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Article

Connecting the Dots, Taking a Stand: Universities, Democracy and Gender Equality Policies

Abstract: *Gender equality is a core EU value stated in Articles 2 and 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union and Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Important steps have been taken in this respect at the EU level, with new and innovative methods and instruments being provided for the member states in the process of the know-how and best practice transfer. Promoting gender equality has become, little by little, a strategic approach in the E.U. but has also been an important field of ideological battles. In consequence, making gender equality public policies is not an easy task, especially in a conservative (even anti-gender) context. At the same time, legal and institutional change within public administration, as well as mainstreaming gender in public policies, and specific gender equality policies cannot be done without strong political will. However, the legitimacy of the political will is based on the democratic connection between elected politicians and the citizens, and in conservative/anti-gender and neoliberal contexts, different strategies are used to keep women's interests out of the negotiation and renegotiation of the citizenship contract. Starting from here, in this paper I will first give arguments to support the idea that universities are becoming an important link that can and should*

bridge the gap described above. Second, I will briefly present how two important Romanian Universities – Bucharest University and the National School of Political and Administrative Studies SNSPA – have been involved in building legitimacy for gender equality public policies.

Keywords: *anti-gender; democracy; expertise; gender equality; Universities.*

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1. Introduction

Gender equality, equal opportunity, non-discrimination, pluralism, and respect for diversity are values embraced by modern, democratic societies through constitutions, treaties, and international charters. These values should not remain mere declarations of principle. Still, they must be reflected in measurable data and, more importantly, in the daily realities of citizens' lives, enabling them to exercise their rights.

Global figures indicate that gender inequalities between women and men remain persistent, especially in areas such as decision-making access, work-life balance, gender-based violence, and more (Global Gender Gap, 2024, pp. 15-19). Tools like the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP), Gender Equality Index (European Union), and the Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum) are now used to identify issues, and trends, and to guide policy decisions, as well as to allow for comparative analysis and transfer of best practices. The Gender Equality Index, which gives the EU and its Member States a score from 1 to 100, shows an overall EU score of 70.2%, with Romania currently ranking last (European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE], 2024).

Based on the above, the first part of this paper aims to provide a brief critical analysis of the policy responses to gender inequality, first from the European Union and then from Romania. As the data indicates, despite steps taken to address gender inequality, progress remains slow, prompting an exploration of possible explanations and solutions. In this respect, two key explanations I consider useful for understanding the current configuration of gender equality policies: 1) the ideological debate related with first the EU's neo-liberal, market-oriented dominance and second to the anti-gender campaigns and conservative backlash; 2) the theoretical debate between democracy and technocracy in setting the political agenda. In terms of solutions, a key question arises: *Who Has a Voice in Gender Equality Policies?* (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007, p. 27) Specifically, how do injustices highlighted in statistics make it onto the formal agenda of policymakers, especially in conservative contexts where the politicization of women's interests remains weak, decisions are often made by men and the principles of representative democracy are evoked to minimize the relevance of gender equality policies?

Last but not least, in the final part of the paper, I will argue in favour of universities as fundamental actors in overcoming theoretical and ideological dichotomies and as strategic partners in legitimizing gender equality policies. In this section, I will also briefly explore how two major Romanian universities – University of Bucharest and the National School of Political and Administrative Studies (SNSPA) – have been involved in building legitimacy for public gender equality policies. The methodology used to answer the above questions falls under exploratory research based on document analysis.

2. Assessing Gender Equality Policies in the EU and Romania: Slow Progress and Resistance

Significant steps have been taken at both the European and Romanian levels to combat gender inequalities. A quick overview of key achievements shows that, since its early days, the EU has been concerned with this issue, gender equality entering the agenda in 1957 when Article 119 on equal pay was included in the Treaty of Rome. However, gender equality in the EU has long been linked closely to the labour market, emphasizing non-discriminatory access to employment. A chronological view of EU directives on gender equality clearly reflects this focus¹. A significant paradigm shift occurred with the Amsterdam Treaty: “EU powers over equal opportunities were strengthened in the Treaty of Amsterdam 1999, which went beyond Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome by raising the priority of gender equality issues, as a consequence of its inclusion within Articles 2 and 3” (Walby, 2004, p. 13). According to Article 3(2) EC, the Community shall aim to achieve gender mainstreaming, meaning that the Community and the Member States shall actively consider the objective of equality between men and

women when formulating and implementing laws, regulations, administrative provisions, policies, and activities.

Lombardo and Meier (2009) refer to the post-Amsterdam developments as a “broadening-without-deepening” approach to gender equality policy, which has been clearly affected by the Union’s labour market constraints on one hand, and by the EU’s limited competence and the domestic policies of Member States on the other. This has led to what the authors describe as a more rhetorical change, as the concept of gender mainstreaming was extended not only to employment but also to family, politics, sexuality, culture, and violence across all EU activities. However, the EU’s activities, as stated in Article 3 of the Amsterdam Treaty, remained predominantly market and employment-related (Lombardo and Meier, 2009). The Treaty of Amsterdam marks a political shift by the EU towards adopting gender mainstreaming as the main strategy for addressing gender inequalities, a method that inherently involves diversifying intervention areas. Recent developments bring forth elements such as the Gender Equality Strategy (2020-2025), a strategy focused on ‘gender mainstreaming’ and, for the first time, intersectionality as a horizontal principle of its implementation; the adoption of the Work-Life Balance Directive in 2019; and, in 2022, after a ten-year negotiation process, the adoption of the Women on Boards Directive. Other important steps were the launch of the European Care Strategy in September 2022, but also the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in October 2023, and the recent adoption of the Directive on Combating Violence Against Women.

Overall, according to data reported by the European Institute for Gender Equality, since 2010, the EU’s score has increased by 7.1 points, mainly driven by progress in women’s access to power in politics and the economy (+17.2 points), the domain with the most pronounced gender inequalities (59.1 points). The EU is closest to gender equality in the health domain (88.5 points), particularly in the subdomain of access to health services (97.3 points). It is equally important to note that after years of standstill, the “money” domain has shown signs of regression in gender equality (-0.4 points) since 2020. EIGE attributes this to the COVID-19 pandemic but also issues a warning about the possibility of a lasting regression for gender income inequalities (see gender pay gap) (EIGE, 2023).

In terms of Romania’s progress in implementing gender equality policies, its continued position at the bottom or near the bottom of the EU Gender Equality Index offers a quick snapshot of the situation. Romania’s lagging position has been explained, among other things, through the concept of “room service feminism” (Miroiu, 2004, p. 257). Specifically, Mihaela Miroiu uses this term to describe the way issues related to women’s interests were imposed by the EU, forcing the adoption of a legal framework on equal opportunities and non-discrimination. As a result of “room service feminism,” Romania adopted, as preconditions for EU accession, Law 202/2002 regarding equal opportunities and treatment between women and men, Law no. 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence, Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination, and, last but not least, created the National Council for Combating Discrimination and the National Agency for Equal Opportunities.

In the last years, significant progress has been made in Romania, particularly in combating domestic violence, following the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2016, which primarily led to strengthening the legal framework in this field and expanding the network of victim services, as well as creating the first services for offenders. Two national strategies on gender equality are also worth mentioning here – the National Strategy for Promoting Equal

Opportunities and Treatment between Women and Men and for Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence for 2022-2027 (Government of Romania. Official Monitor, 2022) and the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence “SYNERGY” 2021-2030 (Romania. Romanian Government, 2022). It is also important to underline that political commitment to these strategies is not matched by adequate funding for the measures. At the same time, Romania continues to have a significant deficit in female representation in decision-making positions, with all initiatives to introduce gender quotas remaining in a grey area of the formal agenda (Băluță and Tufiş, 2021)². Furthermore, recent studies also reveal serious issues regarding women’s access to abortion (Independent Midwife Association, 2024) and the unfortunate prevalence of obstetric violence in Romanian hospitals (Neaga, Grunberg and Radu, 2024).

3. Gender Equality – Between Neoliberal and Anti-Gender Discourses

However, many voices have highlighted that EU interventions in the field of gender equality have long focused primarily on labour market issues, leaving other topics such as access to decision-making, work-family balance, and gender-based violence behind (Walby, 2004; Arriba and Carrasco, 2003; McCrudden and Prechal, 2011). The focus on the labour market alone is not problematic by default, but rather because gender equality policies have been instrumental to the EU’s economic priorities ever from the very beginning of the EU. The rhetoric of justice and rights was left behind and even replaced by that of economic efficiency and growth (Elomäki, 2015). Furthermore, some have argued that EU gender equality policies have always been embedded in market-oriented rhetoric, and that the economic framing has negatively impacted the content and concepts of these policies (Elomäki, 2015). Originally feminist concepts have been co-opted and used in favour of the market and growth; for instance, the issue of work-family reconciliation was only significant as it aligned to increase women’s participation in the labour market through flexible work forms (Stratigaki, 2004).

Lombardo, Meier, and Verloo (2009) also emphasized that the meaning of gender equality has been bent or narrowed, while Elomäki (2015) discusses how policy discourses that bend gender equality toward economic growth create the risk of promoting a depoliticized understanding of gender.

Another explanation for the slow progress in implementing gender equality policies relates to the global anti-gender movement, which is also extensively documented. Since the 1990s, the implementation of gender equality policies has been hindered by the increasingly clear emergence of a backlash, involving a mix of religious, conservative, and neoliberal alliances that have over time shaped what we now refer to as the critique of “gender ideology.” A range of policy areas has been targeted, from those addressing gender-based violence – particularly attacks on the Istanbul Convention (Neaga, 2022) – to measures on reproductive health, the integration of gender perspectives in education, and attacks aimed at minority rights in general, particularly LGBTI human rights (Băluță I, 2020; Băluță O, 2020; Do Mar Pereira, 2018; Frey, Gartner, Kohnen and Scheele, 2014; Roggeband, 2018; Paternote, 2020).

Addressing the strategies used by right-wing populists in opposing gender equality, the European Parliament, Johanna Kantola, and Emanuela Lombardo (2021) propose the following classification: Direct opposition, which includes gender quotas and LGBTI rights, as well as

opposition to what radical right-wing populists term “gender ideology” – a central strategy in several debates, especially those on gender and education; Indirect opposition, which includes Euroscepticism and subsidiarity, bending the meaning of gender equality to focus on issues like migration and Islamophobia; Self-victimization, used particularly against gender-sensitive language, accusing it of silencing opposition and dictating debate terms; Depoliticizing gender equality by presenting gender as a biological given, thus framing it as indisputable (Kantola, Lombardo, 2021).

Paradoxically, despite decades of research in gender studies, even with numerous tools clearly showing the persistence of gender inequalities worldwide, and despite the EU’s investments in creating knowledge and facilitating the transfer of best practices among member states³, the question raised by Verloo and Lombardo “Who has/should have a voice in the political debate to say what gender equality is and how could the problem of gender inequality be solved?” (Verloo and Lombardo, p. 21) – seems to remain relevant. In seeking possible solutions to this issue, which appears as persistent as gender inequalities themselves, Verloo and Lombardo are bringing up the tension between expertise and democracy. In other words, public policies are decisions made by politicians in power, thus having the legitimacy to exercise power. According to the principles of representative democracy, gender equality policies should result from legitimate demands expressed by citizens through majority rule. In other words, as long as citizens do not demand greater gender equality, politicians will not pursue such policies, even though feminist literature explains quite clearly why this perspective is problematic and unjust (see the public-private divide, women’s interests as political interests, the struggle for recognition by the women’s movement, etc.).

The technocratic solution seems to be an option. Gender equality measures are presented as technical procedures that should avoid political conflict and contestation, yet it can be criticized as undemocratic, especially in conservative contexts. These measures are promoted as evidence-based policymaking processes that involve experts with greater gender awareness, using scientific and objective gendered knowledge for more effective implementation of gender equality policies. Verloo and Lombardo, however, acknowledge that technocratizing the discourse on gender equality policies implies a strategic approach designed to be useful until excluded/marginal policy actors gain access to the definition of the public debate to influence public policy formation, even if it carries the potential risk of “depoliticization”. The two authors further advocate for moving beyond the democracy-technocracy dichotomy, engaging instead in a more complex discourse that explores constructive alliances rather than oppositions (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007, pp. 25-26).

A constructive approach like this cannot exclude a highly relevant actor in the democratic equation, mainly the universities. From this perspective, Michael Ignatieff clearly states that universities hold significant power in both democratic and authoritarian societies because they “recruit, train, and accredit ruling elites” (Ignatieff, 2024, p. 197). This is why “academic institutions have been drawn into the centre of democratic struggles over justice due to their roles in training, research, and cultural debate” (Ignatieff, 2024, p. 197). One of these struggles involves defining gender equality, highlighting why conservative attacks often target the production of knowledge, and ask for the prohibition of gender studies, as exemplified by the notorious case of Hungary. Romania has also faced conservative and authoritarian efforts to control the discourse on gender. This is illustrated by the Romanian Parliament’s passage of an amendment to the education law banning educational institutions from “activities propagating

theories and opinions on gender identity that suggest gender is separate from biological sex.” This intervention stemmed from agenda-setting efforts by members of the right-wing party (Popular Movement in Romania), particularly the Parliamentary Prayer Group, which included supporters of the Coalition for Family. This group sought to block any infusion of scientific authority for gender equality policies from academia, using the rhetoric of fighting “sex/gender proselytism” in education.

4. Connecting the Dots and Taking a Stand: Universities, Democracy, and Gender Equality

Returning to the questions posed earlier – *Who Has a Voice in Gender Equality Policies?* and *Who has/should have a voice in the political debate to say what is gender equality and how the problem of gender inequality be solved?* – a more nuanced analysis is warranted. First, regarding the democracy-technocracy tension, it’s important to discuss that when citizens do not demand greater gender equality (or when gender inequality issues do not make it onto the formal agenda through grassroots or citizen-led initiatives), it does not mean such policies lack legitimacy within a democratic framework. These aspects have been extensively discussed by feminist political theory, which, through research (the technocratic perspective), has brought attention to gender interests/women’s interests, the barriers to politicizing these interests and bringing them onto the formal agenda, and the barriers to women’s civic and political participation and the representation of gender interests. Secondly, in the context of anti-gender movements, it’s crucial to emphasize that the democracy-technocracy “tension” can be exploited by conservative voices to legitimize their anti-democratic discourse, ironically invoking the principles of representative democracy – see the Eurosceptic strategy invoking the principle of subsidiarity (Kantola and Lombardo, 2021, pp. 573-574). This highlights the role that academia/experts play in exposing anti-democratic strategies and makes it clear why universities have become a target for autocrats.

We must also remember that decisions are political, and even conservative politicians enjoy legitimacy granted by citizens. In tense political contexts, appeals to democracy as simply majority rule (often by authoritarian populists) may block the implementation of policies that would, in fact, lead to a more substantive democracy. In such contexts, universities’ role as producers of scientific knowledge and guardians of democratic principles becomes crucial. Using knowledge as a tool of *soft power through sometimes rendering technical*, becomes by itself a strategic approach to cruise tensions that could lead to social polarization. Universities can be critical actors in building bridges between opposing groups by: a) connecting the dots in scientific knowledge related to gender equality/inequalities; b) not being hesitant in taking a stand against the attacks to humanist values promoting women’s and minorities’ rights as human rights; c) as custodians of the knowledge that democratic societies use to make decisions (Ignatieff, 2024, p. 197), affirming whenever necessary that democracies are far more than majority-rule decisions; and d) actively engaging in the democratization of scientific knowledge, both regarding democratic principles and gender inequalities.

“Universities exist to teach people to think for themselves, to become autonomous individuals and responsible citizens” (Ignatieff, 2024, p. 199), which is why taking a stand in the name of justice and rights is part of their fundamental mission. Of course, for universities to fulfil this role, they must remain autonomous “from populist governments, private corpora-

tions, and globalized intellectual trends” (Ignatieff, 2024, p. 199). However, maintaining autonomy also depends on universities’ ability to withstand difficult moments that arise in attempts to seize control over discourse and the definition of social issues. There is an expectation that universities will be bastions of resistance, especially in difficult contexts, and that they will substantially contribute to promoting human rights, inclusive women’s rights and gender equality. At the EU level, this is clearly reflected in the European Strategy for Universities, which emphasizes that universities must be “lighthouses of the European way of life,” also by fostering diversity, inclusiveness, and gender equality, as well as promoting and protecting European democratic values (European Commission, n.d., pp. 12-14). Furthermore, for the first time, the European Commission is conditioning access to funding on the existence of a gender equality plan within the Horizon Europe program, the EU’s research and innovation funding program. That also indicates the expectation that universities and research institutes will embrace gender equality as foundational to all actions undertaken. The EU is thus employing hard power to ensure universities comply with gender equality by making Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) a strict eligibility criterion for accessing EU funds. In this respect, universities must commit to gender equity, comply with policy instruments, and genuinely incorporate gender mainstreaming into the curriculum across all subjects.

Lastly, considering their very mission – the production of scientific knowledge at the highest level – there are expectations that universities will find both the best arguments and the most effective strategies to foster social harmony and a democratic climate. Gender equality is one of the issues that challenges universities to demonstrate whether they can withstand trends of encroachment, while also highlighting their fundamental role in producing clear social and economic benefits. Today, universities have the opportunity to leverage their reputation, expertise, and power to democratize the gender equality agenda, adopting a top-down perspective through which scientific knowledge and the technocratic/expert viewpoint are put on the public agenda, thus facilitating better politicization of gender interests and strengthening the mechanisms of representative democracy. Democratizing scientific knowledge on gender equality is aimed at reshaping the landscape of the social environment in a more just/fair way and it is an important tool in challenging traditional structures of power.

On the other hand, through research and scientific knowledge, universities can contribute to legitimizing the gender equality agenda in the eyes of political decision-makers, especially when dealing with sceptical or conservative politicians (specifically through a bottom-up approach). In difficult and tense contexts that could produce polarization and social tension, rendering technical can become a legitimate strategy to overcome conflicts, as long as it does not involve anti-democratic perspectives or limit critical viewpoints in any way.

Lastly, employing expertise as a soft power instrument is not new. Using know-how and best practices transfers in the area of promoting gender equality – see the role of the European Institute for Gender Equality in this respect – the EU effectively adopts a constructive approach aimed at mediating between the democratic and the technocratic perspectives. Moreover, using soft power through rendering technical appears to be a strategic perspective employed by the EU concerning other sensitive topics, such as global environmental governance, including climate change (Ramcilovic-Suominen, 2024).

5. Universities for Gender Equality – A Glimpse from the Romanian Case

In the following, I will briefly present some aspects illustrating how the relationship between universities and gender equality policies has evolved in Romania, emphasizing a few elements that could be considered as best practices. First, it's essential to state from the outset that in Romania, only two public universities have explicitly committed to producing knowledge in the field of gender equality: the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA) and the University of Bucharest. These two universities, specifically their Faculties of Political Science, coordinate the only master's programs in gender and equal opportunities in Romania. These programs have a longstanding tradition (over 20 years at SNSPA and over 15 years at the University of Bucharest), contributing significantly to democratizing knowledge in the field of gender equality. In terms of democratizing knowledge, it's also worth mentioning the "Gender and Power" class, which is part of the mandatory undergraduate curriculum at the Faculty of Political Science at SNSPA.

At the same time, these two universities are the main producers of scientific knowledge in the field, having continuously supported two gender studies collections at two prestigious Romanian publishers, Polirom and Tritonic. Not least, the only academic journal in gender studies published in Romania, *Analize – Journal of Gender and Feminist Studies*, has direct ties to both universities, both in terms of editors and the scientific committee.

In terms of policy decision-making, I will mention just two important moments. Firstly, the collaboration between the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration and the National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (ANES) within the project *Inclusion and Equal Opportunities Post-2020 – A National Strategic Framework for Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities Post-2020*, with the Ministry of Labor and Social Justice as the primary beneficiary. The main objective of this project was to build the administrative capacity of the Ministry of Labor and ANES to base public policies on evidence in their area of responsibility, as well as to strengthen the national strategic framework on social inclusion and poverty reduction post-2020 and the national strategic framework for gender equality post-2020, in line with the requirements set by the European Commission for fulfilling the essential enabling conditions for preparing the documents for the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework and accessing ESIF funds for 2021-2027. The main results obtained from this partnership were the *Diagnostic Analysis in the Field of Gender Equality 2014-2019* and Government Decision no. 1,547/2022 approving the *National Strategy for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities and Treatment for Women and Men and for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence for the period 2022-2027* (Government of Romania. Official Monitor, 2022).

Also concerning evidence-based policy-making, an example of academic involvement in strengthening gender equality in Romania was the revision of the existing occupational standard for "Gender Equality Expert." Within the EGALIS project, four consultative meetings were organized on the theme of professionalizing gender expertise in Romania and reviewing the standard. ANES was also a partner in the project, along with representatives from institutional, academic, and civil society sectors with gender equality expertise who took part in the consultations and the review process. Coordinators of the two master's programs mentioned above were part of the team that made substantial contributions to revising the occupational standard (Coaliția pentru Egalitate de Gen, 2022).

Another noteworthy moment, which clearly illustrates the importance of universities and academia in critical situations, occurred in 2020 with the attempt to ban “gender ideology” in education. At that time in Romania, public statements from various prestigious universities highlighted the dangerous, illiberal attack on academic autonomy (Digi24, 2020; HotNews, 2020).

Additionally, an *Amicus Curiae* was signed in the autumn of 2020 by 885 supporters, including many Romanian academics, and submitted to the Romanian Constitutional Court. At the end of 2020, the Constitutional Court declared the law unconstitutional, following a challenge by the Romanian president.

An equally tense moment in which public opinion focused on the academic response to gender equality issues involved sexual abuse cases in universities. While the media had occasionally reported cases of gender-based violence in universities, the case at SNSPA, where a prominent professor was accused of sexual abuse, shook public opinion and stirred significant emotion and social tension. In this context, the university’s response was crucial not only regarding gender-based violence and sexual harassment in schools but also as a signal of zero tolerance for any form of gender-based violence. Such cases are particularly interesting as they reflect how the academic environment, especially academics who are colleagues of the accused, respond to such situations. In the SNSPA case, the university faced a test of loyalty to democratic values, and more to loyalty to the feminist agenda. As a resilience signal to these values, all teachers from the Faculty of Political Science at SNSPA signed a public letter condemning any form of abuse in universities and calling for firm measures against abusers, as well as substantial involvement in preventing such situations (Mărăcine and Bularca, 2024).

6. Conclusions

Even if gender equality is considered a fundamental value in democratic regimes, even if it is assumed as such in the EU, but also in the Member States, when it comes to implementing effective policies to reduce gender inequality, progress remains too slow. This is also the reason why, all the more so in difficult contexts where there are autocratic threats of a conservative or extremist nature, we need to devise strategic solutions that are useful in maintaining loyalty to democracy, making it possible to overcome divisions and dichotomies and to ensure the best possible representation of the diverse interests of citizens. Universities are a centre of power that can mediate such dense situations, making use of their epistemic authority and always bearing in mind their role as guardians of democratic values and principles. The way in which universities assume the promotion of gender equality by producing knowledge in the field, on the one hand for students (democratization of knowledge), on the other hand as an input for public policies, can be considered as a litmus test of the quality of democracy (Băluță I, 2020) in a specific context. The degree of institutionalization and professionalization of gender studies in Universities is a sensitive indicator for the quality of democracy. “How gender studies have been established and (partly) institutionalized, the ideological and institutionalized, the ideological and institutional obstacles that they have faced, as well as the political values and stakes that are present when they are promoted or contested are significant elements for understanding the process of democratization (Băluță I, 2020, p. 34. Universities should therefore not be afraid to take a firm stand in promoting gender equality. “Universities can’t pretend to be neutral arbiters of their societies’ divisions. Administrators, faculty, and students can’t stand apart from the racial, gender, and class conflicts that divide their societies” (Ignatieff,

2024, p. 198), and from this point of view it is important to document good practices in this field in order to build on them in strategic approaches to strengthen the democratic climate.

Notes

1. 1975 – Equal Pay Directive, 1976 Equal Treatment Directive, 1986 Occupational Social Security Directive, 1986 Self Employed Directive, 1992 – Pregnant Workers Directive, 1993 – The Working Time Directive, 1996 – Parental Leave Directive, 1997 – Burden of Proof Directive, 1997 – Part-time Workers Directive.

2. In parliamentary elections the number of women decreased, with women representing only 18.5% of parliamentarians, compared to 19.1% in 2016

3. For example, see European Institute For Gender Equality's projects and activities

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

About the author

Diana-Elena NEAGA holds a PhD in political science is particularly interested in how women can become full citizens and how public policies should be designed to promote gender equality and represent women's interests in their diversity.

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