bill is usually addressed as the “Zan bill”. The unified text brings together many of the elements advanced in the individual bills mentioned above, resulting in the most comprehensive bill about gender-based hate crimes ever discussed in the Italian Parliament. It targets a wider range of targets groups, not restricted to sexual and gender minorities, as it integrates the fight against misogynistic hate crimes – as proposed in particular Boldrini’s (C.107) and Bartolozzi’s bills (C.2255). Most importantly, the scope of the bill goes well beyond the punishment of LGBTI hate crimes, as the penal dimension is coupled with other strategies aimed at tackling the sociocultural roots of LGBTI hate crimes. The comprehensiveness of the Zan bill sparked heated discussions both within and outside the Italian parliament (Feo, 2022). Moreover, during the discussion in the Chamber, the bill was modified so as to include disability among the target groups. This amendment was sponsored by an Italia Viva MP, and supported *ad-hoc* by the members of the centre-right coalition. As in the previous parliamentary term, the bill was approved in the CoD, in November 2020. Afterwards, the parliamentary process in the Senate entered a stalemate – as the Committee discussion were not scheduled until April 2021. The plenary discussions in the Senate – between August and October 2021 – took place in a changed political setting: the government coalition formed by the Five Star Movement and the Democratic Party that approved the bill in the CoD was replaced by a technocratic government

led by Mario Draghi and supported by a great coalition of all parties but the radical right Brothers of Italy. It is clear that the government change created different majority–opposition equilibria and the relationships within parties of the governing majority. These dynamics affected the legislative process of the Zan bill. In November 2021, the bill was rejected by the Senate.

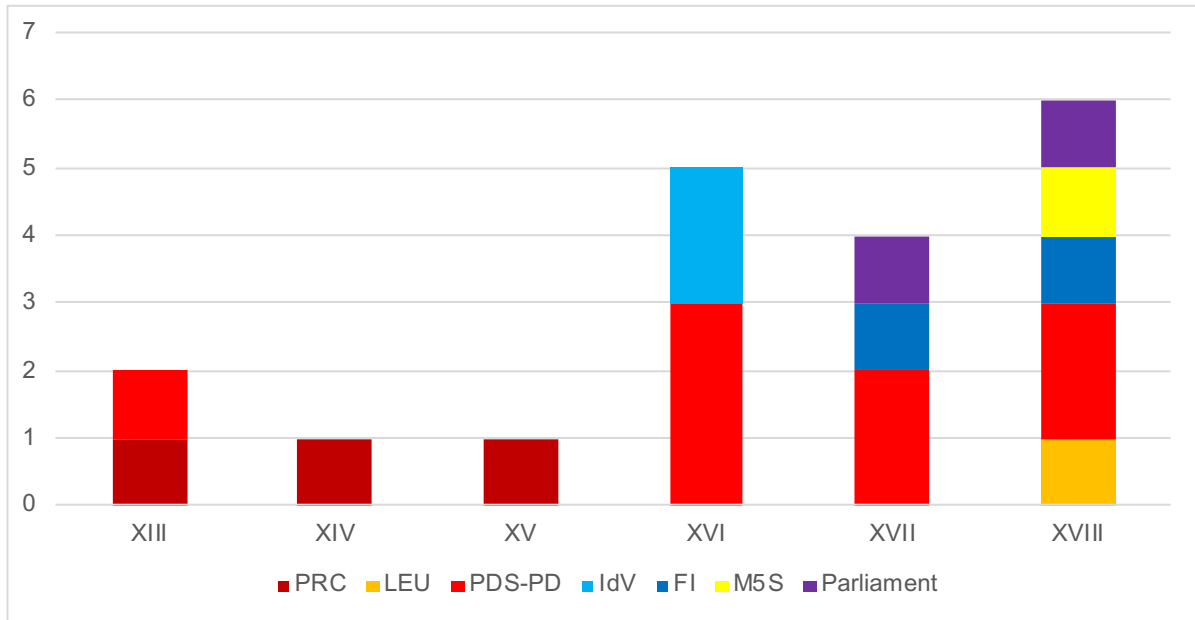
After this longitudinal analysis on anti-LGBTI hate crimes policy-making attempts, few considerations are advanced here. First, parliamentary initiatives on the topic of LGBTI hate crimes were initiated by left-wing and centre-left parties in almost all instances, signing a clear issue ownership of the topic for these parties. Only during the last and former to last legislature some individual MPs of the centre-right Forza Italia have sponsored law proposals on the topic, though without the formal approval of the party. A novelty during the 18th legislature is the activity of the Five Star Movement, which presented a very far-reaching bill combining anti-discrimination and hate crime prevention measures. This M5S bill is, to a closer examination, the closest to the so-called Zan bill proposal drafted by the parliamentary committee and discussed and approved in the Chamber of Deputies (see Figure 15).

Another characteristic is that legislative initiative in this field is predominantly carried out by politicians that are close to and/or identify with the LGBTI community. MPs such as Vendola, De Simone, Concia, Scalfarotto and Zan falls into the category of “critical actors” as defined in the literature on women’s substantive representation (Childs & Krook, 2009). Adapting the definition provided by Childs and Celis critical actors are “legislators who initiate policy proposals on their own and/or embolden others to take steps to promote policies for [LGBTI rights]. [...] The common feature of critical actors [...] is their relatively low threshold for political action: they may hold attitudes similar to those of other representatives, but they are much more motivated than others to initiate [gender]-friendly policy reforms.” (ibid, 138).

Finally, despite the overall failure in adopting LGBTI hate crimes policies, we observe nonetheless an incremental change in the proposals presented over the years. The bills became more inclusive over time, as the range of targeted subjectivities increased. The progressive inclusion of gender categories over time reflects the evolution of debates around gender and sexuality in the national and international community of activists, which also influence the formulation of international norms that set the pace national ones (at least in

the Italian case). Moreover, as the time goes by mere intervention on LGBTI hate crimes regulations are replaced by integrated/holistic proposals to tackle LGBTI discrimination.

Figure 15: Hate crimes bills presented in the Italian Parliament by parliamentary group, parliamentary terms between 1996 and 2021



Source: Author’s elaboration. Note: “parliament” refers to the bills approved in the Chamber of Deputies and then passed onto the Senate.

A3.2. Official documents

In the following table I report all the draft bills concerning LGBTII hate crimes legislation presented in the Italian Chamber of Deputies between 1996 and 2021, linking them to the original sources from the Italian Parliament website. I did not consider bills on the same issue presented in the Senate because the legislative processes on LGBTI hate crimes were always initiated in the Chamber of Deputies.

Table 7: LGBTI hate crimes bills presented in Parliament, 1996-2021

Legislature	Year	First signatory (party)	Bill number and link
XIII	1996	Nicky Vendola (PRC)	C.2551, http://leg13.camera.it/dati/leg13/lavori/stampati/pdf/2551.pdf
	1999	Antonio Soda (PDS)	C.5865, http://leg13.camera.it/dati/leg13/lavori/stampati/pdf/5865.pdf
XIV	2001	Titti De Simone (PRC)	C.715, http://leg14.camera.it/dati/leg14/lavori/stampati/pdf/14PDL0005771.pdf
XV	2006	Titti De Simone (PRC)	C.690, https://leg15.camera.it/dati/lavori/stampati/pdf/15PDL0018300.pdf
XVI	2008	Anna Paola Concia (PD)	C.1658, http://documenti.camera.it/dati/leg16/lavori/stampati/pdf/16PDL0010640.pdf
	2009	Antonio Di Pietro (IdV)	C. 1882, http://documenti.camera.it/dati/leg16/lavori/stampati/pdf/16PDL0014740.pdf
	2009	Antonello Soro (PD)	C. 2802, http://documenti.camera.it/dati/leg16/lavori/stampati/pdf/16PDL0029530.pdf
	2009	Antonio Di Pietro (IdV)	C. 2807, http://documenti.camera.it/dati/leg16/lavori/stampati/pdf/16PDL0029540.pdf
	2011	Anna Paola Concia (PD)	C. 4631, http://documenti.camera.it/dati/leg16/lavori/stampati/pdf/16PDL0052470.pdf
XVII	2013	Ivan Scalfarotto (PD)	C. 245, http://documenti.camera.it/dati/leg17/lavori/stampati/pdf/17PDL0003090.pdf
	2013	Emanuela Fiano (PD)	C.280, http://documenti.camera.it/dati/leg17/lavori/stampati/pdf/17PDL0005960.pdf
	2013	Renato Brunetta (FI)	C. 1071, http://documenti.camera.it/dati/leg17/lavori/stampati/pdf/17PDL0005300.pdf
XVIII	2018	Laura Boldrini (SEL)	C. 107, http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/pdl/pdf/leg.18.pdl.camera.107.18PDL0005470.pdf
	2018	Alessandro Zan (PD)	C. 569, http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/pdl/pdf/leg.18.pdl.camera.569.18PDL0012340.pdf
	2018	Ivan Scalfarotto (PD)	C. 868, http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/pdl/pdf/leg.18.pdl.camera.868.18PDL0019811.pdf

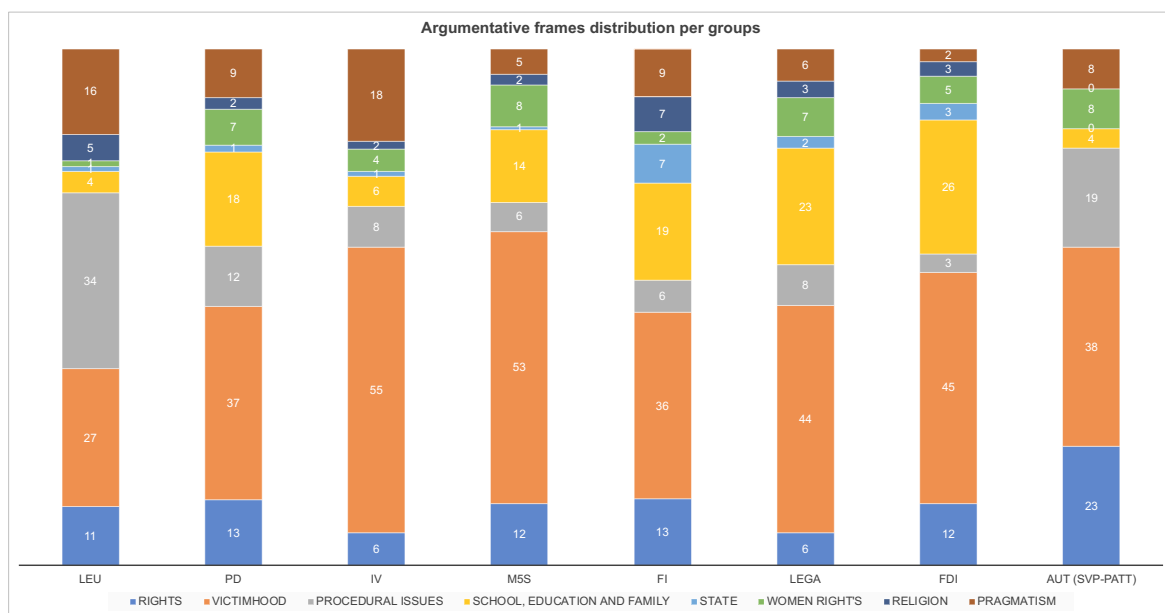
	2019	Mario Perantoni (M5S)	C. 2171, http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/pdl/pdf/leg.18.pdl.camera.2171.18PDL0078440.pdf
	2019	Laura Bartolozzi (FI)	C. 2255, http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/pdl/pdf/leg.18.pdl.camera.2255.18PDL0083150.pdf

A3.3. Dictionary analysis

In this part of appendix I present additional analysis to corroborate the thematic and frame analysis presented in chapter 4. In particular, I used this analysis to assess the degree of convergence of different actors on different themes in the debates. In other words, to show the extent to which different political actors strategically converge over specific and shared themes during the parliamentary debates, following a mirroring strategy. This analysis also helped me to refine my selection of themes to move onto the frame analysis.

In order to do so, I have developed a dictionary of “signifiers” (Pansardi & Battezzar, 2018) and “symbols” (Salvati, 2021) to map the presence of each of the contentious themes. The words chosen symbolically signify the themes in their contentious dimensions. I developed lists of signifiers for the themes that I deductively and inductively identify with the thematic analysis – rights, victims, schools & education & family, procedural issues, women’s rights, state, religion and pragmatism (list of words and frequencies available below).

Figure 16: Dictionary analysis of themes' distribution across the parliamentary groups



This picture shows a convergence over the theme of rights and women’s rights (then grouped into one theme for the frame analysis), victims, school & education & children (renamed children for the frame analysis), procedural issues and pragmatism. The themes of “religion”

and the State were pretty marginal and not touched upon distinctively by all groups so I have decided to not include them in the frame analysis.

Table 8: Signifiers' list and frequencies

Theme	Word	N.	LEU	Lega	Fdi	M5S	PD	FI	IV	Aut (SVP-PATT)
RIGHTS	cittadinanza	6	0	0	2	0	2	2	0	0
RIGHTS	Costituzione	201	7	31	48	18	23	63	5	1
RIGHTS	diritti dei bambini	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
RIGHTS	diritti fondamentali	21	1	3	3	3	2	8	0	1
RIGHTS	diritti umani	8	0	0	0	0	4	3	0	0
RIGHTS	libertà di espressione	59	0	11	5	4	14	15	6	3
RIGHTS	libertà di parola	11	0	5	2	0	2	1	0	1
RIGHTS	articolo 3	81	3	6	18	11	26	13	1	0
VICTIMS	bambin	228	0	82	49	3	14	75	1	0
VICTIMS	lgbt	123	1	41	17	19	13	25	6	0
VICTIMS	lobby	31	0	23	4	1	2	1	0	0
VICTIMS	odio	223	2	39	38	19	50	45	15	5
VICTIMS	omofob	189	5	53	48	7	8	40	12	1
VICTIMS	omolesbobitransfob	22	1	0	2	8	8	0	3	0
VICTIMS	omolesbotransfob	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
VICTIMS	reato d'opinione	18	0	1	16	0	0	1	0	0
VICTIMS	reato di opinione	28	0	8	11	1	1	4	1	0
VICTIMS	trans	266	7	80	33	37	36	33	22	0
VICTIMS	transfob	115	2	22	15	20	15	18	17	0
VICTIMS	violenza	270	4	35	59	33	58	49	15	3
VICTIMS	vittime	59	3	9	4	10	11	3	13	1
PROCEDURAL ISSUES	audizioni	46	3	21	1	1	12	7	1	0
PROCEDURAL ISSUES	calendarizzazione	34	5	6	1	5	7	2	4	2
PROCEDURAL ISSUES	Corte costituzionale	37	3	6	3	3	8	8	2	3
PROCEDURAL ISSUES	direttiva europea	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
PROCEDURAL ISSUES	iter	63	6	17	3	3	15	9	5	0
PROCEDURAL ISSUES	legge mancino	60	12	7	9	2	16	12	1	0
PROCEDURAL ISSUES	motivi futili	7	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	0
PROCEDURAL ISSUES	panpenalismo	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
PROCEDURAL ISSUES	raccomandazione	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PROCEDURAL ISSUES	regolamento	44	3	9	4	3	9	10	2	0

SCHOOL, EDUCATION AND FAMILY	da un uomo e da una donna	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
SCHOOL, EDUCATION AND FAMILY	da una donna e da un uomo	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
SCHOOL, EDUCATION AND FAMILY	educazione	105	0	28	20	6	17	31	0	0
SCHOOL, EDUCATION AND FAMILY	famigli	204	1	57	52	10	26	52	2	0
SCHOOL, EDUCATION AND FAMILY	gender	92	0	35	26	8	6	14	1	0
SCHOOL, EDUCATION AND FAMILY	scuol	287	3	82	60	18	56	53	8	1
SCHOOL, EDUCATION AND FAMILY	un uomo e una donna	10	0	1	8	0	0	1	0	0
SCHOOL, EDUCATION AND FAMILY	una donna e un uomo	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
STATE	Stato	120	1	20	21	2	8	60	2	0
WOMEN RIGHT'S	donne	108	1	32	21	12	21	8	5	1
WOMEN RIGHT'S	femminism	6	0	1	2	2	0	1	0	0
WOMEN RIGHT'S	feminist	44	0	22	7	1	5	6	0	0
WOMEN RIGHT'S	la donna	10	0	4	2	0	2	2	0	0
WOMEN RIGHT'S	lesbiche	17	0	6	2	3	2	2	2	0
WOMEN RIGHT'S	misogin	22	0	2	1	6	10	1	1	1
RELIGION	cattolic	43	1	10	6	1	7	16	1	0
RELIGION	cattolicesimo	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
RELIGION	CEI	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
RELIGION	Chiesa	24	0	5	0	2	1	15	1	0
RELIGION	credo religioso	6	0	1	4	0	0	1	0	0
RELIGION	culto	5	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
RELIGION	Dio	18	0	6	4	1	1	5	1	0
RELIGION	federa religiosa	3	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
RELIGION	libertà religiosa	14	0	1	3	0	0	10	0	0
RELIGION	Papa	12	3	1	1	2	4	1	0	0
RELIGION	patti lateranensi	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
RELIGION	episcopale	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
PRAGMATISM	confronto	77	0	18	7	3	17	16	10	0
PRAGMATISM	dialogo	31	6	10	1	0	1	8	5	0

PRAGMATISM	mediazione	138	8	22	6	8	30	48	10	0
PRAGMATISM	muro	15	1	1	0	0	0	1	8	2
PRAGMATISM	opportunità	24	1	5	2	4	6	3	1	0

A3.4. Codebook for direct and indirect strategies

Strategy	Description
Direct support	Strategy including the predominance of moralized arguments and the following frames in the speech: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LGBTI rights as human rights - Women’s rights as human rights -bridging of LGBTI rights and women’s rights as rooted in the same structural conditions - Positive-sum understanding of rights’ expansion - LGBTI as victims of homotransphobic hatred - frames of the debate as a matter of “civilization vs obscurantism”
Indirect support	Strategy including the predominance of procedural arguments and the following frames in the speech: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - necessity to comply to EU directives (no emphasis on conforming to EU values) - bill considered as incremental policy-making, a simple formalization of already existing norms and customs
Direct opposition	Strategy including the predominance of moralized arguments and of the following frames in the speech: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LGBTI rights as special rights - LGBTI rights as conflicting rights - zero-sum understanding of rights’ expansion - self-victimization - reference to “thought crime” and “crime of opinion” as the ultimate goal of the bill - “social construction of non-problematicity” of LGBTI rights - “gender ideology” and reference to the “gay lobby” -use of deflection
Indirect opposition	Strategy including the predominance of procedural arguments and of following frames in the speech: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inadequacy of penal law to address LGBTI hate crimes - legislative redundancy: provisions for LGBTI hate crimes are already in place - appeals to consensual decision-making - disapproval of the policy-making process, as disrespectful of parliamentary procedures - shrinking of the law objectives. In particular stances in favour of reducing the scope of the bill by excluding gender identity and/or anti-discrimination measures herein contained

This coding scheme has been developed to code the discursive strategies adopted by Italian MPs in the discussion of LGBTI hate crimes legislation. Code each intervention with only with one category. If discursive constructs belonging to different categories are detected, code the intervention after assessing which strategy is the most prevalent in that specific MP speech.

A3.5. List of Interviews

ID	Interviewee	Status	Source	Format	Length
Type: Elites interviews					
ZAN_INT.1	Mario Perantoni, M5S MP Proponent of anti LGBTI hate crime bill (XVIII legislature)	Conducted online	Interview list	Semi-structured	112 min
ZAN_INT.2	Annapaola Concia, PD ex-MP Proponent of anti LGBTI hate crime bill (XVI legislature)	Conducted online	Interview list	Semi-structured	98 min
ZAN_INT.3	Ivan Scalfarotto, ex PD MP Proponent of anti LGBTI hate crime bill (XVII legislature)	Conducted online	Interview list	Semi-structured	76 min
	Alessandro ZAN, PD MP Proponent of anti LGBTI hate crime bill (XVIII legislature)	Accepted 20/06/2022, then no response	Interview list		
	Lega MP, senator (XVIII legislature)	No response	Interview list		
	Fdi MP, Chamber of deputies (XVIII legislature)	No response	Interview list		

Appendix Four (A4) – Consent form for project’s interviews

Info Sheet and Consent Form (translated in English)

Researcher

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Short project description

The research project investigates how gender+ equality policies in Italy are (not) adopted, implemented and resisted between 1990s and 2020s. In particular, I am interested in understanding how different factors (long-term trajectories, the interaction between women’s movements and state institutions, the presence of gendered political cultures and traditions in policy making) influence gender+ equality policies’ adoption and outcomes. In order to meet this research goal for some selected policy debates (gender representation policies, anti-discrimination policies), the research employs data gathered using different methods, among which in-depth and semi-structured interviews with institutional political actors, experts in the field of gender+ equality and feminist movement activists.

Information about the interview and other research materials

The interviews will be conducted by the researchers and will have a variable duration, as agreed between the researcher and the interview partner in previous communications. The interviews can be performed either online or in presence. An audio recording will be made of the interview. A written transcript of the interview will be produced. Upon request, the researcher will share the transcription with the interview. Excerpts from the interview may be used in academic publications related to the research project. If the original interview is not in English, the excerpts may be translated into another language – in English – for publications.

Participation in the research project

Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary.

You may choose at any time not to answer a question, not to express your point of view, or not to disclose information related to your profession or position. At your request, some or all of your statements may be erased from the recording and/or deleted from the transcription. Should you disclose information that might compromise the integrity of another person, these statements will be erased from the transcription. You are free to withdraw or to refuse to participate in any part of the study at any time without any negative consequence, and without being required to justify your decision. If you withdraw from the project after having participated in an interview, at your request the recording and transcription of your interview will be destroyed.

Confidentiality

Upon agreement with the researcher, you may choose to give the interview anonymously. Should this be the case, your name will be replaced with a pseudonym, or not mentioned, and the researcher will make sure to not include any reference that may allow your identification.

Use of interviews

The interview transcription will be used to develop an analysis of the interaction between different factors influencing gender+ equality policy-making in Italy. Your participation will help the researcher to gain insights on specific processes, as well as the role of different actors in these processes.

Results publications and dissemination

The results of the interview analysis will be disseminated in academic publications related to the research project. In particular, this research project is aimed at the compilation of the researcher's PhD thesis.

Interview storage and analysis

Interviews will be recorded on a digital audio recording device or via online recording softwares. The audio files of the interviews, the related transcriptions and the interviews' analysis files will be stored in a portable hard disk only accessed by the researcher and stored in a secure location.

Consent form

I [name]_____ acknowledge to have read the information on the research project included above and I accept the way in which the interview will be employed in the framework of the research project.

Therefore I here state that I freely decided to participate in the interview and I give/give not my consent to produce and audio record the interview.

Participant signature _____ Place and date _____

Interviewer signature _____ Place and date _____

A signed copy of this document will be given to the participant or it will consent will be recorded at the beginning of the interview.

Scheda informativa e modulo di consenso (Original Version)

Ricercatrice

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Breve descrizione del progetto

Il progetto di ricerca indaga come le politiche di uguaglianza di genere+ in Italia siano state adottate, implementate e contrastate (periodo di osservazione 1990s-2020s). In particolare, sono interessata a capire come diversi fattori (traiettorie di lungo periodo, interazione tra movimenti sociali e istituzioni statali, presenza di culture e tradizioni di policy-making di genere) influenzino l'adozione e i risultati di queste politiche. Per raggiungere questo obiettivo per alcune politiche selezionate (politiche per la rappresentanza di genere, politiche antidiscriminatorie), la ricerca utilizza dati raccolti con metodi diversi, tra cui interviste in profondità e semi-strutturate con attori politici istituzionali, esperte nel campo dell'uguaglianza di genere+ e attiviste dei movimenti femministi.

Informazioni sull'intervista e altri materiali di ricerca

Le interviste saranno condotte dalla ricercatrice e avranno una durata variabile, come concordato tra la ricercatrice e il partner dell'intervista. Le interviste possono essere effettuate sia online che in presenza. Tranne quando diversamente concordato, verrà effettuata una registrazione audio dell'intervista dalla quale sarà elaborata una trascrizione scritta dell'intervista. Su richiesta, la ricercatrice condividerà la trascrizione dell'intervista. Estratti dell'intervista possono essere utilizzati in pubblicazioni accademiche relative al progetto di ricerca. Se l'intervista originale non è svolta in inglese, ove necessario gli estratti possono essere tradotti in un'altra lingua - in inglese - per le pubblicazioni.

Partecipazione al progetto di ricerca

La sua partecipazione a questa ricerca è del tutto volontaria.

Può scegliere in qualsiasi momento di non rispondere a una domanda, di non esprimere il suo punto di vista o di non rivelare informazioni relative alla sua professione o posizione. Su sua richiesta, alcune o tutte le sue dichiarazioni potranno essere cancellate dalla registrazione e/o eliminate dalla trascrizione. Nel caso in cui l'utente riveli informazioni che potrebbero compromettere l'integrità di un'altra persona, tali dichiarazioni saranno cancellate dalla trascrizione. E' libera di ritirarsi o di rifiutare di partecipare a qualsiasi parte dello studio in qualsiasi momento, senza alcuna conseguenza negativa e senza dover giustificare la sua decisione. Se si ritira dal progetto dopo aver partecipato a un'intervista, su sua richiesta la informazioni relative all'intervista saranno distrutte.

Riservatezza

Previo accordo con la ricercatrice, potete scegliere di rilasciare l'intervista in forma anonima. In questo caso, il vostro nome sarà sostituito da uno pseudonimo o non sarà menzionato, e la

ricercatrice si assicurerà di non includere alcun riferimento che possa permettere la vostra identificazione.

Uso delle interviste

La trascrizione delle interviste sarà utilizzata per sviluppare un'analisi dell'interazione tra i diversi fattori che influenzano le politiche di genere e di parità in Italia. La vostra partecipazione aiuterà la ricercatrice a comprendere i processi specifici e il ruolo di diversi attori in questi processi.

Pubblicazione e diffusione dei risultati

I risultati dell'analisi delle interviste saranno diffusi in pubblicazioni accademiche relative al progetto di ricerca. In particolare, questo progetto di ricerca è finalizzato alla compilazione della tesi di dottorato della ricercatrice.

Archiviazione e analisi delle interviste

Le interviste saranno registrate su un dispositivo di registrazione audio digitale o tramite software di registrazione online. I file audio delle interviste, le relative trascrizioni e i file di analisi delle interviste saranno archiviati in un disco rigido portatile, accessibile solo alla ricercatrice e conservato in un luogo sicuro.

Modulo di consenso

Io [nome]_____dichiaro di aver letto le informazioni sul progetto di ricerca sopra riportate e accetto il modo in cui l'intervista sarà utilizzata nell'ambito del progetto di ricerca.

Dichiaro pertanto di aver deciso liberamente di partecipare all'intervista e di dare/dare il mio consenso alla produzione e alla registrazione audio dell'intervista.

Firma della partecipante _____ Luogo e data _____

Firma dell'intervistatrice _____ Luogo e data _____

Una copia firmata di questo documento sarà consegnata al partecipante o il suo consenso sarà registrato all'inizio dell'intervista.