

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**A STUDY ABOUT POSSIBLE GENDER QUOTAS IN THE EUROPEAN
COMMISSION**

Aantal woorden / Word count: 17 820

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Masterproef voorgedragen tot het bekomen van de graad van:
Master's Dissertation submitted to obtain the degree of:

Master of Science in de Bestuurskunde en het Publiek Management
Master of Science in Public Administration and Management

Academiejaar / Academic year: 2020 – 2021

Dutch summary

De huidige President van de Europese Commissie Ursula von der Leyen maakte bij het begin van haar termijn duidelijk dat gendergelijkheid een prioriteit zou zijn voor haar Commissie. Ze slaagde er als eerste vrouwelijke President in om, eveneens als eerste, ongeveer een gelijk aantal vrouwen als mannen in haar ‘College of Commissioners’ te verwelkomen. Daarnaast heeft President von der Leyen ook de target van 50 procent gezet voor het vrouwelijk aandeel in de hogere managementposities in de administratie van de Europese Commissie. Dat is beduidend ambitieuzer dan haar voorgangers.

In de wetenschappelijke literatuur is reeds veel geschreven over gendergelijkheid in politieke instituties en hier wordt vaak de link gelegd met gender quota’s. Omdat weinig geweten is over gendergelijkheid in de Europese Commissie, stelt deze masterproef de vraag of de Europese Commissie gender quota’s nodig zou hebben en waarom wel of niet? Deze onderzoeksvraag tracht beantwoord te worden aan de hand van een literatuuronderzoek, een documentenanalyse en interviews met functionarissen van de Europese Commissie.

Het eerste deel van de masterproef bestaat uit een theoretisch kader dat het resultaat is van een literatuuronderzoek. Hier wordt dieper ingegaan op de concepten politieke en administratieve representatie alsook de strategieën om de vertegenwoordiging van vrouwen in organisaties te verbeteren. Een van deze strategieën betreft positieve discriminatie waarop een definitie en een typologie van gender quota’s volgt.

Het tweede deel rapporteert de verzamelde gegevens en bestaat uit twee onderdelen. Het eerste deel geeft een introductie in de verschillende dimensies en functies van de Europese Commissie. In het tweede onderdeel volgt een historisch overzicht van de evolutie van het aandeel vrouwen in de organisatie, zowel aan de politieke als de administratieve zijde.

Het derde deel omvat een analyse waarbij eerst wordt nagegaan welke mogelijke gender quota’s zouden passen in de politieke en administratieve context van de Europese Commissie. Vervolgens worden verschillende elementen besproken die aanhalen waarom gender quota’s al dan niet wenselijk en nodig zijn binnen de zogenaamde Europese uitvoerende macht. Ten slotte wordt de onderzoeksvraag beantwoord en worden enkele theoretische en praktische aanbevelingen geformuleerd.

Preface

In front of you lies the end of a wonderful journey as a student of public administration and management at the University of Ghent. The past four years gave me the opportunity to develop myself, especially my Erasmus-exchange in Budapest was an experience that made me who I am today.

First, I am thankful to my parents who gave me the opportunity to study and who have always continued to believe in me.

Second, I would like to thank my supervisor Claire Dupont who was always available to answer my questions, big and small. Her feedback and knowledge have enriched this master's dissertation extensively.

Third, also some words of thanks to everyone who did the effort to read this thesis and provide feedback. Your input made the dissertation into what it is now.

Last but not least, I am grateful to my friends and family who were always there for me, in good times and tough times.

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List of abbreviations

DG	Directorate-General
DGs	Directorates-General
EAEC or Euratom	European Atomic Energy Community
EC	European Commission
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union

1 Introduction

This introduction aims to make an overview, first, of the problem definition including the practical and theoretical relevance of this research project. Next, the research question is formulated. This paragraph ends with an outline of the structure of this thesis.

1.1 Problem definition

1.1.1 Practical relevance

In her opening speech in the European Parliament Ursula von der Leyen, then candidate for President of the European Commission, announced that she wants to achieve more gender equality in the European Union. Her College of Commissioners would be an example for female representation, so Member States had to propose a minimum of two candidates including at least one woman. If this would not be the case, she would not have hesitated to ask for new names. “Since 1958 there have been 183 Commissioners. Only 35 were women. That is less than 20%. We represent half of our population. We want our fair share.” (von der Leyen, 2019a).

With this speech, President von der Leyen made it clear that she wanted gender balance to be one of the priorities of her Commission. This makes this research subject highly practical relevant.

1.1.2 Theoretical relevance

A lot has been written about gender equity in the literature of political institutions. However, most of these research projects focus on gender balance during elections or in elected organs. But, the European Commission is not an elected organ but an appointed one. Moreover, the European Commission is a hybrid institution consisting of a political and an administrative part (Kassim et al., 2013; Nugent, 2001). This makes the context of the European Commission more or less unique. There are many books and scientific articles with insights about the European Commission, but not one of them focuses specifically on the field of gender balance in the institution.

In other words, a research project about gender balance in the European Commission would contribute to current knowledge since there is not that much literature about gender balance used in this hybrid institution.

1.2 The research question

Multiple strategies exist to achieve more gender equality in institutions like the European Commission, the most discussed one in scientific literature seems gender quotas. The research question in this dissertation concerns: “Does the European Commission need gender quotas, why or why not?”. This is a normative research question since it tries to find out if gender quotas are

desirable or favourable for the European Commission and society (Danneels, 2020). Given gender quotas is a sensitive subject, there is no hypothesis or prediction formulated to avoid biases of the researcher.

1.3 The structure of this research project

This introduction with the practical and theoretical relevance of the subject and the research question is followed by the methodology of the qualitative research methods used. This research project includes a literature review, a document analysis, and semi-structured elite interviews. This section ends with a discussion of the quality of this research project and more specific the traceability, transferability, and plausibility.

The third section includes the theoretical framework which is the result of a literature review. The latter tries, on the one hand, to define the concepts of political and administrative representation. On the other hand, the literature review includes strategies to improve the representation of women in institutions like the European Commission. In this dissertation, more attention is paid to one of these strategies namely, positive discrimination or gender quotas.

Thereafter, the gathered data are reflected first in an overview of the different roles – political and administrative – of the European Commission and their relationships towards each other. The different functions of this institution are briefly mentioned as well. The second paragraph of the data-analysis consists of an historical overview of the number of women in the European Commission in both the College of Commissioners and the administration.

The elements mentioned above make it possible to discuss appropriate types of gender quotas in the European Commission. However, the question should be asked if these quotas are desirable and needed. Therefore, in the last section different factors are discussed which argue whether the Commission needs gender quotas or not. In other words, an answer on the research question is formulated here.

This thesis ends with a conclusion including – on the one hand – a short overview of what has been achieved with this research project. On the other hand, some recommendations for further research and practical recommendations about the representation of women in the European Commission and similar institutions are listed in the conclusion as well.

2 Methodology

To answer the question whether the European Commission needs gender quotas and why or why not, different types of qualitative research methodologies are used. In other words, the purpose of the methods used is to interpret something that is not operationalized with numbers. When the emphasis is laid on interpretation, there is a need for constant reflection to ensure the researcher's own biases do not interfere (Gabrielian, Yang & Spice, 2008).

2.1 A literature review

First, a literature review is carried out to form a theoretical framework for this research project. More specific, the goal is, on the one hand, to define theoretical concepts related to representation in political and administrative institutions. On the other hand, this literature research aims to make an overview of the different typologies of gender quotas in the context of strategies to improve the representation of women. The predominant goal of this literature review is to present background information and develop a robust framework. It cannot be seen as a 'systematic' literature review since it does not accomplish the prescribed requirements like a systematically formulated data gathering (Snyder, 2019). During this literature review, databases like Web of Science and Google Scholar are consulted and the so-called snowball effect is used as well. In other words, relevant sources of used scientific articles and books are consulted as well.

2.2 A document analysis

Second, a document analysis aims to make an overview of the organisation and working processes of the European Commission on the one hand and an historical overview of the different Commissions on the other. The former makes a distinction between the political and administrative activities in the organisation. The latter includes a summing-up of the previous projects which tried to increase the number of women in the institution. The evolution of the number of women in the Commission is discussed here as well. During this document analysis, online documents and books about the Commission are consulted.

2.3 Interviews

Third, to provide deeper insights and to ensure a robust answer to the research question, interviews are carried out. The combination of the interviews, the document analysis and the literature review can result in a strong foundation (Mosley, 2013, p. 3). Interviews in qualitative research can be defined as "an interactive process where a person asks a question to seek particular information" (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017, p. 3). More specific, this research project practices elite interviews in which 'elite' can be defined as "an individual who holds or has held some powerful position that

has afforded the individual unique knowledge or information from a privileged perspective” (Natow, 2020, p. 160). During an interview with the elite, it is possible to receive unique data or knowledge to answer the research question (Natow, 2020).

Because of the Covid-19-crisis and the busy agendas of the different officials of the Commission, the interviews take place via the audio-visual technological platform Microsoft Teams. This platform is used by the European Commission itself and the University of Ghent, so Microsoft Teams was an obvious choice. A videocall is preferred to a ‘normal’ phone call since the former allows more non-verbal communication such as winks, smiles, frowns etc. (Sullivan, 2012).

2.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

This research project applies elite interviews which are semi-structured, this is the most used type of interviews in qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews include prepared questions and some guidelines. “However, unlike the structured, semi-structured interviews have no rigid adherence” (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017, p. 4). There is more space for flexibility in questions and answers here. As a result of this flexibility, the researcher can go deeper into specific subjects (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017, p. 4). The latter explains why not all the officials were asked all the same questions. Another reason for this is that often there was not enough time to ask all the officials all the same questions.

Semi-structured interviews seem to be the best option in this qualitative research project because, first, the goal is to obtain personal experiences. Second, because of the space for flexibility, it is possible to receive specific information which is necessary to answer the research question in the end. A third and last reason for the choice for semi-structured interviews concerns the interview reports. These normally barely include incomplete answers since the interviewer him- or herself is responsible for the completeness of them (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

A well-known disadvantage of interviews is their time-consuming character. Namely, all the interviews need to be carefully prepared and after the interview, the interviews need to be typed out in a transcript. Then, these interviews need to be analysed in a careful way as well. Because of the necessary interpretation of the answers, a second disadvantage can be the interviewer bias (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). However, the chance for bias during the analysis will be reduced as much as possible by doing this in a structure way. More details about this structured analysis will follow in the paragraph about regarding data-analysis.

Another limitation is the fact that it is impossible to interview everyone, so it is a small-scale study (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Because of this, the external validity or the generalisability of this research

project can be damaged. However, the generalisability of the results is not the aim of qualitative research in the end (van Thiel, 2015). Lastly, it can be difficult to get access to the ‘elite’ who needs to be interviewed (Natow, 2020). More about the response grade of this elite is written below.

2.3.2 Selection of the participants

The elite in this research project includes officials from inside the European Commission. More specifically, the participants are mainly people in a senior management position in the administration or cabinet members. Two assistants take part in the interviews as well, one from a cabinet and one from a DG. The goal was to interview ten officials, five from the administration and five from the cabinets. In this way it seemed to be possible to ask question about the administration and about the College to the cabinet members. However, during the actual selection it became clear that most of the officials did both in their career already – a job in the DGs and a job as cabinet member – so a strict distinction was no longer necessary.

During the selection of the participants, only one variable is considered namely the number of women in senior positions in a particular DG or cabinet. To have representative answers, it is important to interview people from units with full gender balance and units with less gender balance. For the rest, the officials were chosen randomly taking into consideration different ages, career length and nationality.

2.3.3 Response grade

In total, 26 mails were sent with the question if the particular official of the European Commission would like to participate in this research project. In the first round, 20 mails were sent which resulted in eight positive answers, three negative answers and nine were left unanswered. Most of the unanswered emails came from the cabinets. But also, units where less women are represented seemed to ignore the email more than units with more women in higher positions. Therefore, only the cabinets were sent a reminder ten days later. Also, four more emails were sent to people in other cabinets from which one positive answer was received. Beside this, one more email was sent to someone in a DG with less women in higher positions. Additionally, one of the participants recommended another cabinet member. The two last ones were willing to contribute to this research project. This means that in total eleven interviews took place including ten women and one man. An overview of all of this can be found in table 1.

Sent mails	Positive answer	Negative answer	No answer
1st round			
20	8	3	9
2nd round			
6	3	2	1

Table 1: Response grade of the elite interviews

2.3.4 Analysis of the interviews

All participants remain anonymous during the research project. They are referred to as EC official 1, EC official 2, EC official 3 and so on. In other words, their functions and units are never mentioned. In this way, the interviewees were certain that they could talk freely. Also, it did not seem necessary to make a distinction between the administrative and political functions during the analysis, since most of the interviewees fulfilled both functions in their career, hence they were able to talk about their work in the cabinet and the administration.

2.3.4.1 Open coding

A transcript was written for each interview. A summary of what every official answered on the most relevant questions is added in the annex of the thesis. Anything that could possibly refer to an official’s unit or function is left out and replaced by (...) to respect the anonymity of the participants. The unintelligible parts are listed between brackets which also include the duration of the unintelligible part.

Then, the process of open coding starts by giving labels to all the answers that the EC officials gave during the interviews. This is necessary to get an overall insight into the gathered data (Mortelmans, 2013) and is recorded in Excel sheets. Sometimes there was a distinction between the political and administrative dimension depending on if this was relevant or not for the specific code.

Below is an example of what exactly is meant by open coding in this case. On the left side is what EC official 10 answered to the question “Is there a difference in policy-output when more women in higher positions take part in the policy process?” On the right are the labels that are assigned to this answer.

“Yes I do think it makes a difference to the policy. I think women approach things in a different way. I think they are more interested sometimes in getting result from a team, a central result, let’s say, that everybody finds itself in the result at the end of the day. It is not all about winning.” (EC official 10)

- Yes: difference in policy output when more women
- Reason: different approach

2.3.4.2 Axial coding

The following step is to look for returning patterns, explanations, ideas... across the different DGs and cabinets. Axial coding is a bit more abstract than open coding and allows to see patterns and relations between the different codes (Mortelmans, 2013; van Thiel, 2015).

For example, two different reasons appeared for the difference in policy output when more women are present in higher positions.

- 1) Different backgrounds enrich the policymaking because of different ideas
- 2) Different approach of handling the policy

2.3.4.3 Selective coding

In the end, the data are linked to what is written down in the theoretical framework and the data from the document analysis. Some visualisations of the different conclusions are made as well. In this way, it seems possible to answer the research question at the end of the thesis.

2.4 The quality of this research project

To answer the question whether the European Commission needs gender quotas and why or why not, different types of research methodologies are used. This research project relies predominantly on qualitative methods. In other words, the purpose of the methods used is to interpret something that is not operationalized with numbers. When the emphasis is laid on interpretation, there is a need for constant reflection to ensure the researcher’s own biases do not interfere (Gabrielian et al., 2008).

Because of the use of qualitative research methods, the quality of this research project is not discussed by the commonly used reliability and validity. Traceability of the analyses, transferability and plausibility of conclusions are used instead. These terms are often used in

qualitative research. Traceability is related to reliability, transferability to external validity or generalisability and plausibility to internal validity (van Thiel, 2015, p. 175).

2.4.1 The traceability

If someone else would repeat this research project, it seems likely that the same conclusions would be made in the end. This is, first, because of the constant reflection between the literature, interviews, and document analysis. In other words, the results are not based on the elite interviews and their interpretation only. Second, the systematic coding of the answers of the EC officials decreases the opportunities for interpretations of the researcher.

However, gender quotas are a sensitive subject and the researcher should be aware of biases towards this subject. Because of this, no hypothesis is added in this research project. Also, the answers of the EC officials can be influenced by personal experiences, career length in the Commission, experiences in other institutions, cultural elements etc. Therefore, the participants were mostly of various ages, with a long or short career, of different nationalities etc. Lastly, there are the so called ‘negative proofs’ in the qualitative data which include contradictions compared to the rest of the data. These negative proofs can be found in the gathered data from the interviews in this case. This shows that the researcher acknowledges them and makes it possible to make a more comprehensive conclusion (Mortelmans, 2013, p. 485).

2.4.2 The transferability

It goes without saying that the conclusion of this research project about the European Commission cannot be generalised to all political/administrative institutions. But there are elements in the conclusion that can be recommended to similar institutions. In other words, there cannot be a general transferability to all institutions but there is a possibility to transfer the results to another context of similar institutions. The latter is the so-called inferential generalisability. The characteristics of the European Commission’s case are mentioned extensively in this paper which makes it possible in further research to see the similarities and differences with another case (Mortelmans, 2013, p. 486).

2.4.3 The plausibility

In this research project, qualitative research methods were chosen, namely a document analysis and elite interviews. Together with a literature review, this seems sufficient to answer the research question. However, only a small number of officials could be interviewed. Therefore, a survey as a quantitative research method would be a good addition to this research project. In that way,

methodological triangulation between quantitative and qualitative research methods can take place (Mortelmans, 2013, p. 483). That idea is included in the recommendations at the end of the thesis.

2.4.4 Conclusion

Because of relying on qualitative research methods, like interviews and document analysis, there is an significant need for constant reflection of the researcher to avoid biases towards the subject (Gabrielian et al., 2008). This reflection is necessary to improve the traceability, transferability, and plausibility of this research project. Efforts have been made to avoid biases but given the sensitivity of the subject and the possibility to do qualitative research within the short time period, there is room for improvement in further research.

3 Theoretical framework

This theoretical framework is the result of a literature review. First, political and administrative representation are defined and discussed. This section is predominantly based on the theories of Pitkin (1967) and Mosher (1968). Next, the strategies to improve the representation of women by Lovenduski, Baudino, Guadagnini, Meier & Sainsbury (2005) are discussed. The focus in this dissertation is on the third strategy – positive discrimination or gender quotas – which finally leads to a definition and a typology of the different gender quotas.

3.1 The concept of representation in political and administrative institutions

3.1.1 Representation: a definition

When talking about representation in political institutions, it is necessary to define some concepts first. Representation simply occurs when an individual or group stands for or acts on behalf of a larger group of people (Heywood, 2015, p. 155). However, it is not always simple to find evidence for that relationship of representation.

Liang (2019) makes a distinction between two dimensions in terms of representation in the public sector, namely the legislative and the executive part. The legislative dimension refers to the elected people in an organisation and are mostly the focus during scientific research about gender equality in the public sector. This is the so-called **political representation** which is the focus in the first paragraph of the theoretical framework. The second paragraph aims to make a theoretical framework of the executive branch or the bureaucracy. This forms the **administrative or bureaucratic representation** and is less common a research focus in the scientific literature (Liang, 2019).

3.1.2 Political representation

3.1.2.1 Political representation: a definition

Political representation can be defined as “the articulation and presentation of political agendas of given groups by various actors in decision-making arenas and key social forums in democratic societies” (Kurebwa, 2015, p. 50). However, according to Penock & Chapman (1998, p. 6), political representation is not only present in democratic states and it does not seem to be a modern concept at all. To be more specific, it seems political representation already existed in the middle ages when the office of medieval kings was tasked to protect the poor and rich classes in the enjoyment of their rights.

Pitkin’s (1967) definition says that political representation is a form of political assistance and happens, according to Kurebwa’s (2015) review of Pitkin’s work, “when political actors speak,

advocate, symbolise and act on behalf of others in the political arena” (Kurebwa, 2015, pp. 50). Hannah Pitkin’s famous work ‘*The concept of representation*’ (1967), provides the theoretical framework of this dissertation which is explained in more detail below.

But this does not mean that there are no other theoretical concepts about political representation. Another concept that appears in the literature concerns the **concept of relational representation** by Williams (1998) and supplemented by Krook (2006). This concept emphasizes the process of representation and does not ask the question whether women are represented. This theory of Williams (1998) can be seen as a complement or an addition to the theoretical framework of Pitkin (1967).

3.1.2.2 Pitkin (1967): the four dimensions of political representation

The most known and cited theoretical framework about political representation concerns the four, closely connected, dimensions of representation by Pitkin (1967) (Kurebwa, 2015; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). The first one, **formal representation**, concerns who is allowed to participate, for example, in elections. The next kind of representation is **substantive representation** which concerns the substantive interests of groups. **Symbolic representation**, the third dimension, takes a look at different groups to see whether they feel represented. The fourth and last dimension, **descriptive representation**, asks whether different representatives reflect the society. Below, an explanation of each dimension is provided and supplemented by other relevant theories and possible obstacles for women to be represented in a specific way.

3.1.2.2.1 Formal representation

First, the formal representation dimension covers who is allowed to participate in the political process. More specifically, this refers to the formal or formalistic representation in the rules and regulations of a political institution. According to Kurebwa (2015, p. 51), there are two different conditions to obtain formal representation. The first condition is **authorisation** which covers how representatives obtain their status or proposition and power. The second condition is **accountability** and concerns the relationship between the representatives and the represented. More specifically, it questions whether sanction mechanisms exist for the constituents when they do not agree with the behaviour of the representatives.

According to Norris and Inglehart (2001) there are several obstacles for women to become formal representatives. Three kinds of obstacles fall under the first condition of Kurebwa (2015, p. 51), namely, authorisation. The first factor of Norris and Inglehart (2001) is the **social structure** including the occupational, educational and socioeconomic status of women. Modernization plays

a big role in this factor. In particular, in the first phase of modernisation (the industrialization) women entered the paid workforce and fertility rates decreased dramatically. In this phase, women started to enter the representative government, but they still had less power than men. The second phase or post-industrialization phase, gender equality improved because women became part of the higher-status economic and political class. It is important to mention here that half of the world has not yet entered this last phase. Even in the most developed industrial societies, like the majority of European countries, this phase of post-industrialization is not yet finished.

The second factor of obstacles for women to enter politics, according to Norris and Inglehart (2001), concerns the **political institutions**. Different factors influence these political institutions, among which, the level of democratization, although that remains in dispute in the scientific literature. On the one hand, political and civil liberties seem more widespread in democratic states, which means women have greater access to, for example, the parliament (Norris & Inglehart, 2001). On the other hand, Reynolds (1999) sees no significant relationship between the level of democratization and the number of women in a parliament.

Finally, the third factor of obstacles preventing women from entering politics includes **cultural barriers** (Norris & Inglehart, 2001). This emphasizes gender roles or traditional attitudes towards women in the private and public spheres, including stereotypes. In a recent research project by Jalusic and Antic Gaber (2020), this factor appears to be the most important one for women. The personal and private circumstances are usually the biggest obstacles for women standing as a political candidate. Besides that, funding and private support are also a big obstacle for women to enter politics.

The research by Jalusic and Antic Gaber (2020) elaborates on that political support and more specifically on **the role of political gatekeepers**. Political gatekeepers are people who set the criteria for other people entering the political elites. Political gatekeepers consider it easier to recruit, promote and support people who are similar to themselves (Rasmussen, 1981). This theory by Rasmussen (1981) has as a consequence that the more women are part of the political elite as gatekeepers, the more women will be present in political institutions like the parliament and government. This concept relates to the formal representation-dimension by Pitkin (1967) since these gatekeepers formally decide who can participate in the political process.

3.1.2.2.2 Substantive representation

The next dimension is called the substantial or substantive representation and concerns, in this case, the interests of women. Pitkin (1967, p. 209) defined this dimension as “acting in the interests

of the represented in a manner responsive to them” (Pitkin, 1967, p. 209). Policy responsiveness is the most common concept that refers to this dimension of representation (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005, p. 409). To be more specific, it does not mean that when women are formally represented in a political institution, they automatically have a direct, proportional influence on the policy itself. In other words, non-substantial representation can be an obstacle for women to actual representation, however, it seems that the presence of women has a positive influence on that substantial representation (Phillips, 1995, p. 148).

But do women’s policy priorities really differ from the policy priorities of men? According to Skeije (1991) they do differ. Men are more likely to be more concerned about economic, industrial and energy subjects while women seem to think more about social welfare, environmental protection and equality and cultural policies. However, the focus of Skeije’s research project was on parliamentary members in Norway, and not every relevant person was questioned. Also, not every woman has the same policy priorities. A research project by Thomas (1991) on the impact of women on state legislative policies confirms Skeije’s conclusion. Namely, women tend to lay more policy emphasis on issues related to women, children and family. Once again, this is not applicable to all female representatives and it is important to be critical towards these theories.

Reher (2018) did a more recent analysis on the substantive policy representation of women in different European countries. This research project does not focus on the priorities of women which can differ, but it focuses on the substantive differences of policy ideas between men and women. The conclusion here was that in about half of the analysed policy domains there is a high level of agreement between women and men, mostly in ‘women’s issues’ such as abortion, but in economic issues as well. The most differing opinions between men and women seem to be related to ‘new politics’ subjects such as nuclear power, animal rights and adoption rights of same-sex couples. However, “across issues and countries, the majorities of men and women desire the same policy 87 percent of the time” (Reher, 2018, p. 16).

This raises the question whether male politicians are able to defend the female interests during the policy process? In other words, is it possible to have substantial representation without formal or descriptive representation? According to most of the scientific literature related to this topic, it seems not possible for men to fully substantially represent women (Franceschet, Krook & Piscopo, 2012; Phillips, 1998). Although, there seems to be contrary ideas as well and further research is needed in this matter (Reher, 2018).

3.1.2.2.3 Symbolic representation

Symbolic representation is Pitkin's (1967) third dimension and emphasizes the feeling of being represented. It asks whether representatives 'stand for' or 'symbolize' society. In other words, this dimension emphasizes the perception and evaluation of the representatives by those they represent. According to Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005) and Reher (2018) a government or a political system is considered more democratic when women are sufficiently represented. Opposite these last-mentioned studies, stands the one by Lawless (2004) about the effects of women present in the United States House of Representatives and Congress. This research project shows that there is no relation between the positive feeling of women about their representatives in the House and their positivity about politics in general. But, having more female representatives seems to send a signal to women that politics are open to everyone, including women. Because of this, women tend to participate more often in the political process when the political institution seems women-friendly (Childs, 2004). However, there are several contrasting understandings of symbolic representation or the feeling of being represented.

Different variables can meet the symbolic representation, including the interest in participating in the political process. Concepts such as trust in the government and evaluation of the government, are variables that contribute to understanding the symbolic dimension of representation (Kurebwa, 2015).

3.1.2.2.4 Descriptive representation

Pitkin's (1967) last dimension, descriptive representation, concerns the question whether the representative organ reflects the diversity of society. In other words, does the political institution 'stand for' society? (Norris & Franklin, 1997). The words 'stand for' occur in this dimension, just like in the symbolic one as well. Although, in symbolic representation the emphasis lies more on the attitudes and feelings, while the 'stand for' in the descriptive dimension refers more to sharing similar characteristics (Pitkin, 1967). A descriptive representer is, in some sense, typical for the people he or she represents (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 629).

There is a distinction between two different types of descriptive representation. The first one, **function representation**, is about "the correspondence between representatives and represented" (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005, p. 409). This type can be related to the formal representation dimension as well and more precisely to accountability. As mentioned above, accountability raises the question whether there is a sanction mechanism for the constituents when they do not agree with the representatives' behaviour. In other words, function representation is about the

communication relation between the representatives and the represented. The other type of descriptive representation, **social representation**, is about social characteristics, for instance gender, race, ethnicity and class. In this component of the descriptive dimension, a representative stands for people when they share identical social characteristics (Norris & Franklin, 1997).

In the literature, the descriptive dimension is also linked to the concept of the **politics of presence** by Philips (1995). According to this concept, the content of the political debate is influenced by the presence or absence of some social groups like, for example, women. These groups include personal characteristics and experiences which lead to different priorities in outlining policy (Wauters, 2017). According to Williams (1998, p. 149), the absence of representatives of particular groups in the policy process, would also lead to a decline in trust of those societal groups in that policy process.

3.1.2.2.5 Conclusion and criticism

After the separate explanations of Pitkin's four dimensions (1967), it is important to mention that the four dimensions need to be seen as a coherent whole. The dimensions are closely connected to each other, for example, accountability is an element in both the formal and descriptive dimension. These different dimension can be integrated into one model in which the relationships between them can play a role as well (Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). Those relationships between the dimensions are not relevant in this paper since it focuses on gender equity. The dimensions of representation are used as a theoretical framework only in order to make an analysis about the representation of women in the European Commission.

Also, accomplishing one dimension does not mean that there is completely sufficient representation. For example, descriptive representation of women does not automatically lead to their substantive representation as well. In other words, when there are enough women present in a representative organ to reflect society, it does not mean that their interests are automatically represented as well. However, the presence of one dimension can positively influence the other ones (Philips, 1995).

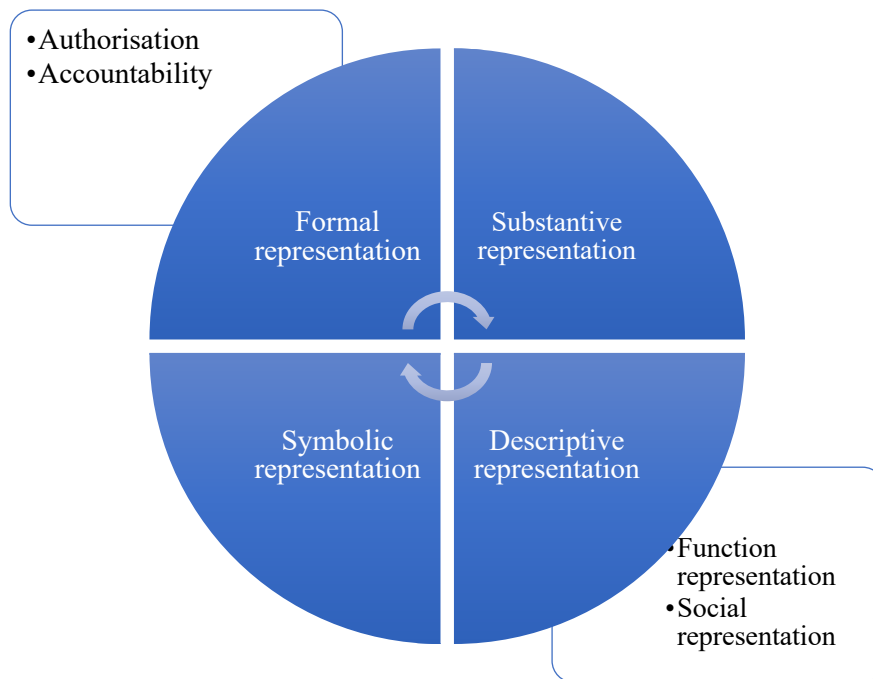


Figure 1: The dimensions of representation by Pitkin (1967) as a theoretical framework of political representation (Kurebwa, 2015; Norris & Franklin, 1997; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005)

It goes without saying that there is criticism on this theory of the four dimensions of representations by Pitkin (1967). The first critic relates to what should (should not) be included under the term “social characteristics”? Norris and Franklin (1997) give some examples such as gender, race, ethnicity and class. But is sexuality, for instance, a social characteristic as well? And should children also be represented in an official institution ? Because it seems that children are substantively represented since their interests seem to be represented in the policy process nowadays, however, they are not represented in a formal or descriptive way (Dovi, 2002). Stalford (2012) wrote a book about how the interests of children, more specific their rights, welfare and accountability, are represented in the European Union. The conclusion was that their interests are more or less represented, however, there is always room for advancement in the future (Stalford, 2012). This is an example that shows that there can be substantive representation without the presence of the descriptive or formal dimension.

Something that can be added here is that gender does not always mean the same as sex. In this context of representation, gender refers to shared experiences and sex to the same visible characteristics. In other words, it is possible to share the same experiences without sharing the same visible characteristics or the other way around. Gender identity is not something fixed and the behaviour of men and women in politics does not differ because of their biology but because of their ascribed gender roles and the related experiences (Childs, 2004; Mansbridge, 1999;

Philips, 1995). In this research project, gender refers to shared experiences and not to the visible characteristics because the latter is the definition of sex.

A second critic states that the question should be asked how far the descriptive and symbolic ones should be implemented since it does not seem possible to represent every social characteristic in a political institution. Maybe some unavoidable costs will appear in order to accomplish the descriptive representation. For example, instead of electing or appointing the most qualified or talented person, the choice would be made for a ‘necessary’ person to accomplish the descriptive representation (Mansbridge, 1999). While the best selection seems to happen after a process of rational thinking in terms of qualification (Kurebwa, 2015). This is an important element that returns when speaking about gender quotas.

3.1.3 Bureaucratic representation

3.1.3.1 Bureaucratic representation: a definition

Representation in political institutions can consist of political representation and bureaucratic representation (Liang, 2019). The latter refers to the representation in the administration of a political institution.

Bureaucratic representation seems the most important in “heterogenous societies with a history of civil unrest and conflict” (Eckhard, 2014, p. 602) because in these situations, the civil servants can actively push for the priorities of their group. In this way, societal stability can be established by bureaucratic representation (Eckhard, 2014).

According to Weber (1968, p. 975) bureaucrats should act “without anger and passion” because they should treat all citizens equal. However, civil servants seem to act on the basis of their socialization and demographic backgrounds (Mosher, 1968). The key assumption of this research project is that bureaucrats are not neutral, so they represent the section of the population which they are part of while doing their job.

3.1.3.2 Mosher (1968): a passive or an active representative bureaucracy

Mosher (1968) states that a representative bureaucracy can be either passive or active. **A passive representative bureaucracy** means that the civil servants share the same demographic origins, for example gender, as the general population. **An active representative bureaucracy** focuses more on the individual behaviour of the civil servants and raises the question whether the policy output benefits the people who are passively represented (Eckhard, 2020; Meier, 1993; Mosher, 1968). Rosenbloom and Kinnard (1977) call passive representation in the administration ‘social representation’ and ‘representation in a policy sense’ is what they call active representation. In this

thesis, the terms ‘active’ and ‘passive’ bureaucratic representation were chosen, since these seem the most commonly cited ones in the literature.

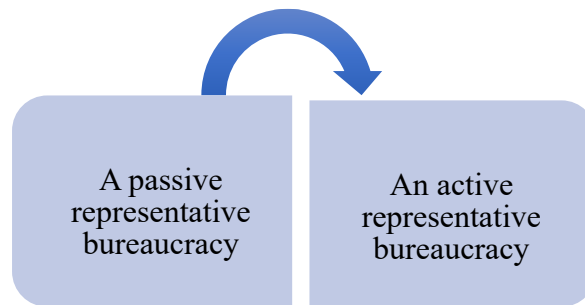


Figure 2: Bureaucratic representation by Mosher (1968) as theoretical framework of administrative representation (Eckhard, 2020; Meier, 1993)

Kennedy (2012) relates active and passive representation with the dimensions of (political) representation by Pitkin (1967). More specific, the passive representation of a bureaucracy can be related to descriptive representation while an active bureaucracy does think about the substantial dimension of representation. These can be seen as “the dimensions of policy representation” in a bureaucratic context (Kennedy, 2012).

Mosher (1968) argues that passive representation is a condition to accomplish active representation in bureaucracy as well. This can be linked to the previous discussion, in the paragraph regarding substantive representation. There, the question was raised whether it is possible for men to represent women or do representatives/bureaucrats need to share some similar characteristics to be able to represent the other gender? Most research showed that, indeed, passive or descriptive representation is required for the active or substantive dimension to be fulfilled (Franceschet et al., 2012; Mosher, 1968; Phillips, 1998).

However, passive representation does not automatically lead to an active representative bureaucracy. In other words, it does not mean that when a specific group is formally represented in a specific organisation, that group will automatically receive benefits of that. According to Meier (1993) there are three reasons for that. The first one states that civil servants can be put in positions which have a lower impact on the actual policy output. Next, the civil servants may change as a person before obtaining a more powerful position. “To succeed in many organizations means substituting the agency’s values for one’s personal values” (Meier, 1993, p. 397). The last

reason why passive representation does not always lead to active representation is related to the authorities of a specific organisation. It is possible that the organisation is not able to influence the policy in the areas that benefit the passively represented population. This shows that a passively represented group will only receive benefits from the representation if these three criteria are not met a particular public agency (Meier, 1993).

But the relationship between an active and a passive representative bureaucracy remains hard to identify. And beside Meier's criteria (1993) as conditions for active representation, there are other variables that affect that relationship between passive and active representation in the administration as well. Mosher (1968) mentions the duration of being in the organization, the nature and strength of the organization's socialization process, the nature of preparatory education and the strength of associations beyond the agency (Mosher, 1968, p. 13). However, it is hard to find out how these things exactly affect the relationship between the two types of bureaucratic representation (Nachmias & Rosenbloom, 1973).

3.2 Strategies to improve the representation of women

There are different options to ensure sufficient female representation in a political and administrative context. Lovenduski et al. (2005) describe three different options or strategies. The first one is the equality rhetoric which includes promoting women's participation, for example, in speeches. The second strategy is equality promotion and concerns positive action. Equality guarantees or positive discrimination, including quotas, is the third strategy and the main focus of this research project.

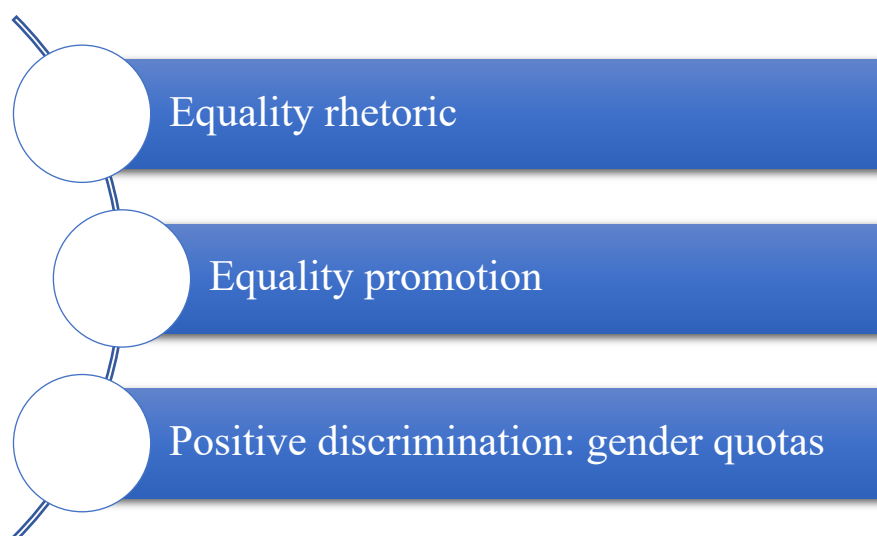


Figure 3: Strategies to improve the representation of women by Lovenduski et al. (2005)

3.2.1 Positive discrimination or gender quotas

Gender quotas can be defined as “a type of equal opportunity measure that forces the nominating bodies to recruit, nominate or select more women for political (or administrative) positions” (Dahlerup, 2007, p. 6). Since gender quotas focus on who is and who is not able to participate in politics, quotas seem to belong to the formal dimension of political representation by Pitkin (1967). However, the aim of gender quotas is to provide a more realistic reflection of society in the political institution. From that point of view, gender quotas belong to the descriptive dimension as well. In the administration, the goal of gender quotas is to improve the passive representative bureaucracy (Mosher, 1968).

Gender quotas seem to be a fast way to achieve more women in political institutions and according to Dahlerup (2007), are seen as the most successful strategy to accomplish gender equality. However, the effectiveness depends on the specific type of gender quota that is applied.

3.2.2 Gender quotas: a typology

The next paragraphs consist of three questions that form together the structure of the typology of the different gender quotas. More specific, a distinction is made first between the type of organisation in which the quotas are applied. Then the question of how the quotas are met is raised. Lastly, the level of commitment of the quota is discussed. Each section brings forward some types of gender quota, a visual summary of the typology can be found at the end of this section.

3.2.2.1 *The type of organisation*

A first factor concerns the type of organisation in which the gender quotas are implemented. **Electoral quota**, on the one hand, are gender quotas in public organisations based on constitutional regulations, electoral laws or political party rules (Hughes, Paxton & Krook, 2017, p. 333). Dahlerup (2007) delved further into these electoral quotas and distinguishes three levels in which the quotas are applied. A first possible goal is to change the composition of **the aspirants**, namely the pool of potential candidates. The second level relates to **the list of effective candidates**. The third level concerns **the elected people** in the end.

The goal of a **corporate board quota**, on the other hand, is to have more women in the board of directors, namely the managers (Hughes et al., 2017, p. 334).

3.2.2.2 *Implementation*

A second element is the way to meet the gender quotas. According to Larsrud and Taphorn (2007) there are two ways to meet them, namely **during the nomination process** or afterwards based on the results, the so-called result-based quotas. A zipper or zebra system, where every other

candidate needs to be a woman, is a good example of a quota applied in the nomination process. **Result-based quotas** are the second type of gender quotas according to Larsrud and Taphorn (2007). Here, a certain number or percentage of seats in the organisation are reserved for women. There are two different ways to implement result-based quotas, namely **a separate list with only female candidates** or the so-called **'best loser system'** where the best women amongst the initial non-appointed or non-elected candidates are chosen. When quotas are applied during the nomination process and to the results, it is called **a double quota** (Dahlerup, 2003, p. 4).

3.2.2.3 The level of commitment

Lastly, the third factor focuses on the difference between the level of commitment of the used gender quotas, and possible sanctions if they are not followed. Here, Larsrud and Taphorn (2007) and Krook (2014) make a distinction between voluntary and **legal, obligated quotas**. The latter are legally binding and there are sanctions, such as fines, when these quotas are not met. **Voluntary quotas**, on the other hand, consist out of targets and recommendations and there are no real consequences if they are not followed.

3.2.3 Conclusion and criticism

As one might expect, these three differentiations mentioned above are not the only ways to categorize gender quotas. Nevertheless, these ones seem to be the most cited in scientific literature about gender quotas. As Krook (2014) discussed, researchers created a lot of different schemes with different categories of gender quotas. Other approaches, which are not discussed here, mostly focus on the location and timing of the quota mandate. Whatever the classification and way of using gender quota, they seem to have the same main purpose, namely to meet gender balance in institutions in a fast way.

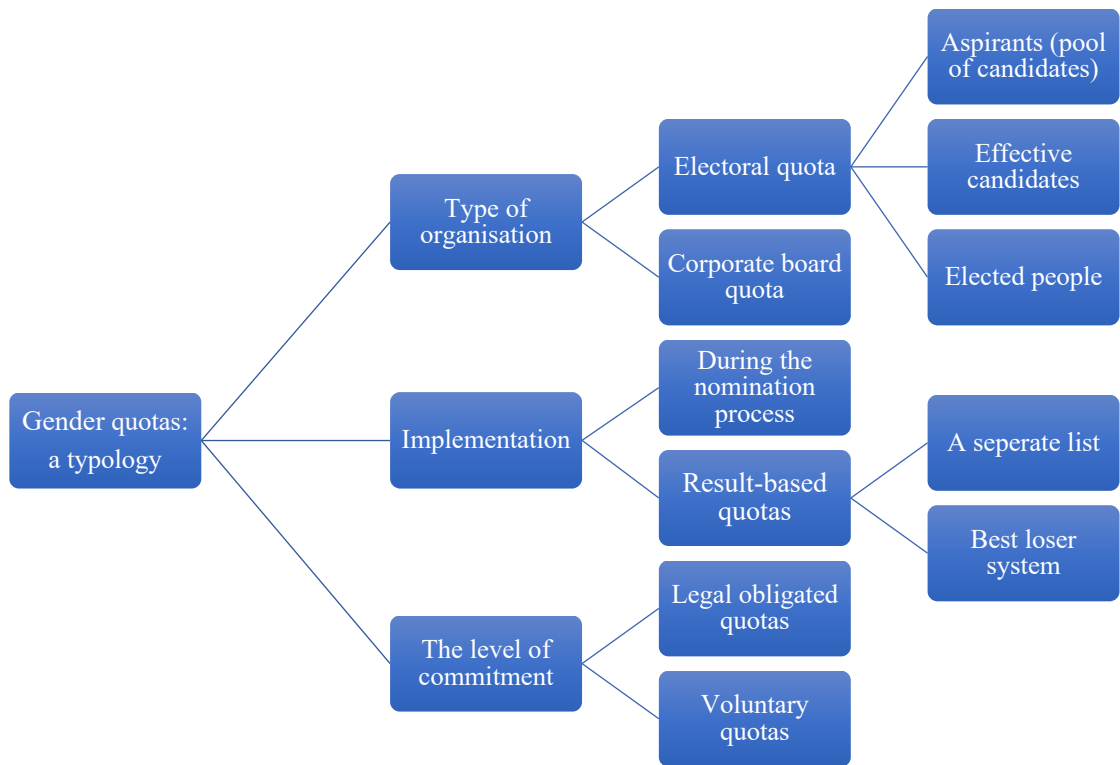


Figure 4: Gender quotas: a typology (Dahlerup, 2003, 2007; Hughes, Paxton & Krook, 2017; Krook, 2014; Larserud & Taphorn, 2007)

4 Data analysis

This data analysis describes the results of the document analysis and the interviews. First, the European Commission as an organisation is introduced and its different roles are described. The next section consists of an historical overview of the different Commissions and their different strategies to increase the representation of women. After this description of the different results, the data will be discussed in a more interpretative way in the subsequent paragraph.

4.1 The roles of the European Commission

The European Commission is seen as the EU's executive power and is responsible for the formulation and execution of European policies (Wille, 2013). It is a hybrid and multidimensional organisation (Kassim et al., 2013; Nugent, 2001). These different dimensions will be discussed first.

Just as in the theoretical concept of Liang (2019), a distinction can be made between political and administrative representation in the roles of the European Commission as well. There is the political role, practiced by the College of Commissioners and their personal staff, and the administrative role, or also called bureaucracy, consisting of supporting services. These services are subdivided in different units, namely 'Directorates-General' or 'DGs' and other special departments, such as the services and agencies (Egeberg, 2013; Mussa, 2020.; Nugent & Rhinard, 2015; Wille, 2013).

According to the website of the Commission itself, a third element can be inserted here, namely the Commission offices throughout the world. In the European Union, these offices' main function is to inform citizens about the activities of the EU, they "act as the Commission's voice in their host country" (European Commission, n.d.). The offices outside the Union are part of the European External Action Service and aim to promote EU interests on the one hand, and to undertake various programmes on the other hand. These offices are out of scope here since they seem to have no direct influence on the policy-making activities of the Commission.

After discussing the political and administrative role separately, the relation between the two of them is addressed. The section about the roles of the European Commission ends with a brief discussion of the organisation's different functions.

4.1.1 The political role

The political level of the Commission currently consists of 27 Commissioners, one from each member state. They are appointed for a five-year term and every Commissioner is assigned to a

specific policy domain, independent of their country. In other words, they do not represent the government of their member state, but they work on behalf of the whole Union (Egeberg, 2013; European Commission, n.d.). Although it seems that the role of national governments in the Commission expanded over the past years. This is because, firstly, the Commissioner is a first point of contact for a Member State when they want to say something to the highest level of the European Commission (Egeberg, 2013). Also, they choose a Commissioner-designate or possible multiple candidates for the Commissioner's post. Someone can be named as Commissioner-designate once he/she is nominated by the Member State (European Parliament, 2009). "It is all up to the member states in the end. The Commission can only do what the Commission can do. In the EU, in the end, the member states are deciding everything." (EC Official 7). The last citation shows the significant influence of the Member States in the EU's executive power.

The national governments are not the only ones whose role seems to become more important in the Commission's operations. For example, more and more decisions are made by the President and the appointed Commissioner(s) and since 1997, the President eventually decides how the different portfolios are allocated and the President is also able to reject nominated candidates. In that way, the President seems to be given more power and his or her role seems to change from a *primus inter pares* ('first among equals') to a *primus super pares* ('first above equals'), this is the so-called 'presidentialization'. Or, at least, since the early 1990s, the President seems to be more than the *primus inter pares* (Kassim et al., 2013, p. 155).

All the Commissioners together, including the President, are called 'the College of Commissioners'. They can be seen as the political leaders of the European Commission (Egeberg, 2013). The Commissioners are responsible for all the decisions made by the Commission because of the principle of collegiality. At the start of their five-year term, they decide the priorities they want to work on during their term. An example of such a priority is the European Green Deal (European Commission, n.d.).

The Commissioners receive support during the operation of different policy processes to reach these priorities. On the one hand, this support comes from the personal cabinets of the Commissioners and consist of advisors and other personal staff trusted by the Commissioner. This cabinet usually has two functions: pushing down their Commissioner's ideas to the departments and editing and filtering policy proposals coming from those departments. On the other hand, there is support from the administration part of the Commission, namely the Directorates-General or DGs in short (Egeberg, 2013).

4.1.2 The administrative role

The administration in the European Commission plays an essential role since they bring expertise into the organisation. More specific, this dimension consists of 33 Directorates-General and 20 special departments, services and agencies (Mussa, 2020).

Every DG is organized around a particular function, for example, agriculture, justice or budget. There are the so-called **horizontal** services, like the DG Budget for example, which handles issues that are not part of one policy domain. The most important horizontal department is the Secretariat-General, the permanent office of the President of the Commission. Their function is to shape a consistent policy for the whole Commission and to manage the relationships between the Commission and other institutions inside and outside the European Union. The other type of DGs is **vertical** and works on a type of sector or policy domain, for instance, the DG Justice or the DG Agriculture. Every DG is composed of different directorates which in their turn are split up into units.

The staff of the DGs is usually permanent and ranges from 300-700 per DG. This staff is normally recruited based on their educational and professional experience, which means recruitment is not based on social or geographical background or good contacts (Egeberg, 2013). However, EC official 10 stated: “There are certain quotas to make sure that nationalities are fully represented across the Commission. That can be relevant. Different nationalities have different style of working of course. I think at the end of the day in the Commission, you are not appointed to represent your member state, you are there for the general European interest. But as you go higher up in the Commission, the more relevant your nationality becomes in a certain way”. Finally, there are expert committees, networks and agencies who help with the practical work of policy initiatives (Egeberg, 2013).

4.1.3 The relationship between the political and administrative component

The relation between the political and administrative level of the Commission is not always harmonious “and has often been characterized by tension and friction. Commissioners and their personal staff in the cabinets at times feel that the services prefer to concentrate too much on their own agenda rather than giving full support to the Commissioners’ initiatives and policy references” (Nugent & Rhinard, 2015, p. 13). Also, the staff at the DGs often seem to feel that their work is undervalued by the political level of the Commission. The Commissioners would intervene too much and in a way that is too direct as well. This seems to be the main source of tension and friction between the political and administrative level within the Commission (Nugent &

Rhinard, 2015). It is also important to mention that there is no distinct boundary between the political and administrative activities of the European Commission. The actions of the administrative level have an influence on the political decisions because the DGs often own expertise in a specific policy domain (Egeberg, 2013). “But we can't do anything without the DGs who are really specialised in those subjects, so it's a very important cooperation” (EC official 5).

4.1.4 Brief explanation of the different functions of the European Commission

According to Nugent & Rhinard (2015), the European Commission has seven different functions: policy leader and initiator, legislative functions, executive functions, legal guardian, external representative and negotiator, mediator and broker and mobilizer. The Commission plays a role in the policy process from beginning to end. Generally, they decide, amongst other things, about the agenda setting in terms of legislative proposals, the implementation and monitoring of EU's member states. The external representation happens, for example, by negotiating with international organisations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). As a mediator, the Commission leads the discussion between different member states and between the Parliament and the European Council as well (Egeberg, 2013).

4.2 Women in the European Commission: an historical overview

This paragraph aims to make an overview of the number of women in the European Commission through history. Here, a distinction is made between the College of Commissioners and the administration.

4.2.1 The political dimension

The political dimension of the Commission consists of the Commissioners and their personal staff, namely the cabinets. This paragraph offers an overview of the different Colleges of Commissioners since 1958. This is the inception of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom) via the Treaty of Rome (Lethé et al., 2014). In 1965, the executive organs of the High Authority for the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the EEC and Euratom merged into one entity, namely the Commission of the European Communities. In 2002, it was renamed to its current name: the European Commission (Mussa, 2020).

Below is an overview of the different Colleges of Commissioners and their absolute and relative numbers of female Commissioners. The sources for this scheme are Bussière et al. (2019), Dumoulin et al. (2014), the European Commission (2014), the European Commission (n.d.) and Lethé et al. (2014). An important remark is that only the Commissioners who are appointed from

the beginning of the term are taken into account here. The relative numbers are rounded off to the decimal.

Period	Commission	Total number of Commissioners	Absolute number of female Commissioners	Relative number of female Commissioners
1958-1962	Commission Hallstein I	9	0	0
1962-1967	Commission Hallstein II	9	0	0
1967-1970	Commission Rey	14	0	0
1970-1973	Commission Malfatti	10	0	0
1973-1977	Commission Ortoli	13	0	0
1977-1981	Commission Jenkins	13	0	0
1981-1985	Commission Thorn	14	0	0
1985-1989	Commission Delors I	17	0	0
1989-1993	Commission Delors II	17	2	11%
1993-1995	Commission Delors III	17	1	6%
1995-1999	Commission Santer	20	5	25%
1999-2004	Commission Prodi	20	5	25%
2004-2009	Commission Barroso I	25	8	32%
2010-2014	Commission Barroso II	27	9	33%
2014-2019	Commission Juncker	28	9	32%
2019-2024	Commission von der Leyen	27	12	44%

Table 2: The evolution of the number of women in the College of Commissioners 1958-2019 (Bussière et al., 2019; Dumoulin et al., 2014; European Commission, 2014; European Commission, n.d.; Lethé et al., 2014)

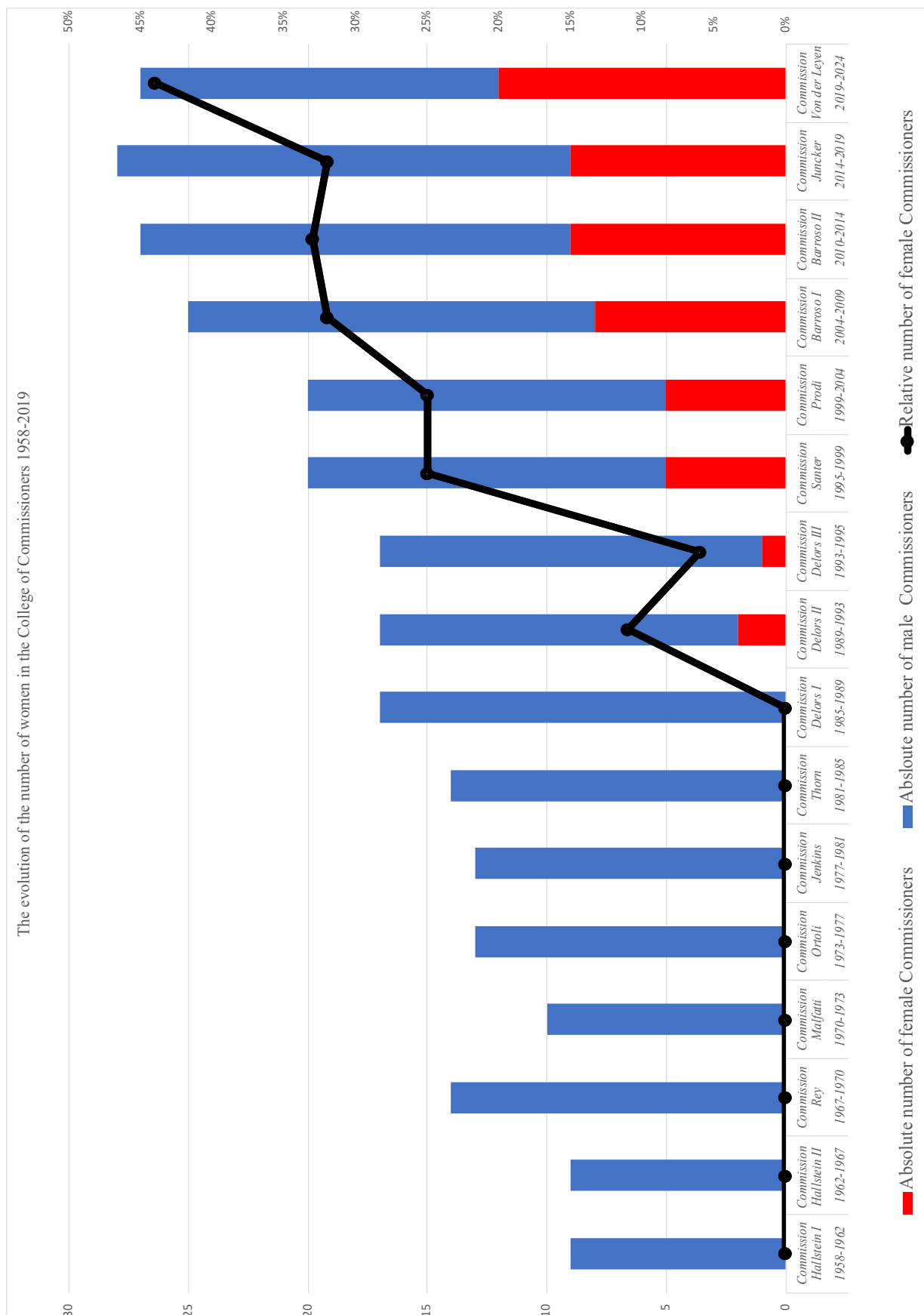


Figure 5: The evolution of the number of women in the College of Commissioners 1958-2019 (Bussière et al., 2019; Dumoulin et al., 2014; European Commission, 2014; European Commission, n.d.; Lethé et al., 2014)

The College did not include any women before 1989, “The College of Commissioners was an all-male body with an average age of about 50” (Dumoulin et al., 2014). The Commission Delors II welcomed the first two female Commissioners in 1989 but the next Commission, Delors III, included only one woman. In the end of the 90s and the beginning of the years 2000, around a quarter of the College were women. The Commissions Barroso I, Barroso II and Juncker included each around a third female Commissioners.

The European Parliament already asked for full gender balance at the start of Juncker’s term. Martin Schulz, at that time President of the European Parliament, mentioned, “The EU is discussing quota for female representation in corporate boards or bodies, it should ensure its own parity too” (Cerulus, 2014). However, Juncker could not get more than the same number of female Commissioners as Barroso in his second term as President of the Commission mainly because of the Member States who did not propose enough women. “Because it is also a delicate political balance back home in the member states, we do recognise that, that is also part of their government-formation process sometimes.” (EC Official 9)

Lastly, the current Commission von der Leyen has almost 50 percent female Commissioners since the resignation of the Irish commissioner Phil Hogan in 2020. Mairead McGuinness replaced him which means thirteen of the 27 Commissioners are women at this moment (European Voice, 2015). It was clear from the beginning of von der Leyen’s candidature as President that she would fight for gender balance in the Commission. But she had to depend on the Member States to propose enough female candidates. That is why in her speech at the European Parliament she announced that if this would not be the case, she would not hesitate to ask for new names with the European countries. “Since 1958 there have been 183 Commissioners. Only 35 were women. That is less than 20%. We represent half of our population. We want our fair share.” (von der Leyen, 2019a)

4.2.2 The administrative dimension

The European Commission used to be an organization where “historically women have been under-represented, concentrated in lower grades, and largely absent from senior posts” (Kassim et al., 2013 p. 63). However, the presence of and promotion prospects for women in the administrative part of the Commission have increased in the past decades through different programmes, reforms and strategies. Following is an overview of those different plans and their realisations.

4.2.2.1 1981-1999: The Joint Committee on Equal Opportunities and Action Programmes

In 1984, the Joint Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women was created under the Commission Thorn. This Committee's goal was to increase the presence of women in the Commission and more specifically, in senior posts. Ten years after the creation of this Committee, it does not seem to have succeeded, since the A-grade officials used to consist of 13.5 percent women and the top grades only 5.4 percent. In the mid 1990s new actions were established by the Commission Delors I, II and III to improve that number of women in higher functions (Kassim et al., 2013). These included the three so-called 'Action Programmes' in 1988-1990, 1992-1996 and 1997-2000. These programmes resulted in some progress, but a gender imbalance remained. In 2004, 23.5 percent of A-grade officials and 17.1 percent of senior managers were women (European Commission, 2004).

4.2.2.2 1999-2009: The Kinnock Reform and the Fourth Action Programme on Equal Opportunities

After four decades of almost no administrative reforms or merely small reforms with little leverage in the Commission, the so-called 'Kinnock Reform' happened under the Prodi Commission in the early 2000s (Metcalf, 2000). This reform was mainly necessary after the resignation of the Santer Commission in 1999 due to some scandals related to fraud, corruption and mismanagement (BBC, 1999; Levy 2002). Another reason for this reform was related to external pressure, as many organisations implemented administrative reforms during the 1980s and early 1990s. The Commission could not lag in this aspect, and the European Council demanded a reform of the administrative dimension of the Commission (Kassim et al., 2013, p. 210).

This administrative reform is named after the Vice-President for administrative reform at that time namely, Neil Kinnock. The main function of the reform concerned "improving internal management to enable the Commission to perform its core functions efficiently" (Metcalf, 2000, p. 817) but it did not seem that all the reform's goals were accomplished at that time (Kassim et al., 2013, p. 243-244). In the 'human resources development' part of the programme, gender balance is briefly mentioned, however, it did not seem to be a priority of the reform (Kassim, 2004; Levy, 2002).

Therefore, the 'Fourth Action Programme on Equal Opportunities' was launched in 2004 by the same Vice-President Kinnock of the Prodi Commission just before the appointment of the Commission Barroso I. Some of the objectives of this programme aimed to stimulate flexible working arrangements for the staff so it would be easier to balance private and professional life

and to compare the careers of men and women in the Commission (European Commission, 2004). Unlike the Action programmes in the years 1980 and 1990, this programme concerns detailed conditions for the DGs and services on implementation, monitoring and evaluation. More specific, “the gender equality scoreboard indicates the extent to which a particular DG or Department is making progress on equal opportunities for men and women by implementing the objectives of this programme” (European Commission, 2004, p. 17). Every year, a report states the progress in gender balance and publishes a ranking of the best performing DGs based on this scoreboard (European Commission, 2004; Hafner-Burton & Pollack, 2009).

4.2.2.3 2010-2014: The equal opportunities strategy

In 2009, the European Commission stated that 21.4 percent of the senior managers and 23.3 percent of the middle managers were women at the time (Kassim et al., 2013). One year later, the ‘equal opportunities strategy’ was established by the Barroso II Commission which included a target of 25 percent female senior managers and 30 percent female middle managers by 2014. The Barroso II Commission succeeded, because at the end of its term these goals were met with around the same numbers as their goals (European Voice, 2015). Great progress in gender balance in the administration of the European Commission was made during the Commission Barroso II.

4.2.2.4 2014-2019: Commission Juncker

When Juncker started his term as President of the College in 2014 and failed to appoint more female Commissioners, he asked in his mission letter (2015) to K. Georgieva, Vice-President for Budget and Human Resources, to pay attention to gender equality in the administration of the Commission. In this letter, he also set a target of 40 percent women in the senior and middle management positions and 43 percent of non-management functions by the end of his term in 2019. In 2015, the Commission counted 42,2 percent female non-management officials, so Juncker’s goal was almost achieved (European Voice, 2015).

At the end of his term, 37 percent of the senior managers and 42 percent of the middle managers were women. In other words, only the target including the highest manager positions was not achieved, even though it was a small margin. Also, Commission Juncker facilitated an increase of women in senior and middle management positions of around 10 percent during one term, which can, in turn, be seen as great progress. But it is important to state here that this growth does not apply to every DG. It seems that women are still underrepresented in economic fields while other fields, such as environmental or social affairs, have a higher number of women in management positions (Bloj & Bennallaoua, 2020).

4.2.2.5 2019-2024: Commission von der Leyen

Gender equality is an important element of von der Leyen's 'agenda for Europe'. "By the end of my mandate, I will ensure we have full equality at all levels of Commission management" (von der Leyen, 2019b, p. 11). The College of Commissioners is specifically mentioned in the agenda, but there is no specific reference to the administration. But, there can be distracted from the cited sentence of President von der Leyen's agenda above that the target of von der Leyen Commission is to have around 50 percent women in all management and non-management positions. EC official 6 confirmed that 50 percent is the target that President von der Leyen has set. The Management Plan 2020 of the DG Human Resource states that an additional effort in the administration of the Commission will take place to expand the pool of women candidates. This effort includes raising awareness of existing vacancies, the Female Talent Development Programme, bolster career talks and Team Managers Networks. The overarching goal of all these elements is to improve the communication and raise awareness about this subject in the administrative dimension of the executive organ of the European Union (DG HR, 2020).

During the interviews, almost all the officials indicate that there is currently full gender balance in their unit. Sometimes, there are even more women than men in higher functions. One official states that there is not a good gender balance at the senior management positions at his/her DG: "we have one out of five and one empty post that will most likely will be filled by a female candidate eventually so then we have two out of five" (EC Official 11). In other words, it seems like in most of the DGs there is gender balance, except for some DGs where the current targets are not (yet) met. However, in these last mentioned DGs there is ambition to hire more women in management positions.

4.2.2.6 Evolution over time – Conclusion

It is clear that an evolution over time took place in the administration of the European Commission in terms of the number of women in middle and senior management positions. This is something that the officials who have been working for the Commission for a long time can already confirm. Eight out of ten people who answered this question state they personally experienced that transition (EC official 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11). The ones who personally experienced a difference in the number of women in those positions state that the greatest change took place in the last ten years.

Did you personally experience a difference in the number of women in higher positions since you started working in the Commission compared to now?

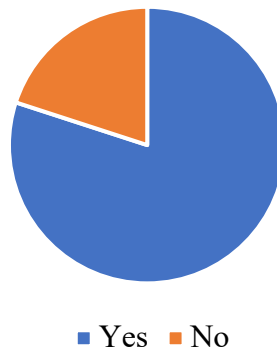


Figure 6: Personal experience in the evolution of the number of women in the administration (EC official 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11)

They give different reasons for this transition. The main reason given by most of the officials is the 40 percent target that is set by Juncker. Other elements that came up were the influence of the particular Commissioner (cabinet) or the Director-General who have an impact on the working processes in their DG, the pool of qualified candidates and campaigns in specific DGs where women were given extra support, help with interviews, mentoring, etc. (EC official 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11). One of the campaigns often mentioned during the elite-interviews was the Female Talent Development Programme which will be explained extensively later.

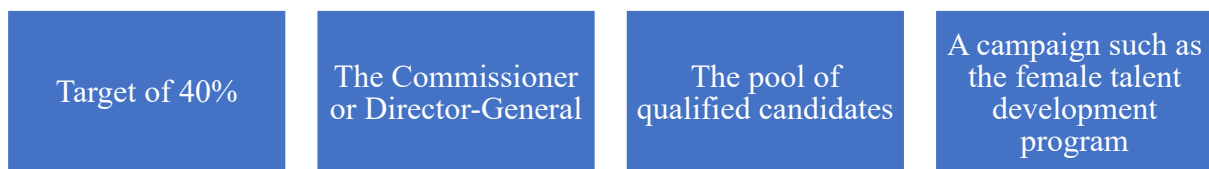


Figure 7: Reasons given by the officials for the evolution of the number of women in the administration (EC official 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11)

5 Discussion

There seems to be a general agreement about the need for sufficient representation of women in institutions like the European Commission. The reasons for that can be found in the previous sections and more specifically in the sections regarding substantial representation (political representation) and active bureaucracy (bureaucratic representation). This section discusses, first, which types of possible gender quotas would seem to fit best in the European Commission. Next, the question arises whether gender quotas are desirable in this institution. Again, there is a distinction between the College of Commissioners and the administration in both paragraphs. The data used are taken from the literature, the document analysis, and the interviews.

5.1 Appropriate types of possible gender quotas in the European Commission

This paragraph aims to apply the typology of gender quotas – mentioned in the theoretical framework – on the European Commission. It does not yet talk about the desirability of these quotas since this will be discussed later. There is a difference between the possible quotas in the College and the bureaucracy. Each dimension discusses the type of organisation, the implementation and the level of commitment of the possible gender quotas.

5.1.1 The political dimension: the College of Commissioners

5.1.1.1 *Type of organisation*

It seems natural that the political dimension of the European Commission, as a political institution, should have the electoral type of quota, based on constitutional regulations (Hughes et al., 2017). Although the Commission is not an elected organ, different candidates are proposed by the member states and the Council, and in the end, the decision lies with the European Council (European Parliament, n.d.). Therefore, a possible gender quota can be seen as an electoral one here.

The level of the electoral gender quota could be considered as well here. The quota's goal can be to change the composition of, first, the aspirants, namely the pool of potential candidates for a Commissioner-designate proposed in a particular member state. The second level is about the list of Commissioners-designate of a Member State which is examined by the European Parliament and the Council (European Union, 2009). The third level concerns the elected people by the Council and the European Council. In other words, the people who become Commissioner at the end of the procedure (Dahlerup, 2007)

It seems that implementing gender quotas in the second level is the most useful approach here.. In practice, this would mean that all Member States should propose a particular number of women

and/or men as candidates for the Commissioners' post. Nowadays, most national governments propose only one person, which means it is either a man or a woman. If there were a list of multiple candidates, there would be a possibility to have male and female candidates and to reach gender balance in the College. This is also what former President Juncker and current President von der Leyen have done, namely asking for two candidates: a man and a woman. However, not every Member State has done so (EC official 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10).

5.1.1.2 The implementation

The moment that the Member States propose their candidates is still part of the nomination process of the Commissioners. In this way, this type of possible gender quotas in the College can be seen as a quota during the nomination process (Larserud & Taphorn, 2007).

5.1.1.3 The level of commitment

If this list of multiple candidates would become binding in the Treaties or other European legislation, this could be considered as legally obligated quotas. For instance, a Member State could receive a fine or lose their right to vote during a particular event or conference if they do not propose a (sufficient) number of women as candidates for the Commissioner's post. To be clear, this is presently not the case. President Juncker and President von der Leyen can merely ask for multiple candidates, a man and a woman, but cannot force the Member States to comply as this is not written down in legislation and/or the Treaties (EC Official 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11). In other words, only voluntary targets have been applied by the current and previous President.

5.1.2 The administrative dimension: the Directorates-General

5.1.2.1 The type of organisation

Usually, corporate board quota address quota in the private sector, but as the European Commission is a hybrid organisation this type of quota do fit in here as well. The goal of corporate board quota is to achieve more women in the board of directors, namely the managers (Hughes et al., 2017). Different plans and strategies of the Commission (used to) concern the number of women in middle and senior managers functions. Therefore, corporate board quota could be applied to the administration of the Commission.

5.1.2.2 The implementation

In the Commission's bureaucracy, it is possible to apply both types described by Larsrud and Taphorn (2007). On the one hand, a separate list with only female candidates for a function in a unit with significant gender imbalance can be an option. Although, this does not seem to be the

best way of meeting gender quotas. It seems better to apply ‘the best loser’ system here, namely the woman with the most points in the different exams and interviews will get the job.

5.1.2.3 The level of commitment

Currently, there is a voluntary target of 50 percent women in the middle and senior management positions set by President von der Leyen. If obligated quotas would be applied, this would result in negative consequences for the units who have yet to meet these targets or quotas (Larsrud & Taphorn, 2007; Krook, 2013).

5.2 Are gender quotas desirable in the European Commission?

The analysis regarding which type of possible gender quotas would fit in the European Commission is followed by a discussion which tries to answer the question whether these quotas are desirable. There is, again, a distinction between the College of Commissioners and the European Commission’s bureaucracy.

5.2.1 The political dimension: The College of Commissioners

In this paragraph, different elements are discussed which form arguments why or why not the College of Commissioners needs gender quotas. After summing up all these elements, a conclusion is formulated.

5.2.1.1 Descriptive representation: a reflection of society

First, according to Williams (1998), the political elite should represent the diversity of society (the descriptive representation) to retain political trust of that society (the symbolic representation). Quotas seem a good instrument to meet this reflection of society, as one of the strategies to improve the representation of women (Lovenduski et al, 2005). However, the College of Commissioners currently already reflects more or less the European society in the gender field . The current College consists of 44 percent women and about 51 percent of the European population is women (World Bank, 2019).

Nevertheless, this is the first College to obtain full gender balance in history and this is not guaranteed in the future. Because of the latter, gender quotas seem to be a good idea here, at first sight. However, gender is not the only thing that distinguishes society. When following this argument, it seems that other minorities – for instance, ethnic or geographical minorities or religions – should be represented via quota as well. If there are quotas for women, the question arises whether quotas are also necessary for these other minorities as they may have a different perspective on policies as well. This could lead to a never-ending discussion of implementing quotas (EC official 11).

Also, as mentioned earlier, when meeting the total implementation of the descriptive dimension, the quality of representation would decrease. Namely, instead of electing or appointing the most qualified or talented person, the ‘necessary’ person would be chosen in order to accomplish descriptive representation (Mansbridge, 1999). This point is discussed in more detail in the next argument.

5.2.1.2 Equality and fairness

The most cited element regarding gender quotas is about equality and fairness. When a particular quota with a fixed reserved number of seats for women is applied, there is a chance that, for instance, a less qualified woman may be appointed instead of a man with a better degree. In this situation, an organisation – in this case the European Commission – would choose the woman in order to meet the quota. This seems like a form of discrimination against men and goes against the principle of fair competition. However, Dahlerup (2007) states the following “quotas are not discrimination against men, but compensation for discrimination against women, past and present” (Dahlerup, 2007, p. 300). In other words, there is a multi-level view on this issue. Women seem discriminated here as well, but in a positive way because they are elected or appointed based on their gender and not because of merit.

The best composition of an organisation – by knowledge and skills – seems to be reached by electing or appointing gender blind (Bacchi, 2007; Dahlerup, 2003). Therefore, former President Juncker and current President von der Leyen have asked for a minimum of two candidates. In this way, it is possible to choose the most eligible candidate for the specific portfolio. But in the end, not every Member State has proposed multiple candidates for the Commissioner’s post (EC official 9 and 10).

5.2.1.3 Substantive representation VS descriptive representation

A third element concerns the impact of gender quotas in organisations like the European Commission. Are women interests defended more in the policy process when women themselves take part in it? Since one of the main tasks of the European Commission concerns proposing legislation (European Commission, n.d.), it seems important that the interests of women are represented in that policy process.

The interviewed officials of the Commission indicate that there is a difference in policy output when more women take part in it. They give two reasons for that change in policy output. First, different gender-backgrounds enrich the policy because of the different ideas and approaches of looking at a problem. A second reason relates to the way policy is established. Women tend to be

more interested in getting a result that is taken by consensus or by a team (EC official 3, 10 and 11). “I think they are more interested sometimes in getting result from a team, a central result, let’s say, that everybody finds itself in the result at the end of the day. It is not all about winning. Of course, women want to do things well and they want to do things properly. It is not always the case, there will be women who are aggressive and confrontation as well but in general your average woman is probably more interested in finding result which brings more in account areas and a team-decision than an individualistic decision.” (EC official 10).

This conclusion was confirmed in the literature review as well: the priorities of women are defended more substantially when more women are present in the political organ in a descriptive way only. Nevertheless, Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005) estimate the influence of the substantial dimension to be lower than the descriptive one. Without the descriptive and formal dimension of representation it does not seem possible to practice the substantial one. In other words, it is important to first reflect society before talking about the actual influence of women on the policy output. This reflection of society can be met via gender quotas, but also via equality promotion and/or rhetoric equality (Lovenduski et al., 2005).

5.2.1.4 Women as a heterogenous group

Related to the substantive dimension, the question arises whether ‘women’s interests’ actually exist? Women seem to be a heterogenous group of people with different priorities on different policy subjects (Dovi, 2002; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). It is not sure that female politicians and managers in the policy cycle will defend all these different priorities and ideas. Therefore, it does not seem sufficient to only adopt quotas based on gender because in that way, not every woman will find her interests in the policy outcome. For instance, quotas for ethnic minorities may need to be combined with gender quotas to achieve even more diversity of policy interests. But in the end, this could lead to endless quotas for every minority who do not feel represented. “You cannot get the benefits of diversity if you translate everything in diversity targets.” (EC official 11).

5.2.1.5 Obstacles for women to enter the College of Commissioners

Women seem to experience obstacles when they want to enter political institutions. These obstacles fall under the social structure of a society, the political institutions themselves or cultural barriers (Norris & Inglehart, 2001).

For instance, several research projects have demonstrated that more citizens usually tend to vote for men more often than they tend to vote for women (Jalusic & Antic Gaber, 2020; Larsrud &

Taphorn, 2007). Despite the European Commission not being elected by citizens, the national governments decide about the Commissioners-designate. And these candidates for the Commissioner's post are often people who are already part of Member States' national politics (EC official 1, 7, 9 and 10). "And that is probably still more men because of the way it works in different member states to put themselves in positions where they would be eligible or considered to be eligible for a Commissioner's position. So, I think we still need progress in the member states" (EC official 10).

However, the question here should be whether gender quotas are the right solution to reduce or avoid these obstacles that women experience when they have the ambition to become a Commissioner. The other two strategies to improve gender balance described by Lovenduski et al. (2005) can be applied in the College as well, namely equality rhetoric and equality promotion. This is discussed in more detail in the next paragraph.

5.2.1.6 The other strategies besides positive discrimination

The question arises whether gender quotas are necessary and desirable when there are other instruments and/or strategies as well. It seems more desirable to use other instruments first, such as the equality rhetoric mentioned earlier and promotion by involving other stakeholders, for example, before implementing gender quotas (Larsrud & Taphorn, 2007; Lovenduski et al, 2005).

This is something that the College is already doing by promoting and talking about gender equality in its policies (EC official 3 and 4). The mindset seems to be changing now with the first female President (EC official 4, 7, 8 and 10). However, it seems to be too early in the mandate to measure a difference in the policy or attitude, and the Juncker Commission already endeavoured gender balance (EC official 3 and 6) "I think it is very short the time to see because it has been for one year. She is been appointing women, also the image of a woman as a President is also very important and powerful for sure. I think to measure the impact of her policies, we need to wait a bit. (...) It is not something came all of a sudden in the process. The Commission engaged in this already some time." (EC official 6). An example of this changing attitude can be inviting more female speakers during a conference. "This is new. Before it was like okay if there are great speakers, and they are all men. Now you know you would be judged and criticised." (EC official 7). The latter is an example of the equality rhetoric and promotion of Lovenduski et al (2005). These two strategies have been easily implemented – without applying the gender quotas as a third strategy – and seem to have been successful.

5.2.1.7 Women as gatekeepers

Another element can be linked to the theory of Rasmussen (1981) mentioned earlier, which states that political gatekeepers are more likely to recruit someone like themselves. This means that when more women, eventually via quota, are part of the political elite, more women would be recruited (Jalusic & Gaber, 2020; Krook, 2006). This is also an argument provided by Phillips (1998), namely supporting the political representation of women: “women politicians act as role models for aspiring women candidates” (Kantola, 2009, p. 380).

Applied to the European Commission this means that when more women are part of the institutions who have a say in the process of nominating and/or appointing Commissioners, more female Commissioners would be recruited. These institutions include the national governments but also the European Parliament, the Council and the President of the Commission.

In 2018, women were still a minority in the parliaments and in powerful positions in Europe (Reher, 2018). At the start of the current term of the European Parliament in 2019, almost 40 percent of the members of the European Parliament were women (European Parliament, 2019). Also, the first female President of the Commission – as a gatekeeper for the College – underlined the importance of women in her Commission. “The image of a woman as a President is also very important and powerful for sure” (EC Official 6). This all seems to have resulted in gender balance in the College of Commissioners and confirms this theory by Rasmussen (1981) in the context of the European Commission.

5.2.1.8 Sensitivity of the subject

Implementing gender quotas can sometimes provoke controversy and because of this, gender quotas can receive negative media attention. First, potential female candidates may see this as a reason to hold back from applying as a candidate (Franceschet et al., 2012). Also, women who are not a fan of gender quotas may see these quotas as a reason to not propose themselves as candidate. Because of this, the controversy and sensitivity of the subject can be seen as an argument to not implement gender quotas.

5.2.1.9 The outcome of applying gender quotas

Larserud and Taphorn (2007) state that gender quotas are able to accomplish their goal but could be seen as a maximum ceiling. When, for instance, a specific quota states that at least 30 percent of the College should consist of women, it seems that there would not be more women nominated than that particular 30 percent. As mentioned earlier, the attitude and mindset play an important

role in the process to improve gender equality. Gender quotas alone do not seem to change that attitude and mindset.

5.2.1.10 The Member States need to agree about gender quotas

Lastly, there are no provisions in the Treaties or other European legislation that force Member States to propose multiple Commissioners-designate, like a man and a woman. The President usually asks the Member States for at least one candidate. Former President Juncker and current President von der Leyen asked the member states for at least two of them: a man and a woman. In this way, it would be possible to have a gender balanced Commission but not all Member States did this. As a consequence, Juncker, for example, was not able to form a gender balanced College.

This can be avoided in the future by forcing the Member States to propose multiple candidates, men and women. In other words, an obligated gender quota can be applied on the list of candidates and this needs to be recorded in the legislation. Therefore, it is necessary that all Member States approve this idea, and this does not seem desirable to them at the moment. A first reason for this is that the decision about the candidates for a Commissioner's post in Member States is often "a delicate political balance back home in the member states" (EC official 9) because sometimes, it is part of their government-formation process. A second reason why an obligated quota is not desirable by the Member States is that the voluntary quota of President von der Leyen worked out without this quota. Although there is no official legislation, there is a way of informal obligation during the negotiations between the President and the Member States. "I assume that there was trading on portfolios: if you give me a woman, I'll give you a better portfolio so of course there was negotiation." (EC official 7). However, this is the first College where it works out to achieve gender balance and there were Member States who still did not propose multiple candidates and/or a woman, even for a 'better' portfolio.

5.2.1.11 Conclusion: a balance between the different elements

Despite the urge for full gender balance in the College of Commissioners, it does not seem desirable to achieve this by gender quotas. At this moment, there is more or less gender balance in the College of President von der Leyen which results in full descriptive representation (Pitkin, 1967). But this is uncertain in the future, given the low number of female Commissioners throughout the history of the Commission. Therefore, the other strategies by Lovenduski et al. (2005), namely promoting equality and equality rhetoric, should be considered. Another reason to apply the equality promotion and rhetoric is to focus more on Pitkin's (1967) substantial and symbolic dimension of representation. Equality promotion and rhetoric can consist of a speech

that addresses gender balance, but also the request for multiple Commissioners-designate like former President Juncker and President von der Leyen have done. When this request would become an obligation, , we could talk about gender quotas. The Member States can only be forced to this when it is included in the Treaties, this is only possible with the approval of all Member States. This seems to be a delicate and undesirable subject at the moment.

To conclude, it does not seem that the College of Commissioners needs gender quotas at the moment. However, there is room for additional focus on the other strategies to assure future female representation, such as a target set by the President of the European Commission and addressing gender balance in speeches and conferences.

5.2.2 The administrative dimension: the Directorates-General

The question here is whether gender quotas - which are obligated and have consequences if they are not met - are a good idea for middle and senior management positions? Just like for the political dimension, different elements are summed up here. In the end, these elements are balanced to answer the question whether the administration of the European Commission needs gender quotas, and why or why not?.

5.2.2.1 *A passive representative bureaucracy: a reflection of society*

The current administration of the European Commission is almost a passive representative bureaucracy in the field of gender. Currently, about 40 percent of the middle and senior managers are women and this is almost a reflection of the European population. This number has increased enormously in the last decades and this seems to be the result of the targets (EC official 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11). “The need to make progress was so great that if we would just left things without having a target, then we would not have made progress.” (EC Official 10). Gender quotas or targets can be seen as a quick way to a greater number of women in political institutions and it seems like this has succeeded in the Commission’s bureaucracy. However, targets are voluntary and gender quotas are obligated resulting in negative consequences when they are not met (Dahlerup, 2007). The current target, set by President von der Leyen, is 50 percent women in the middle and senior management. Since the previous targets have worked out, it seems like this target will also be met. DGs where the target is yet to be met, seem to be ambitious to meet the target in the future (EC official 11).

5.2.2.2 *A passive representative bureaucracy VS an active representative bureaucracy*

Nevertheless, there is more than just passive representation or mere statistics as mentioned in the previous paragraph. It is also about the active representation, namely the question whether the

interests of women are really represented during policymaking. “At some point, I also believe that we need to be actual really equal. And therefore, these targets would not be necessary anymore.” (EC Official 4).

For a bureaucracy to become representative in an active way, three requirements need to be fulfilled. First, women should be put in a powerful position that has an actual influence on the policy output. A second important requirement is that women should not change their personal values before obtaining that powerful position. Third, it is important that women be appointed in DGs that can actually benefit European women. For example, the DG of energy is not able to really make policy outcome that benefits women directly, while DG EMPL – which handles inclusion, among other things – can benefit women directly by their policy. When these three requirements by Meier (1993) are accomplished, it is possible to have active representativity – together with passive representativity– in the administrative dimension of the Commission. Only when both – passive and active – are fulfilled, the European Commission will have a representative bureaucracy.

Therefore, targets or quotas seem to be able to reach a passive representative bureaucracy but not an active one. The confidence and skills of women and their influence on the policy should be considered as well to obtain active representation (Larsrud & Taphorn, 2007). The management skills of women can be improved by, for example, the Female Talent Development programme (EC official 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10). This programme is explained below.

5.2.2.3 Other strategies besides positive discrimination

Implementing gender quotas is one way to increase the number of women in higher positions besides promoting equality and the equality rhetoric (Lovenduski et al., 2005). The other two strategies are already in place with the administration of the Commission. Equality rhetoric is practiced by, for example, President von der Leyen’s mission letter to Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Budget and Administration, where she appeals for more gender equality (von der Leyen, 2019c). The other strategy – promoting equality – is something that happens through the voluntary target for middle and senior management positions or the Female Talent Development programme, for example. The latter is explained in the Commission’s Management Plan 2020 as a programme “to identify motivated colleagues with the right profile and ambition to become middle managers and follow them closely throughout and after the programme” (DG HR, 2020, p. 16). This programme was introduced by the Juncker Commission (EC Official 3) and was often one of the subjects discussed during the interviews with the EC officials.

Many of the officials who were interviewed took part in this programme, as a potential manager or as a mentor. Most of the participants were satisfied with this program, although, improvements seem necessary according to some of the officials. An overview of the remarks on both sides can be found in the figure below (EC official 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11). It should be noted that their participation in this programme was not recent, so things may have changed since then.

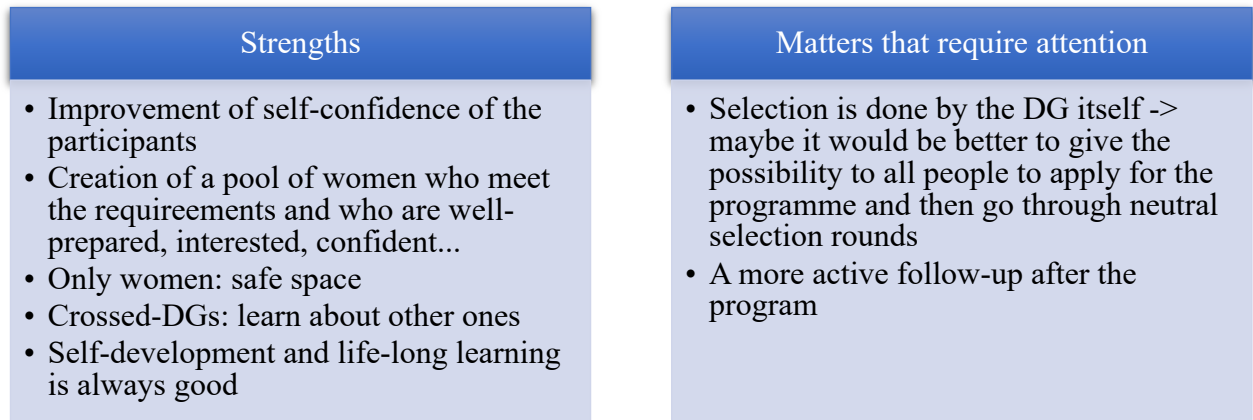


Figure 8: The strengths and matters that require attention of the Female Talent Development programme (EC official 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11)

It seems that the European Commission’s bureaucracy already put effort in promoting gender equality in its organisation, nevertheless, there is still room for improvement. Just as in the College, only implementing two of the three strategies by Lovenduski et al. (2005) seems possible and successful. In other words, the administration could increase the number of women in middle and senior management positions without quotas but with voluntary targets and other elements such as the Female Talent Development programme.

5.2.2.4 Obstacles for women

There are multiple obstacles that seem to hold back women from a management position. First, most of the interviewed women in the DGs and cabinets of the European Commission indicate that in their experience it is harder for a woman to have a good work-life balance in a higher position than for a man (EC official 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10). However, most of them state that this depends on multiple factors, for example, how much time a father spends with his children. “There are opposite examples of course, if you take President von der Leyen, she has seven children and still make it being the President of the Commission. I think you can say in general someone find it hard to combine both but then there are exceptions of course” (EC official 10). Another factor that plays a role here is that the Commission does a lot to avoid or reduce these obstacles for women, such as offering long parental leave or flexible telework (EC official 7 and 9). It goes without saying that gender quotas alone will not have a real effect on this obstacle.

A second obstacle may be women's self-confidence. "If a man is offered a job, he is not going to think a lot. If a woman is offered a job, she starts thinking and doubting. The self-confidence of women is not that yet firm like men" (EC official 1). However, the Female Talent Development programme mentioned earlier is an example of how to improve women's self-confidence (EC official 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10). It does not seem that gender quotas are a solution for this obstacle either. The other strategies by Lovenduski et al. (2005) seem more efficient to reduce or avoid the obstacles holding back women from a middle or senior management position in the European Commission.

5.2.2.5 Equality and fairness

As is the case in the political dimension, equality and fairness is an important element when talking about gender quotas. When specific positions are reserved for women, men and women will not be treated equal in the application process. In other words, women will be favoured, although a male candidate with a better degree is available. The best composition of an organisation, by knowledge and skills, seems to be reached by appointing gender-blind (Bacchi, 2007; Dahlerup, 2003).

The latter seems to already be happening in the administration of the Commission. EC official 4 who is one of the gatekeepers in his/her unit says the following: "I do not see if this is a man or a woman. I recruited women when they were pregnant for example. And everyone told me what are you doing, they are going to leave six months or one year. But no because this is an investment." (EC official 4). The other female officials as well indicate that they were never negatively discriminated against during their recruitment process because of their gender. Because of this, it does not seem necessary to positively discriminate them.

5.2.2.6 The same elements as mentioned in the political dimension

In addition, the same elements that were mentioned in the gender quotas-discussion about the College can be mentioned in this discussion about the administration as well. First, the quotas can be seen as a maximum ceiling and will not result in more women than prescribed. Second, it is important that there is a sufficient number of women in recruitment positions, which seems to be the case already. As third element the sensitivity of introducing gender quotas can hold back women from applying. Lastly, the question arises whether "women's interests" are involved? Women are a heterogeneous group of people with different priorities on different policy subjects (Dovi, 2002; Schwindt-Bayer & Mishler, 2005). Moreover, an endless discussion about implementing gender quotas for every minority group should be avoided.

5.2.2.7 Conclusion: a balance between the different elements

Currently, almost full gender balance has been achieved at the middle and senior management levels in the administration of the European Commission which results in a full passive representative bureaucracy (Mosher, 1968). This seems mostly due to the targets that were set in the last decades. These voluntary targets can be considered as promoting gender equality (Lovenduski et al., 2005), one of the other strategies besides positive discrimination to improve female representation in institutions like the European Commission. As mentioned earlier, the third strategy – equality rhetoric – is also applied in the administration through, for example, the letters of former President Juncker and President von der Leyen to the person responsible for the institution's HR-policy. Therefore, the need for obligated quotas for these higher positions in the European Commission's bureaucracy does not seem likely.

6 Conclusion

This research project focuses on the gender balance in the European Commission. After a literature review, a document analysis and elite interviews with multiple officials at the European Commission, it does not seem desirable or necessary to apply gender quotas in this institution. During the research project, a distinction is made between the political dimension of the Commission – the College of Commissioners – and the administration, including the DGs.

It is the first time in history that there is gender equality in terms of descriptive representation (Pitkin, 1967) in the College, thanks to President von der Leyen and the willingness of the Member States to propose multiple candidates. The administration of the European Commission is almost a reflection of society as it is now. Former President Juncker's target of 40 percent women in the middle and senior management positions was more or less met at the end of his term in 2019. President von der Leyen has set a target of 50 percent, which would mean a full passive representative bureaucracy (Mosher, 1968) in the European Commission.

Besides descriptive political representation and passive bureaucratic representation, there is also substantial political representation and active bureaucratic representation. While the first two concepts focus on the reflection of society in numbers, the focus of the last two concepts lies on the representation of the interests in the policy processes. This can be realised by mainly the first two strategies of Lovenduski et al. (2005), namely equality rhetoric and promotion. In the College of Commissioners this is already being practiced by the request to the Member States of former President Juncker and current President von der Leyen to propose multiple Commissioners-designate. Also, President von der Leyen's speeches address gender equality. In the administration, different equality promotion elements were undertaken in the last decades, such as targets and the Female Talent Development programme, to decrease the obstacles women were experiencing.

Because these two first strategies – equality rhetoric and promotion – seem to work out, it does not seem necessary to apply the third strategy in the European Commission, namely positive discrimination or gender quotas (Lovenduski et al., 2005). Instead, the focus should continue to lie on equality rhetoric and the promotion of equality. The practical recommendations below show how this can be worked out.

6.1 Recommendations

The conclusion ends with – on the one hand – some policy recommendations for the European Commission and possible similar institutions. On the other hand, this paragraph includes

theoretical recommendations which consist of additions to this research project and emphasis on further research.

6.1.1 Policy recommendations: the European Commission and/or similar institutions

Gender quotas do not seem to be a good idea, as they predominantly focus on descriptive representation in the political dimension and passive representation in the administrative dimension. Therefore, it seems more important to focus on substantive representation and active representation. The last two concepts cannot be reached with quotas alone. Therefore, the other strategies by Lovenduski et al. (2005) should be focused on even more, namely equality rhetoric and promoting gender equality.

In the College of Commissioners, the future Presidents may also set a target and/or request Member States to propose multiple Commissioners-designate, just like former President Juncker and current President von der Leyen did. In this case, the President should be able to count on the goodwill of the Member States, since this is not obligated by the Treaties or other European legislation. However, there is an informal way to convince the Member States during the negotiations between the President and the Member States regarding the candidates for a Commissioner's post. When a national government does not propose a woman nor multiple candidates, the President may give the Commissioner of that country a 'less important' portfolio. To conclude, the President plays a big role in this matter and should use his or her role to achieve gender balance.

In the administration, the previous and current targets seem to work out themselves except some DGs. However, these DGs seem ambitious to change the gender balance in their unit in the future and seem to be dependent on the pool of candidates as well. Here, the Female Talent Development programme is a good option to boost this pool of middle and senior managers. Here, however, the European Commission could improve on the follow-up with participants who attended the programme. Also, the DGs themselves select the participants. It seems better to give everyone the possibility to sign up and then go through neutral selection rounds. As equality rhetoric, the next President could also write about gender equality in the administration in his or her mission letter to the Commissioner in charge of HR. This underlines the priority of gender equality for the European Commission to the administration and the rest of the world.

All these specific recommendations for the European Commission could be applied to similar institutions. Although this context of politics and administration seems unique, it is possible to apply elements such as the Female Talent Development programme and voluntary targets.

6.1.2 Theoretical recommendations: further research

The coming theoretical recommendations concern further research projects. The first one is an addition to this research project while the other three recommendations could be the focus of future research projects, including two projects regarding the administration and one regarding the College.

One of the limitations of this research project is the fact that it only relies on qualitative research methods which are sensitive to biases. Therefore, methodological triangulation with quantitative research would be a good addition to make the results more generalizable (Mortelmans, 2013). An example of this is a survey sent to more officials with the European Commission with questions about their experiences, ideas and opinions.

During the data gathering and analysis, different elements came forward that can be investigated in depth in further research. First, the cabinets remained below the radar during this research project. They are part of the political dimension and are chosen by the Commissioners themselves. The cabinets are out of scope here and can be the focus of further research.

A second element is the role of the nationality of women who want to be appointed as managers in the administration. Some Member States seem to push and help their compatriots more than others to have them appointed (EC official 7 and 10). The role of the nationality in being appointed is not the focus of this dissertation but seems an interesting element for further research.

A last recommendation for further research concerns the political dimension or the College of Commissioners. There is still a lot of ignorance regarding the nomination process of the candidates for a Commissioner's post by the Member States. A concrete and recent example is the reason why some of the national governments ignored the question of former President Juncker and current President von der Leyen to propose a minimum of two candidates, a man and a woman. This nomination process seems to be a delicate matter and leaves a gap in the scientific literature.

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Annex 1: Overview of the interviews

1.	EC official 1	Thursday 11 th of March 2021
2.	EC official 2	Thursday 11 th of March 2021
3.	EC official 3	Friday 12 th of March 2021
4.	EC official 4	Wednesday 17 th of March 2021
5.	EC official 5	Wednesday 17 th of March 2021
6.	EC official 6	Wednesday 31 st of March 2021
7.	EC official 7	Thursday 25 th of March 2021
8.	EC official 8	Wednesday 1 st of April 2021
9.	EC official 9	Wednesday 7 th of April 2021
10.	EC official 10	Wednesday 7 th of April 2021
11.	EC official 11	Thursday 8 th of April 2021

Annex 2: Most important questions and answers from the interviews

Below the different answers of the eleven officials of the European Commission on the most relevant questions can be found. Everything that possibly refers to a particular unit or function of the officials is left out by (...) to respect the anonymity of the participants. The parts that were not understandable are listed between brackets as well with in between the duration of the non-understandable part. Language errors by the speakers were not corrected. Irrelevant text parts such as interjections, stammering and repetitions have been omitted to increase readability.

	How is the gender balance in your unit?
EC official 1	More than half. In employment we are very good in this gender balancing. And on management level, there are five women and three men. I mean as deputy director-general and director general. So, I think we do not have an issue there.
EC official 2	Yes, in the sense, that the Commission, and you will know this already, the Commission has put in place a policy and precise rules about management recruitment. So, the targets are very clear and DGs have been invited to recruit women whenever they can see with respect to these targets. So, yes, we are balanced with regard to management positions. What I cannot tell you now, from the top of my head, is how balanced when it comes to non-management positions. I would suspect, you know, roughly speaking, that there are about a bit more women. But this is not something that I can tell you scientifically, it is just an impression.
EC official 3	<p>Yes, that is correct. And it is both, in the management and in the staff functions. In the middle management, I think we are really 50-50 percent. Also in the senior management, we have some empty posts that will be filled in, we will see that then. And for the staff, we have at least the half women. (...)</p> <p>In our DG (...) there have not been a target. It has come naturally. When this Director-General was established (...) it was more and less already 50 percent women, maybe a little bit more men. It was quite close; I would say maximum 60-40. So it has been quite well. And when the DG received a new post and was growing, the applicants were more women. And as I said, it was a time where we were only able to take from the new member states. Those applicants were a lot of women. So, that was one of the reasons. Then, over the years, we had received as DG a directorate in charge of equality and that was related to the social affairs. Depending on that subject, there are many women, I think 70 percent women and 30 percent men. Somehow, in the social areas, there were more women working. (...) So, we did not need a specific programme for getting staff so that was one thing.</p>
EC official 4	
EC official 5	
EC official 6	The higher functions are for women actually. The Head of Cabinet and Deputy Head of Cabinet are women. This is not always the case in the cabinets. We are

	<p>very gender balanced in terms of numbers but also in terms of weight that the numbers have. So the most senior functions are held by women in the Commission.</p>
EC official 7	<p>I have not counted but I would say 50-50. The Commissioner has of course made it clear that she want to have a balanced team and diversity in all fields, also on race, disabilities or sex and gender orientation. So, it is quite a mixed team.</p> <p>The Head of Cabinet is male and the Deputy Head is female.</p>
EC official 8	
EC official 9	
EC official 10	<p>Certainly for the moment, in terms of the directors that I am responsible for which are four, it is three women and one man. I think it is very well represented. Thinking about changes, there was one change because previously it were two men and two women. The gender balance became even more positive for women I would say. If I look at the DG as a whole, it is not so positive. There are three women out of the directors. So within the food pillar things have improved but more generally we are nearly but not quite there yet. I think where we still have more to do is at the middle management level. Because if I am looking at that now, there we definitely have work to do because it is five out of 20. So, that is still a lot of work to do on middle management I would say.</p>
EC official 11	<p>These things evolve over time. At the moment, at the senior management we do not have a good gender balance, we have only one woman director out of 5. But there is one empty post. So we have 5 directors and at the moment we have one out of five and one empty post that will most likely will be filled by a female candidate eventually so then we have 2 out of 5. I am a male, so the overall balance is not so good. When you look at the overall balance it is good around 50-50 or a bit more. And if you take into account also all the middle management as well, the Head of Units and the Deputies, I think the balance is quite good but we have a deficit at the moment at the senior management level which we are trying to address.</p>

	Did you personally experience that the number of women increased the last decades? + Maybe a reason for this.
EC official 1	Yes, I think so. I can tell you that, for me, the success of achieving gender balance in an organisation is also linked to political commitment for that. And if you remember in the previous Commission, Barroso II, has already decided about a target of 40 percent.
EC official 2	(...) When I worked there in the late 80s and beginning of the 90s. Yes, there were not many women in management positions that was clearly. It was much about behavior when we talk about relationships between women and men. There were some very strong women and the first Commission director-general by the way was a Belgian lady and she has always been seen as a very strong character. The Commission had one very interesting, extremely impressive secretary general, Catherine Day, who really marked the Commission. She has been so far the only one until now where we have another Commission secretary-general and that's the second one. So, the first Commission secretary-general states in his position for a very long time. But, of course, in terms of numbers yes. I mean, the directors-generals where men, the directors were man for the vast majority. But then, there is also what I said about the behavioral thing. The way women were treated or seen depended a lot on personal ethics and personal attitude and there are things that would just no longer be possible. Because when I was there a long time ago there were things that you could not imagine anymore.
EC official 3	I know from the figures and numbers that it is so. My personal experience is not so. I do not know whether it happens. I have a Finnish background; my family is from Finland where I did not see in my studies or work any feeling of gender inequality. I saw similar opportunities around me. And when I came to the Commission (3sec), my Head of Unit was man then and my Director was man, there were probably indeed less women than now. But I did not feel that there was a big imbalance on there. I have worked on the (...) area, there were also women. And then I have worked in (...). Maybe these were places where I saw around me also women. Last years in my own policy area, the majority were women. In some areas the problem is now other way around. When I hear some colleagues, who have been in some other areas (10sec). I hear comments saying like I remember when there was only 1 woman and 10 men, or I remember when there were 2 women, and the rest were men. (5sec) But if you ask if I personally experience it, I did not experience it. But I think one aspect is that I came from a gender equal society with the same opportunities, so I did not pay attention.
EC official 4	Yes, well I am 30 years in the Commission. The world compared to what it was 30 years ago, 10 years ago and now is different. Well, I will give you 2 examples. One example from when I joined the Commission as a desk officer where I was the only woman at administrative level. All the other women were secretaries. And the second of when I became the first Head of Unit. I entered that DG where I was first appointed and there 77 men and I. There was also an adviser, another woman, but as Head of

	<p>United, I was the only woman out of 78 people. So, you can see, it is a big difference.</p> <p>There are some DGs where they have more men than women, there are some DGs with a population of 70 percent women. It is obvious that in such population you get more candidates that are women. What you can do in areas like sciences, economics... is to try the increase the population of women from the lower level. So if a DG is more equal populated men and women or even more women, you can get more women in the management positions too. This is one thing. The other thing I need to tell you. You are very young but I have seen developments in the Commission too. When I was young as you, we were trying to manage professional and personal life because we wanted to be equal with men. And the men were not equal with us because they went home and were not doing all the jobs. Today, this is changing as well. But there is a qualitative difference as well because we are working harder and longer. I have seen at my career that two women got appointed as Head of Unit and they did not accept the position. Because they wanted to have more, at that stage, involvement at their kids. And then of course they came back, one of them, and became manager. Things like that at my generation I would never have done. If you lose an opportunity, you lost it. It is good where we are today of course.</p>
<p>EC official 5</p> <p>Translated Dutch-English</p>	<p>In general, where I have worked, there have always been many women, but it is true that most women work in assistant positions for male bosses, and that generally remains the case. From my experience in the last 11 years, I think in 80% of the cases the boss was a man and so were the boss's closest assistants. Since 2015, because I worked for (...), she was a woman of course and there it was already pretty balanced. And now with Mrs von der Leyen, she has of course put a lot of effort, at least in the cabinets here, to really push through a gender balance. And there is, there are many more women in higher positions this year.</p>
<p>EC official 6</p>	<p>When I started in 2004, I started in a very, within in the Commission, in a place that was very because it was very demanding. (5sec) I started in this and there were a lot of men, especially when it is about the (1sec) of the European Commission it was a lot of men. (1sec) The situation changed and then there were also a lot of women who were, not only young women like me in the very beginning of their career, but also in senior positions so the situation has been in the DG very much changing and very much more (1sec). We also in that DG, thanks to a Commissioner who was a woman, (1sec) Cruise (?), a very young director-general who was coming from outside the Commission. And it was also a very good example for young women working there. And now there they have also one Deputy Director-General who is a woman and many directors were women. And the situation has indeed quite changed compared to 2004.</p>
<p>EC official 7</p>	<p>Well, I have worked for almost all of my career in the European Commission for DG (...). And it is a DG that has always been female dominated. I have never been or worked in an environment with a lot of men. It is almost too much women in DG (...). You have since many years a female Commissioner and you have a female director-general, and the hierarchy is very women dominated.</p>

	<p>Let's say the Heads of United and the Directors are 50-50, more or less in DG (...) which is not the case in many DGs. So I worked with a lot of women.</p>
EC official 8	<p>There the Head of Cabinet was a French male. I have to say there it was mostly male dominated. You could say, although the Deputy Head was female, the balance was a bit off. But this ten-eleven years ago so it has changed in that sense.</p> <p>Yes, everybody, all the assistants were women except one, the assistant of the Deputy Head of Cabinet. You could sense that there was a role assigned to the women. Not that extreme but at that time it was acceptable.</p> <p>I think it has to do also with the Commissioner. Off the record, in my traineeship it was a woman who accepted the old way of thinking. But when I came back, in the (...) cabinet, it was a very dynamic leader in a way. It didn't matter who you were, as long as you did your job well. So, you could sense the different. Although I have to say that in the cabinet there were two men who were aware of that backward thinking. Of course, to the Commissioner they were adapting their role but towards junior people, like me as female, you could sense the different attitude.</p>
EC official 9	
EC official 10	<p>Yes definitely. I think both, the number of women that are recruited but also the number of women that made it into management positions. I think so definitely.</p> <p>I think it is primarily because of the targets. There is also a generational issue too. You know we come to a point where we have had more even recruitment and those colleagues are now coming through promoted. (3sec) But I think the targets had an impact yes.</p>
EC official 11	<p>I think it is primarily because of the targets. There is also a generational issue too. You know we come to a point where we have had more even recruitment and those colleagues are now coming through promoted. (3sec) But I think the targets had an impact yes.</p> <p>And now there specific targets for the senior management, I think that quantitative targets are necessary in order to make the move. The Commission, and other institutions, have tried to have a progressive increase without quantitative targets. In my experience it never works because it is a big change, so you need to set targets in order to make progress. Like any transition from one system to another, it has costs and benefits. It is true that occasionally when you push the system, you might end up at certain moments that you do not have enough pool of candidates which you source promotion. But this can also happen within the same gender or it can happen, for example, with the geographical criteria. It has happened in the past that you want to ensure geographical distribution and you did not have good enough candidates from certain nationalities. Or as you might not have in a certain specialization a lot of women at this particular moment. And then you can see in one- or two-years people get promoted. So the issue of pooling, having always a good pool of potential candidates, according to the criteria that you want to enforce. (3sec) It is also</p>

	<p>true that many people, men or women or whatever, want to espouse to the challenge and therefore they become better. So this idea that you will only get the best, whether they are men or women, it has a lot of flaws. Because you can only get the best when you are giving the challenge. Of course some people fail the challenge and some people do not do the challenge. The difficulty in the public administration, in the Commission or elsewhere, is that you cannot fire people. Because if you could fire people, you could give more opportunities to people, even if they are younger or less experienced, but then you have a way out. Here you promote somebody to a certain position and they are stuck until retirement. So in the public administration, it is a bit of a problem. It is a different subject but you have rigidities that come with the employment.</p>
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	How to increase the number of women in your unit or another one?
EC official 1	
EC official 2	<p>Well, the Commission has now put in place a dedicated programme to help women, you know, going into management, this is called, the female talent development programme. And this is something that I have been active in. I have been volunteering now twice. And I mean, of course, you know about this programme. There are different, you know, parts, different programmes within this programme. And one of them is mentoring. And I mean, there are also, coaching and training and other things. But, there is one, which is about mentoring, and the HR-department would invite women, senior managers, from across the Commission to become a mentor of someone from another department which is a good idea. A mentor can be a man or a woman and now I am currently taking in this edition. As I said, it is for the second time. It is very interesting, relatively new, and I think it is only through dedicated measures that indeed, I mean this is one of them, that we can actually create a pool of women who, first of all, feel attracted, interested, confident, well-prepared and then, later on, not only to become a manager, and have all, you know, the preparatory requirements to actually be a manager. So, to pass the selection process because the selection process matters a lot of course. So, this is something, that I find very interesting. And also, what is very important, is that you have balanced selection panels who are sensitive to this aspect. And, now that we have these rules and policy in place, I think the momentum is there, the tendency is there. And, you know, when you look at (2sec) you will also have seen that there is an implicit mention. There is a real will to fasten women in management. And so I think, for a DG, which is now below target, this is something they must do very electively. But I think it also depends on the recruitment that is done at the more basic grades. You cannot have all of a sudden a pool of managers at the basis. But then we go probably into something that is more related to earlier: how do you foster women's will and desire to go into certain areas at the earlier stage, in education, in academia and so on. And as we have education policy under our responsibility, member states are the first ones to be responsible for education policy. When we are talking about these 'STEM'-fields, there needs to happen something. But we also know that women do well and probably in most disciplines better than men. Then afterwards you have the so-called glass-ceiling and for some reasons, there, the pipeline is sort of interrupted. So, if we have that pipeline, and I think it needs to start from early on, and it is not when you realize in a certain Commission DG that you maybe don't have this pool of women that it would be enough to decide "I do something". So, I think it goes along the whole process.</p>
EC official 3	<p>There has to be a sufficient number of women in the applicants. When there are not enough women in the applications when there is the closing date then we prolonged it.</p>
EC official 4	

EC official 5	
EC official 6	
EC official 7	
EC official 8	
EC official 9	
EC official 10	<p>In my previous DG I worked on this quite extensive because I worked in DG (...) which was very male because there were male engineers in that DG. So there we had to recruit eight middle management, we had to make eight middle management appointments. So we had a whole campaign of things that we did in terms of setting up schemes whereby women were given extra training, given extra support, help with interviews, they were mentored... I think basically a lot of the time it is about encouraging women to feel that they can do the job and they are willing to take a risk. I did similar work as well. You have probably heard about it this if you were looking at it. There is a female talent development program. I have been a mentor on this the last couple of years as well. I was working with someone who was in a different DG which was DG (...). She finally applied and got the job as Head of Unit as well. So I think it basically means giving extra support and help and helping women to feel comfortable and they can do the job. Because a lot of the time they don't tend to take the risk while a man in the same situation would be more willing to say okay I give the job a go. Women ask themselves a lot more questions before they are willing to apply for something.</p>
EC official 11	

	What is women holding back from applying?
EC official 1	
EC official 2	
EC official 3	
EC official 4	
EC official 5	
EC official 6	
EC official 7	
EC official 8	I don't know. Like you said in (...), there are mostly women if I am honest. If someone should complain it's the men. For other things, I think now that we have the quotas that we have reach to in the management positions, maybe we don't have the results now but maybe in five or in ten years we will see. (3sec) Because women will see other women in management positions, and this helps to visualize how things could be. But I don't know for (...), these are also DGs in which the work-life balance is even less. So maybe it has also something to do with that as well. I am just speculating now. But you are right, they are more male dominated.
EC official 9	Possibly, I think that could be one of the things in the new HR-strategy for example. That would be good to look it. The thing is that the recruitment strategy is very fair I have to say. It is very hard but it is very fair in terms of entry exams. They are very anonymized, the interviews come at the end, it is completely transparent with grading criteria and it is done outside the Commission. So, I think in that sense we have a fair recruitment process. (5sec)
EC official 10	
EC official 11	

	How is the balance between private and professional life for you?
EC official 1	
EC official 2	
EC official 3	It is difficult to say if the balance between private and work life was correct. Still, my feeling was that is possible to have both. And when I started in the management work, my children were (10sec). I had to arrange it. In that way, I still had the feeling that I had the responsibility to arrange. I had the feeling that it was possible. And while our children were growing, I have 2 sons, they had their part in our household work. So, in that way it was indeed the whole family supporting in the work side. Naturally there has been times in years in the rush-hours of the family-life that there is imbalance. There is the feeling that we are not sufficient at home and not sufficient at the office.
EC official 4	
EC official 5 Translated Dutch-English	Of course, it is also a very hard world. We work here, for example (...), seven days a week from 7 in the morning to 9 in the evening. If you have a young family, of course, that is very difficult. That is a bit of a trade-off and the difficulty for many women in high positions, because it is expected that you are always available and that is not always possible if you are a mother.
EC official 6	It requires a lot from my private life so I don't know if I would do it again.
EC official 7	Well, I am a bad example. I basically left Sweden very early, after my university I left. But I, of course, have that mentality because you are right, this is probably the most developed country in Europe, in the world even. But I am married with an (...) man so you know the contrast. I have three kids so, I am not lived like how I would teach honestly. My husband is not taking parental leave, I have taken all of that myself. And you accept what he can do and can't do. In the beginning I was fighting about that but then after a while I realize that is not pointing to fight about that. He is a private (1sec) so there are things he cannot do but he won't do and that would end up in divorce. So personally, I managed yes by being lucky in the Commission is very flexible. The Commission as employer gives you a lot of flexibility, you have less parental leave than you have in Sweden but you have much more than in many other countries even Belgium. So I have maternal leave, full payed, for four months. And I have twelve months parental leave per child which is payed small amount, enough to survive I guess but maybe not from one side. (5sec) So what I have done is I have taken nine months for every child parental leave after the birth. And then either a crèche or a nanny at home. And then trying to work it out, coming home, it is probably later than you would do in Sweden, having someone who picked them up in school. It is logistically challenge but I have done teleworking before Covid at least once a week which gives you flexibility as well. Personally, my youngest kid is eleven, so I am fine now, I am out of the worst. But of course, when the kids are small, it is a struggle. You never feel that you are good at anything. If you would have the father helping out more, it would be great. He

	is doing a lot, in the weekend he is full time daddy but during the weeks not really.
EC official 8	Because I see our managers now, they work day and night and weekends, holidays, I even see with my own Director-General, I don't think in the last two years she could switch off her phone and disconnect. So, you are right, this is another a big part of the choice why you would want to be a manager. And I think it is for women a bit more difficult. Although, I have to say that the Commission is a space that allows both parents to take the burden of parenthood or private life. I think from where we come from, women have the tendency to take more of the burden. But I like the fact that in the Commission there is a choice. Normally it is the woman that chooses.
EC official 9	<p>I'm still quite young and unmarried and no children. So it has been easy to kind of put myself in the jobs that I had. Some of them ask a lot of your time and energy but I think I have been able to do that so far. I don't know how that will be in the future. One thing about the Commission that is good is that you see a lot of these really powerful women in really strong positions that still manage to have families. And I think I have had a lot of those role-models through (20sec). And in the last mandate, because the Head of Cabinet was a woman, and she is also fantastic. I had these really good role-models.</p> <p>Yes, I do think about it because I would like to have kids. It's a couple of years off still but it is in the kind of planning and there is no reason I still cannot have good and interesting jobs. I think it depends a lot on the relationship you have with your partner, how you handle it. It is something we talk about a lot.</p>
EC official 10	I think that matters but more than that is what happens once you are back at the job and you have a child and you manage to find the right balance. I think what is important, and the Commission has a long way in that now compared to when I was younger, is the flexibility in terms of working. And I think one of the other things that I have seen and which makes a very big difference is when men are willing to take time as well. If you have men who are in management positions who also okay for them to leave at a certain time (2sec). I think that makes a big difference, the acceptability's in the workplace and the possibility that women think that they can combine the two.
EC official 11	You do of it what you want to do, I don't know. I am not a good person for this, I like to work so for me this is not a question, this is a question for the people that do not (1sec). I do not work 9 to 5. If you want to get anywhere in life, everybody that I have seen whether it is in private sector or in public sector, people just work. (1sec) hours a week, nobody has succeeded by not working hard and playing golf. This does not exist. (2sec) The work and life balance is important but it is linked to time. Normally we have 40 hours a week so people should be happy I think. People are paid a lot of money and they have to develop. They are not paid to have a 9to5-job. If you work in a communion in Belgium, where are you from? From Ghent?

	If you go to Ghent, everyone closes at 4 o'clock. But if you want to have every afternoon free, then you do another job.
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	Do you think this balance between private and professional life is harder for women than for men?
EC official 1	
EC official 2	<p>I was encouraged to go for it. Interestingly, by the way, it was an older man, who was a manager, who said be very careful, not to overdo it. Because then younger women tend to take too much on their shoulders. It was said in a simple way, but it was it was nicely said. He just said be careful don't overdo it because you also know that more is expected in reality from women than from men, at least then. (...) I think that women still pay a higher price in terms of the division of who does what at home and these things. So, I think, yes support yes the reality remains. However I see it also with female colleagues who, you know, when the kids are ill or it has trouble in school and so on. They take more often a day off. It's not the rule it is not a general thing but I still think it is.</p>
EC official 3	
EC official 4	<p>Hard to apply, no, hard to pass, a little bit because there were questions about how you will deal with women, how you will deal with your personal life, with your kids, balance between professional and personal life. But I have to tell you, at least in the post that I obtained, I have never been in a situation that the sex was harder for me.</p> <p>Yes, a lot. The woman that has 2 kids, like me, not only as a desk officer but also as a manager then, you needed to work twice, not in the job, to work in your life, in your house, as a mother, as a wife, particular as a mother and to do what you have as post in the Commission. In particular when I get into the management part.</p>
EC official 5	<p>Yes, traditionally it is still a bit like that. So I think that still plays a part, it shouldn't be like that. And the people here who work in top jobs, they of course have a high enough salary to be able to ask for help. But of course you have to weigh up for yourself as a woman and a mother, do I want to be a mother to be there for the children or do I want to be a mother and have a nanny raise the children? These are considerations that women make more quickly than men.</p>
EC official 6	
EC official 7	
EC official 8	<p>And I think it is for women a bit more difficult. Although, I have to say that the Commission is a space that allows both parents to take the burden of parenthood or private life. I think from where we come from, women have the tendency to take more of the burden. But I like the fact that in the Commission there is a choice. Normally it is the woman that chooses.</p> <p>I think so yes. There is the very biological fact that they do not have to stay home for, I don't know six or nine months, it puts them in a better position. Even if you have a great husband who will share the burden of parenthood, I think the fact that you are out of the workforce for a long time it affects some things,</p>

	<p>especially in a political environment. So if you're in a cabinet, you cannot say to work parttime, it is impossible. So, yes, it matters.</p>
<p>EC official 9</p>	<p>It is obviously harder for women, I mean, because we have (1sec) leave for one. And there is no one who can do this for you although, you know, the Swedes have a quite good model of how they share parental leave. And I think it is kind of changing but I think it is obviously harder for women because you have bit of gap in your job. When I worked for public institutions, so in the European Commission, there is fantastic parental and maternity leave and packages. But I think in general we are still really far from full equality. And women suffer the most burden.</p>
<p>EC official 10</p>	<p>I think it can be more difficult. I still notice around me, for example, I have one child but I noticed that (...), who is the Director-General, she has no children and I think they are still a generation of women who made it through high positions without having children. Because they did not find it possible to balance it with their career and having a family. There are opposite examples of course, if you take President von der Leyen, she has seven children and still make it being the President of the Commission. I think you can say in general someone find it hard to combine both but then there are exceptions of course.</p>
<p>EC official 11</p>	

	How did you experience the competition while applying for a higher function job in the Commission?
EC official 1	
EC official 2	<p>Yes, there's also something else in terms of well competition. When you are already in a certain DG, you may have better chances. So, on the other hand competitions where, I'm talking now about internal competitions, then you know it's logical in a way. I'm not saying it's right but, if you have let's say people who are not in a management position but good people in your own Department, or you have middle managers who you think should move up higher remove higher up when ahead of unit is very good. You would probably want him to become director one day. And a good policy officer you may want him or her to be deputy head of unit and then head of unit and so on. So, yes there is competition but often you would already have a precise profile in mind. And so it's more difficult to move. Where it is very common that people would move is at top level. So, we as director general would come from another DG a deputy director general as well in in many cases. But, yes there is competition but apart from being a woman or man, of course other factors play a lot. Some other thing is geographical balance. In an organization which is multilateral, there are sensitivities and it's also normal that nationalities are represented in a balanced way. Not because we come in and see ourselves as in my case in Luxembourg or you know German or a Polish. But, I think something would miss also in the cultural diversity in bringing in different points of views inside if this balance was not there. So this is an important factor in the Commission. But also I don't think that member states would accept it in the end if they were not well represented or very poorly presented at the management level. And some member states are more active than others in push the info for their people. For instance, I give you last example on this one. For some time it had been very difficult for let's say a Belgian man to be appointed to a management position because there were many Belgians already. And now, of course people would say "oh no I have no chance I'm i'm a belgian i'm a man". So competition yes but ...</p>
EC official 3	
EC official 4	<p>Well, I take the life always as a challenge. When I saw that, for example in the DG that I applied there were 90 percent men at that time, they were asking about the policy direction because I was in the policy area, it was not technical. I decided to go because I thought that I would add a different direction, a different dimension in the policy design of the DG. I think why they have chosen me also because of that. Because they said so that I want to change things. I take the challenges and I fight with so it is dynamic, it is both ways. (5sec). Later in my career, I have chosen DGs which was the subject of my career. That time, it was only about the challenge and the function.</p> <p>For me, it goes without saying that we have an open competition. I have to prove that I am one of the best or the best. And of course, now I look at it from it to the other side, from those I select. And I want to see the motivation of these I</p>

	<p>interview. How can I say, motivation to do not only their job but the area in which they are working, what their ideas are, the commitment, the engagement. And I do not see if this is a man or a woman. I recruited women when they were pregnant for example. And everyone told me what are you doing, they are going to leave six months or one year. But no because this is an investment.</p>
EC official 5	
EC official 6	
EC official 7	
EC official 8	<p>I think we are a bit trapped by the human resources policy. When you are a functionar, you have a job for life let's say. And you have a grade and every few years, you are assessed and you get a promotion. Sometimes there is a misconception that if you reach a certain grade that you'll become a manager. I like to work for a Director-General who does not think that. What she does, and I agree with that thinking, that you have to choose. If you feel like you can be a manager, when you promoted, you go into a management position. But if you feel that you want to become an expert, then you'll become a senior expert which means you will not go into that manager position. I think it is a misconception that if you have the grade you'll become a manager. These are two different things.</p>
EC official 9	<p>Yes, it is extremely competitive.</p> <p>I mean the numbers are huge, the people that take part in the conquer every year are thousands and then you take like 20, it is very difficult. And it took me a while to pass the civil servant exams myself. About ten years, I applied every single year while already working in the institutions in temporary posts. I was already a qualified candidate but the exams are just hard to pass. It was a long time but I got there eventually. But yes it is very competitive and you have to study a lot.</p>
EC official 10	<p>Most of the positions, like Deputy Head of Unit or Head of Unit, there is a lot interest in those positions because it gives promotion and responsibility. Most of the people, not everybody thanks, there is a good proportion of people who want to progress in their careers and take that kind of responsibility. So yes I think there is competition around that positions.</p>
EC official 11	

	What do you think about the targets in the administration?
EC official 1	I think the Commission is getting there so, it is very good to set a target although the target seems a bit too ambitious. Once a target is set and there is political commitment, things progress very well.
EC official 2	It is a very difficult question. As you know as people always say, we don't like quotas, but we like the result of it. So, this is also something that you know that applies very much to the private sector when the Commission actually launched their proposal for rules with regard to women on men on boards on Corporation Boards. I think it was a bit of a shock fall from any people that the Commission went ahead and said we want quotas. In the end to be a bit more forceful and just redress the imbalance. This is not something that should need to stay. I think it's just become from so far, we have so much impact that at some point only incentives will not be enough. I really think at some point you have to become stronger (5sec) However, I think we are not doing badly so I think you can always try. It has to be gradual approach as well because if you first start the soft approach targets incentives and so on and then you see doesn't work, maybe then, you have to think about something else and things will deeply about these and to understand the reasons why it does not work. (3sec) Psychologically and sociologically, I think that it is important that something like this is also accepted. There must be some ownership across the institution, across the company in general, and this is not something that should polarizing women against men. So, in a way I think as long as it works as it seems to do. I'm quite confident that we don't need quotas, but we need to do something that is probably. It's not politically correct to say it I think is that we also need to be bit careful about the generation of younger men that come now in. When we look at the older generations where this imbalance was so shocking and no longer acceptable. Young men who come in and tell us "look I don't have any career chances here so why should I bother and committing to being hardworking and I will never become a manager here". And that cannot be phase where we nevertheless need to say, well, you're turn hasn't come now, we will keep you in mind. But, it will happen once. We will maybe also making it more complicated. But, in the Commission, it's unlikely in the private sector, we are not that flexible with regard to recruiting or eventually terminating contractors people who don't deliver stage to it. So once you are an official yeah...
EC official 3	In our DG for the recruitment of the staff there have not been a target. It has come naturally.
EC official 4	Well, when it is started, I was working on this initiative. When it started, the women were (2sec) 40 percent. And that moment, the women in the management, but not only in the Commission also outside, they were 15-20 percent. (3sec) It generated a lot of discussion. Today, this President, von der Leyen, has set 50 percent. You know very well that in the Commissioners-position it is close to 50 percent. And I think when we started with the targets, it was something that needed to be done because there was a history behind, a legacy about men. So, you needed to have these targets and still maybe in some cases. But at some point, I also believe that we need to be actual really equal.

	And therefore, these targets would not be necessary anymore. At that moment, however, they stimulated the discussion, they tried to rectify what has not been done for years and years.
EC official 5	
EC official 6	I think we have quotas for the cabinets but just for the senior positions. The problem is within the cabinet, it is more difficult. In a DG you take decisions with a lot of people, which is a pool of people, which is much larger. In the cabinet you are with a much smaller team and the Commissioner decides on his or her own. So, cabinet quotas is much more difficult. Because if you have that target of 40%, the Commissioner would be more limited in choosing their Head of Cabinet. What you can do is for instance something in the team of the cabinet thinks about at least one of the most three senior-functions, which is usually Head of Cabinet, Deputy Head of Cabinet or Senior Expert, needs to be a woman.
EC official 7	
EC official 8	
EC official 9	
EC official 10	Yes I do think it is a good idea. I had a while whether to think if it was a good idea. You tend to think that you will end up with situations where you are only appointed because you are a woman. But the need to make progress was so great that if we would just left things without having a target, then we would not have made progress. And I do not see that the organisation is any worse now of having more women in positions. I think it is better. There is an issue around the fact that some of the men feel that they lost out because they think they already promoted and then they do not get the promotion because they are male and women only get promoted. It has to be done in a way which at least does not (1sec - decrease) the male population. Because we are all working together in this organization and everybody has to be motivated and everybody has to feel that the work that they are doing is being appreciated to the maximum extend possible. Of course, there are always going to be issues and disappointments. The way that we did it when I was in DG (...) was instead of just appointing eight women and we appointed a woman, than a man was appointed so that there was a balance and people did not feel they were losing out completely.
EC official 11	And now there specific targets for the senior management, I think that quantitative targets are necessary in order to make the move. The Commission, and other institutions, have tried to have a progressive increase without quantitative targets. In my experience it never works because it is a big change, so you need to set targets in order to make progress. Like any transition from one system to another, it has costs and benefits.

	Do you think it is important that the administration of the European Commission reflects the European society?
EC official 1	I think it is very important that it reflects it. But I think there are not enough candidates. I do not think we could achieve what we could but what we have so far seen as candidates is not broad and diverse enough. The choice is very limited. But we have people from minority background, from migrant background and so on. I think this have never been an issue in the discussion “shall we take this person” because he is not a white man or something like this, no.
EC official 2	
EC official 3	Yes, I do think that different backgrounds are enriching the policymaking. There is the geographical background with different cultures and different languages. (10sec) Age, I do not see a challenge, we do have young people. Specifically, the last ten years there were a lot of young people coming when the new member states came with a lot of young people. Actually, they have been now getting older and in the last years, there has not been so many new people coming because the Commission has to reduce its staff number. And we are not recruiting that many new people. So, it is true that in total, if we do not recruit new people, it will be a bit older. (30sec) There is some challenge there. And for the ethnic minorities, we certainly hope that would be more. That needs something structural in the member states’ university education level. Naturally, we are not representing everyone in the sense that we are university educated people most of us. It is only in the secretariats that it is without university education. (15sec) Yes I would hope and support brother but not on the cost, let’s say, taking out these recruitments of people servants. This means I am not pro a separate way for coming in like in the U.S. The member states should offer the same educational opportunities for everyone. And in that way coming to the Commission.
EC official 4	Absolutely, the Commission is an institution, as it is the Council and the Parliament, all the big administration and ministries in the member states. So, I think all have to follow this (1sec). I do not know, I know from the rapports I see, it is not the case in every member state. There are member states also that there is not only equal truth and diversity but also a pay gap. This is also something that needs to be addressed as well.
EC official 5	
EC official 6	
EC official 7	
EC official 8	
EC official 9	I think it is important to have a balance. You shouldn’t pursue it too far in the other direction. We maybe have too few men to be honest in our cabinet. It is really female dominated, and I think you always need a balance in life and it is good to have different perspectives. Seeing an issue from another slightly

	<p>perspective is always good. But at the same time I do believe in positive discrimination, the Commission is really trying and doing quite well in this terms, we have at least 40 percent female managers now. That's a much better picture than if you look outside of the institutions. So I think we have to keep pushing to have more women in powerful positions. I remember when I started in the spokesperson service, when I was an intern, all of the spokespeople were men and all of the press officers were women. And actually now it is the opposite. There are more female spokespeople than male. So I think it changes in time but until we have generational shift in the way gender balance is reflected in senior management jobs, we still need positive discrimination.</p> <p>Yes and I think we do not have an ethnically balanced Commission at all and von der Leyen herself said that. We did survey in the Commission and it was clear that in the Commission they are underrepresented. But I think it is difficult because you have the civil servants exams that need to be passed. And there is a certain influence of nationalities as well to have a balance of nationalities and of gender and of ... It is hard to complete that all. But it is clear that at the moment it is not the case that we are representing society.</p> <p>Yes I do, I really do. And I think that is definitely something we are missing. I remember working on something like Roma rights. And I remember we had a look at the Commission and we had one employee from the Roma community. And we used him quite a lot at the development of the strategy. But when you have that perspective, it really does improve policy a lot.</p>
EC official 10	
EC official 11	

	Is there a difference in policy-output when more women in higher positions take part in the policy process?
EC official 1	
EC official 2	
EC official 3	
EC official 4	
EC official 5 Translation Dutch-English	<p>It really depends from person to person, I think. I can't put a general stamp on it. I do think that in difficult negotiations, it really depends on who you have in front of you. I work for the Deputy Head of Cabinet, who is a woman but who generally has a more masculine approach. She is fairly tough in the negotiations, she doesn't let people walk over her, not that women let people walk over them. Women can easily have a softer approach, a bit more mediation in a less offensive way, I think, than men. I think the women here in the top positions have the same style as the men, quite aggressive. I talk very, how should I put this, not nuanced.</p>
EC official 6	
EC official 7	
EC official 8	
EC official 9	
EC official 10	<p>Yes I do think it makes a difference to the policy. I think women approach things in a different way. I think they are more interested sometimes in getting result from a team, a central result, let's say, that everybody finds itself in the result at the end of the day. It is not all about winning. Of course, women want to do things well and they want to do things properly. It is not always the case, there will be women who are aggressive and confrontation as well but in general your average woman is probably more interested in finding result which brings more in account areas and a team-decision than an individualistic decision.</p>
EC official 11	<p>Yes, diversity, not only gender diversity but also other diversity. It is proven, academically, that it increases activity and innovation. It has been proved scientifically in economic papers. It is also true in practice that you have different ideas, different outcome to negotiations, different ideas to problems, different approaches so it is certainly better. The same goes with geographical, let's say plurality and other diversity criteria.</p>

	What do you think about the Female Talent Development programme? / Did you take part in the Female Talent Development programme before?
EC official 1	<p>In the Commission, we have the female development programme which I can really confirmed that helped a lot. I can see the change in colleagues who applied a few years ago for managerial posts and after they have undertaken this female development programme, they made a leap in their performance, their presentation, their self-confidence and I think that was an important element in their career development helping them. Because as you know, if a man is offered a job, he is not going to think a lot. If a woman is offered a job, she starts thinking and doubting. The self-confidence is of women is not that yet firm like men. These female development programmes, I think they are called leadership development programmes, they are helping women to be more certain about their own capabilities and also more confident.</p>
EC official 2	<p>Well, the Commission has now put in place a dedicated programme to help women, you know, going into management, this is called, the female talent development programme. And this is something that I have been active in. I have been volunteering now twice. And I mean, of course, you know about this programme. There are different, you know, parts, different programmes within this programme. And one of them is mentoring. And I mean, there are also, coaching and training and other things. But, there is one, which is about mentoring, and the HR-department would invite women, senior managers, from across the Commission to become a mentor of someone from another department which is a good idea. A mentor can be a man or a woman and now I am currently taking in this edition. As I said, it is for the second time. It is very interesting, relatively new, and I think it is only through dedicated measures that indeed, I mean this is one of them, that we can actually create a pool of women who, first of all, feel attracted, interested, confident, well-prepared and then, later on, not only to become a manager, and have all, you know, the preparatory requirements to actually be a manager.</p>
EC official 3	<p>In general, I think that all development programmes are useful. I believe in self-development and training. So then is the question is it good to have something where only women are? Because there can also be a programme for young professionals. I still also see the usefulness for women, it is a possibility to express some uncertainties. It encourages women to take the floor. In the mixed group, it sometimes happens that men are more on front there. In that way, I find yes. One last point, it is good that is also a clear signal from the institution that we are trying to deal with the structural problem that there has been less women candidates. Even if somebody does not participate in the programme itself they know that this is (1sec). In that way, it has a larger influence than just for the participants.</p> <p>I have been mentor in that programme. It goes so that the director-general can send as many candidates as we can also then mentors in the senior management. So, in senior management we are a little bit rotating so that not everyone is not doing it every year. But we have done it and I have also been mentor in the programme.</p>

EC official 4	<p>When I became Head of Unit, we did not have that but now I believe it is a good one. It gives perspectives to that women that are not yet in a management position, it motivates them. So it is a very good initiative. There are other initiatives as well today, how you balance professional and private life. I do not speak about the Covid-period, it is a different one, it is hard.</p>
EC official 5	
EC official 6	<p>The problem is the selection of the people who go to these programs, is already been done in the DGs and sometimes it is already confident people who are selected to go there. So sometimes people who do need to boost their self-confidence. (10sec) A lot of women are very valid and very intelligent but they have a lack of confidence. What is important is that who recognized and support them, for sure. But also to give them the possibility to try it out themselves. You have these kind of programs where those who are chosen are already the ones who sort of emerged. Because very often they are the ones speak out in public. It really depends what you want to do it with it. If it is about learning management skills fine. But if it is about fostering talent that are hidden in people and you would not otherwise find. I am not sure that at least, how it is applied now, from what I have seen, the best way. I think it would be probably best to give all the people the possibility to apply and go through a selection panel and then decide whether to go or not. Because what I have seen is that from the time being all the people were already Deputy so already in a management part where chose to participate in these programs.</p>
EC official 7	<p>I was part of it in the first pilot program.</p> <p>I have very mixed feelings about that. It is a very good idea but personally I have not been helped in any way after the end of the program. It was great to have coaching and being developing your own and networking. Everything is right on the paper but what I honestly get annoyed with is they talk a lot but then they do not seriously promote you afterwards. Because it is all up to you how you want to find out. Because I applied for a few jobs and there was no gender discrimination because I lost the job to another woman so that was not a feeling of being discriminated because I am a woman. But what I feel is that the Commission is not sufficiently honest about promoting talent I think. I have been in a (...) role for a long time and I was proving that I am capable to be a Head of Unit but ... I have not felt an active interest in promoting me for that. Which you are on the paper not allowed to do as an organization because everyone has a competition on equal terms. But we know that that is happening all the time for women and men. Personally, I have never felt discriminated because I am a woman, but I am also not sure if the Commission is sufficiently honest about promoting the right women, the best women for positions. It depends on your personal contacts and network and so on. It is not necessarily the outcome of that program which I can imagine costs a fortune because they have private companies to coach and so on. I am interesting if that is really given the results they want to achieve.</p> <p>What I felt when I was doing that, I was in the first pilot program, so my DG asked me to join. It was not a selection procedure, but the DG asked 3 women</p>

	<p>in DG (...) to join this program. I was one of them. So there was the selection and then a 6 months program. (3sec) If you have been selected to join a program, you would expect to be in a kind of pool. They had selected you, they had trained you and they build the capacity for a woman to be a leader and then you would expect some kind of follow-up and not just leave you. Now every six months I get a mail of a vacancy with here you can apply for. But there is no active follow-up. (5sec) Even if they cannot guarantee the job because it is all an equal competition but at least an active coaching to follow up this program. I would have expect this and I am not the only one saying this and I do not know how they have changed the program. I also felt when I did it, it was all about your personal branding and to say the right words, to act in the right way, build your network... It almost felt like competition amongst participants sometimes. And afterwards as well, oh I got this job, this is so great, and we supposed to be like networking and helping each other but in the end the competition was also among the women who participated in the program. It wasn't necessarily the best.</p> <p>There was one job I applied for and one girl who was from the same group, got the job and I honestly have worked with her in this group for six months and I felt that I was much more competent than her. But she had the right nationality and had the right contacts so I am not sure.</p>
EC official 8	<p>I think I would in the sense that I would be interested to see what they teach. I have a colleague, the other assistant with me, she is in a higher grade so she was proposed to do this talent management. She told me actually that it was an interesting experience because it was a female talent development. So in a way to find a way to empower women, to not feel so insecure because I think we are more critical with ourselves. A man might say okay let's do it and go ahead and do it, maybe not so great but he will do it. While we, if we are not so certain, we will say yeah but maybe I am not so good. We don't try and they invest a lot in this aspect.</p>
EC official 9	
EC official 10	<p>I have been a mentor on this the last couple of years as well. I was working with someone who was in a different DG which was DG (...). She finally applied and got the job as Head of Unit as well. So I think it basically means giving extra support and help and helping women to feel comfortable and they can do the job. Because a lot of the time they don't tend to take the risk while a man in the same situation would be more willing to say okay I give the job a go. Women ask themselves a lot more questions before they are willing to apply for something.</p> <p>Yes I definitely learned something. First of all, I learned a lot about a different service. (5sec) I learned a lot more about how they work, how they visit the sites, how the colleagues work there because obviously they are scientists which is helpful for me now in my current job. I think it was very good to me to see it from another women's perspective as well. My menti how she approached things, the kind of career that she had, the experiences that she had, the</p>

	<p>challenges that she faced and etc. So I learned a lot of that. I probably learned as much as my menti did from that program and participating in it.</p>
<p>EC official 11</p>	<p>I think it is good. I am not here now for a long time so I don't know, also with Covid, everybody. But we had it in the (...) before. I think it is very useful. Effectively, the talent development programme it is something that is, again, it is in theory needed for all talent, male or female. So, it is good that we have that. It is a way to invest in people that have potential and ambition. I think what is also very good, I am not good in all this sort of gadget names, what we had before, I don't know how we call it, I don't like all this Brussels-terminology, we had for example for some years in my previous job was mentoring. What you need in professional life, again whether you are a man or woman, is mentoring. So we have this system by which women more higher in the hierarchy have been the younger ones and this is a mentoring-program is very important. In private sector and in public sector, this is the only way that people work, whether it is implicit or explicit. So you need to have talent management which is a kind of system of providing external education. This is life-long learning. But you also need a very good mentoring program that women or men can reach out to people to see what is important. But of course you also have to take into account that all this are concepts are linked to career development. And not everybody in life wants to make a career. This is also something that tend to forget. There are many people, they might be only attached to the subject so they do ... People want to be a doctor, a family doctor, they don't want a noble winner in medicines, or they don't want to be a director of a hospital. They want to be a doctor to serve the role of family doctor of their local communities. So I think we have to have in big organisations, we have to gather the rights of everybody and not only with big ambitions. Because the management positions are a small bit of the population. So you need to gather the rights of women but at every level.</p>

	Did or do you have someone you were or are looking up to in a professional way?
EC official 1	If you would see my biography, I have been at high positions since I was 30 so it's, how to say, I had different inspirations for that but not necessary women. For me, what I do or what I did was not that much to proof that I can be a better woman, but I wanted to proof that I can be as good as a man on the post. It was not like this is my inspirational person and I want to become like him because I think people are different and you cannot become like anyone else. I have seen that women who I worked with are very strong and I was trying to understand their ... to follow their approaches. But as a clear role model I cannot find anyone that I am thinking I want to be like that person, no.
EC official 2	There are many people. I admire one of them, an Italian politician lady whom I had a chance to work with even before studying political sciences. She was one of the people who actually influenced my choice because she was so committed and actually managed to change a few things through ability. Why am I a bit wary about the notion of role models is because very often the messages add say looking up. This can be an issue already. Because look at me how well I did so there's no reason you couldn't do this as well. But what I'm not telling you is how much the price was that I've been paying because either I have kids but I have everything I have been any I have a husband who is fantastic person around. So, I'm just saying this because I notion of role model. I don't like the idea you have to look up to somebody. Why am I saying this what I prefer a lot is that somebody tells you be yourself and that's how you will make it not look at somebody else it's a bit it's a bit provocative for them. The best advice I got it several times in my career was be yourself and that's what is missing because what women often need is confident. But to be and to act as the yard not to compare because a role model could I'm now seeing something strange but you could even take a man as a role model. I very much like is that slow the shift from the role model approach to mentoring approach so mentoring in the sense that yes be yourself but I am more senior in the Commission I'm more experienced I've been there for awhile now I can give you a few tips I can you show you where the traps are I can show you where I think your assets could be but it's for you to develop your (1sec) sorry but I'm you know I'm trying to you know yeah well I really understand what you're saying I'm thinking kind of the same
EC official 3	Not in the Commission but 10 years ago or something like that, when I was Head of Unit in the (...), then we got a new Director, very dynamic woman who is (...), who is now(...). When she came, I have her then considered as a kind of role model on going forward in the senior management level. For me then, the idea of getting the kind of support of being a senior manager. I would say (2sec)
EC official 4	Well, role-model, I am really telling you, I do not know if I have somebody close to me. I have different, how can I say, different people for different reasons. I have one that I would say ticks to the box. And not all are women. (20sec) I worked with president Juncker who was so much European and today you have

	<p>the new Commission President who is so result-oriented and wants to give solutions in the emergency crisis we are in today.</p>
<p>EC official 5</p> <p>Translation Dutch-English</p>	<p>Yes actually, I think ex-Commissioner (...) is someone I looked up to a lot because she was someone who worked very hard, had to travel because she was doing foreign affairs so she was always travelling. But she was always very friendly, always had time for her staff, for the cleaning teams, for everyone. She always had time, even if it was only 20 seconds, for a chat. In order to create a good atmosphere in her team, and I always found it amazing how she could maintain this under all the pressure and time constraints. It really helped to motivate the team, such small gifts. I think that's very important for all managers and I have the impression that it's sometimes forgotten here in the institutions. It's all very hierarchical here and if the hierarchy falls away a little, then I think you can achieve much more than if you stick to the hierarchy. My current boss is (...), who really stands her ground in a man's world, and who was actually one of the top people to (...). I look up to her very much too.</p>
<p>EC official 6</p>	<p>I like many women whom I worked. I did not like many of them either. My experience is that you can have both women were very good and men were very good (10sec) What I experience with women was, I had a really good experience when I was in the company with my leader. She was my age and she was very bright, a very positive person and at the same time a very good relationships with the team. I came to Brussels and I also experienced very good relationships. I had very good experience with for instance Deputy Director-Generals in the Commission who were women and were very bright and very well organized in expressing their thoughts, very confident and very consensus digging which I find important. And I also was very inspired by the time by Commissioner (...) (2sec)</p>
<p>EC official 7</p>	<p>No not one in particular. But what I always find impressive are these people, women and men, who have done the career without sacrificing family life and can still do both and show that you do not need to be in the office and talk to the guys in the corridors until 9'o clock. But that you can go home at six or seven and still do your job and have a successful career. I have been mentoring by female directors who have not been the best role models in that sense I had one, but she did not have any kids. So, she pushed me a lot but did not have the same circumstances. What I am trying to say is that I don't think that having children should either put barriers or promote or have any influence. I think the work that you produce, the results should be the only thing that matters. With now, while everyone is teleworking, we all see that work continues. We might not be as happy and inspired as we met people in the office but the work is done and we are producing the same results. So we are the proof that there is not necessarily a problem with teleworking which was forbidden in some DGs a year ago or a few years ago. Even when the Commission said yes, some Directors and Head of Units said no not in my service, I am not going to have any teleworkers which was not the case for me because I was working in a DG that was very flexible. For me that is important. Just to answer your question about that role model, something that annoys me sometimes and this is very honest having been in the gender equality for a long time. When they talk about these female role models,</p>

	<p>you always have to say oh I can do everything: I can be an astronaut, I can be the CEO of Apple... You always have to teach girls that they can be the top and then it is almost like, as a small girl for those who do not care about that, you almost have a reversed effect, do you see what I mean?</p> <p>Unless I want to be an astronaut or the most successful singer or business women, then I am not good enough. So I think we need to be careful about what role model means. I think role model is someone that shows that you can do what you want to do. And if you want to be a housewife, that is fine. I am not telling you that you cannot be a housewife. I should tell you that you have the choice to be a space engineer. And not because you are a girl that you are not able to do it. For me, that is very important.</p>
EC official 8	<p>I have to admit that I learn a lot and I admire how she can swim or survive in a very male dominated function and it is not easy. I see how she acts, how she is trying to put herself in the same position. But to be honest, I also feel like what I said about the private life. I admire her in her professional life. But I see on a daily basis that it is very difficult to have a private life. And that is also why I admire her but I do not want to have that, I also want to have the private sphere. It is a bit sacrifice. But she is definitely the person I look up to professionally.</p>
EC official 9	<p>I think (...), she was the (...) towards the end of the mandate, before she was the (...). I have worked with her for some years. And she is supersmart and really good at her job. It was amazing to see her in that (...) role. Because I think there was no (...) before either. And also a (...) nationality there has never been one before. (5sec) She was perfect. And the other person would be (...). She was the Director-General of DG (...) when I was working with her. Now she is Director-General of DG (...). She is fantastic.</p>
EC official 10	<p>I have had but she is retired now. I have had a couple of mentors actually. There was one who was a British woman who was a (...) and who was my mentor for a few years. And I previously had an Irish woman that was a mentor before. So I always had some colleague that I felt that I could go to to talk about things, who was inspirational in a way.</p> <p>Actually, the one in question had the same profile but she had a very different background in terms of I was a lawyer and she was an accountant so she was more an economist and had a different approach to things. But I suppose in a way she had similar challenges in terms of professional career and balancing family and work and so on.</p> <p>Yes I think it is very important. Because obviously you will have the colleagues that you will work with more directly who will be managing you. But I think it is very good to have someone out of that system that you can go to and you can talk to in a very open way, who is not going to judge you or be grading you. Personally I think it is very important.</p>
EC official 11	

	Do you experience a difference since President von der Leyen took office with a gender balanced College of Commissioners? (administration)
EC official 1	
EC official 2	
EC official 3	<p>There are two aspects here: the general policy on the equality and the Commission only. On the Commission internal gender equality, there was already the Juncker-Commission who has set the 40 percent target and who started appointing women in the positions. (5sec) Maybe this has been seen more outside because the president is a woman. Internally we had started the talent development programmes already in the Juncker Commission. I do not see a big difference there. I see more difference in the policy for equality. In the previous Commission, the Juncker Commission, even there was a lot of talk about gender equality. For example, Timmermans said ‘I am a feminist’ so lot of talk. But politically we did not move forward in a similar way in gender equality. For example, the gender equality strategy in the Juncker Commission was adopted only as (2sec), it was not a College communication. They did not bring it to the College. So, they did not gave it so many importance. There is the difference with now with Ms. von der Leyen. (5sec) Naturally, we have the dedicated Commissioner for equality, Commissioner Dalli. So on the policy level, yes there is more attention and more, let’s say, real aim for change.</p>
EC official 4	<p>Well, in her policy guidelines (5sec). As a president of the Commission, she highlights and gives the policy direction. So, in the Commission we have the Human Resource director-general that prepares statistic directions, Commissioner (1sec). So these are all guidelines and activities to have opportunities and seminaries like the talent development programme. So all of these, are things that the supervisor has to agree on.</p> <p>I think the line comes from the President. I have worked with men and women as Commissioners. You can see that we need more women. It is not that they would tell me you need to recruit women. You need to recruit the best. But if the line of the Commission is this DG needs more women. I need definitely administratively look more for women than for men. And men know that.</p>
EC official 5	
EC official 6	
EC official 7	
EC official 8	
EC official 9	
EC official 10	<p>That is a very good question actually. I think there is a difference. It is the first time for me now that I worked with a Director-General that is a woman and a Commissioner who is a woman. I think we are in a very particular situation in DG (...) with everything that is going on with (...) and so on. So it is difficult to</p>

	say exactly now how different the work is on an actual daily basis. But I certainly experience a difference but I would find it difficult to say to you.
EC official 11	I don't know, there were already, I don't know, seven percent women in the management and now they become 45 in the overall. I don't know in the College. Since the Commission has moved to a more balanced College at level of the College of Commissioners, has an impact that you have more women, not only now but also in the previous ones. The more in the government, the more impact they have. Balancing at the political level, the College, is also very important.

	Do you experience the influence of President von der Leyen? (political)
EC official 1	
EC official 2	
EC official 3	
EC official 4	
EC official 5 Translated Dutch-English	Absolutely, (...) Of course, there is no sudden change of position for everyone but if there are new vacancies then we do look at that gender equality now. Because that has to pass our Cabinet and Ms. von der Leyen, I think that this has a trickle-down effect but little by little.
EC official 6	I think it is very short the time to see because it has been for one year. She is been appointing women, also the image of a woman as a President is also very important and powerful for sure. I think to measure the impact of her policies, we need to wait a bit. (10sec) It is not something came all of a sudden in process. The Commission engaged in this already some time.
EC official 7	Of course, she is the Commissioner. All the members are handling the different files, we have our own responsibilities, and we are working with the DGs on the different policies and legislation in my case. But that has to be approved and greenlighted by the Commissioner and then that needs to go to the Vice-President so there is a whole hierarchy of decision making in the Commission. Absolutely, that has changed completely. Working in gender equality before was supposed to be a women's issue, nobody is really interested. No it is a top priority and we had a strategy, not only gender but all the other equality areas as well. We see that the way that we discuss with the other colleagues in the Commission, in the meetings before we adopt an initiative, when I bring up equality matters, people will listen and take on board which was not the case before, not at all. So, this Commission, von der Leyen-Commission, has changed the attitude on gender equality enormously.
EC official 8	I think because she pushed so much with the female quotas, it is a condition and we have to stick on this, we can say a bit later to this. There is a reflex now, if you want to do something now, for example you want to organise a big conference and you want to invite the President or even if she is not invited, you cannot have a panel with five men. This is new. Before it was like okay if there are great speakers, and they are all men. Now you know you would be judged and criticised.
EC official 9	von der Leyen is not the first person, I worked with Juncker before and he very insisted on wanting a balanced College but he did not get one although. Because he cannot force member states to (1sec) and if too many member states propose men, he does not have enough candidates to choose from. So I think von der Leyen was more successful, partly because she is the first female President and partly because time has moved in those five years, the world has changed a little bit. So I think we will see a reflection of the member states, of their own public

	<p>opinion. You know you can't live in a backhood world anymore. Everyone wants a balance.</p> <p>Yes and that is exactly what Juncker did actually. He said if you do not propose me a woman, you will not get the portfolio you wanted. That is exactly he did. And the one that was successful with this was Belgium. Because they were talking about, I think it was already then Reynders. And he insisted no I wanted Marianne Thyssen and if you give me her, you can get the employment portfolio. Otherwise, I will give you something else. So, he did use that.</p> <p>I think as part of her platform that she ran on as a President was making gender equality on of the spotlight-issue in the Commission. She did already come forward with the gender equality strategy that we have already presented. So I think she is following that promise and you see it quite dominantly in the policy. I think one area that we are still lacking is in our own HR because we were also promising a new HR-strategy which still has not happened which has partly to do with Covid, partly due to political unwillingness here and there. We are two years in the new mandate and we still have no new HR-strategy. Because one of the things we still really need to do is to reform our HR-strategy notably for protecting women who suffer harassment sexual or psychological. That is one of the things that I think personally really need to change.</p>
EC official 10	<p>Yes I think it is very good. Personally, it was a very positive thing for me to see the first women President after 30 years. We've been waiting a long time. That was very positive and I think it is positive too that we got so many women Commissioners. I am not always sure, that's a question of the organisation of the Commission, everybody is so well-employed. But that's part of the problem of having 27 different Commissioners and trying to find portfolios for them and so on. Especially now, my sense is probably that we have too much Vice-Presidents but anyway that is another issue that is not related to gender.</p>
EC official 11	

	Do you think that it would be a good idea to have full gender balance in the College in the future as well?
EC official 1	
EC official 2	
EC official 3	
EC official 4	
EC official 5 Translated Dutch-English	<p>Personally, I don't think it should be absolutely 50-50, that it should still be about people's competences and qualities. But I do think that this should be pushed more, because very many women these days, even if they are competent and capable, still get fewer opportunities, certainly in the political world.</p> <p>If she stays on in the next term, she will certainly ask for this again. We started with an almost gender balance and then the Irish Commissioner had to resign and then another man was proposed and she did say 'no, I don't want that, I want a man'. She succeeded in doing so; she is strict about that. That is high on her agenda. Of course, if another president comes along in five years' time, he can undo everything. I do think that something is starting to happen in large organisations like the institutions and that this cannot be undone so easily.</p>
EC official 6	
EC official 7	
EC official 8	<p>I definitely think so there should be this requirement because whether we want it or not. I think it helps in changing the mindset. The more women you see, the more you start thinking okay. It is your boss so the respect is gained and there is, how can I say it ... If there are women in leadership positions, the people that work for them adapt their thinking too. At the same time, I know of Commissioners that might be women, but they work in a not so progressive mindset. So, it really has to do but the person as well, how they choose to manage their team.</p> <p>I think because she pushed so much with the female quotas, it is a condition and we have to stick on this, we can say a bit later to this. There is a reflex now, if you want to do something now, for example you want to organise a big conference and you want to invite the President or even if she is not invited, you cannot have a panel with five men. This is new. Before it was like okay if there are great speakers, and they are all men. Now you know you would be judged and criticised.</p>
EC official 9	<p>It is not regulated by legislation but it is was Juncker asked and von der Leyen did the same. They asked for two candidates, one male and one female from each member state. But sometimes the member states nevertheless only send one candidate. Cause it is also a delicate political balance back home in the member states, we do recognise that, that is also part of their government-formation process sometimes. That is why it happened that way.</p>

EC official 10	
EC official 11	<p>Yes why not? But I think we also have ... these rules are always have to be sort of politically set. I think the best way is that the President does it. I don't think you should entrail them in the Treaty or something like that. Because then tomorrow people will argue ... It is part of the change to be mature about diversity in general. You cannot get the benefits of diversity if you translate everything in diversity targets. Because then you have a quantitative target for blacks, a quantitative target for Muslims, a quantitative target for orthodox, a quantitative target for LGBTQTI... So diversity is good including for religion, including for LGBTQTI but then if a specific group ... if you start to (1sec) pieces then the only objective becomes how to ensure to fill the targets. So it has to be women participation is an important structure element to be addressed. Quantitative targets politically set are an important instrument but we should not become slaves of the instrument. Because the whole composition of any group will just be (1sec) target. It is important to have diversity, more than just gender.</p>

	Would it be a good idea to implement the Female Talent Development programme in the cabinets?
EC official 1	
EC official 2	
EC official 3	
EC official 4	
EC official 5 Translated Dutch-English	There are a lot of people here who have not been permanently appointed, so they are actually in a different trajectory and they often come from outside for five years, for the mandate of the President or the Commissioner. I think we have less time for such long-term trajectories to develop our careers a bit more.
EC official 6	I think for the cabinets it is very difficult to do. Yes it would be a good idea but the workload is as such and there is much less flexibility. In the DGs they can take one day off to take the course but in the cabinets this is harder. But ideally yes it would be a good idea. The problem is the selection of the people who go to these programs, is already been done in the DGs and sometimes it is already confident people who are selected to go there. So sometimes people who do need to boost their self-confidence. (10sec) A lot of women are very valid and very intelligent but they have a lack of confidence. What is important is that who recognized and support them, for sure. But also to give them the possibility to try it out themselves. You have these kind of programs where those who are chosen are already the ones who sort of emerged. Because very often they are the ones speak out in public. It really depends what you want to do it with it. If it is about learning management skills fine. But if it is about fostering talent that are hidden in people and you would not otherwise find. I am not sure that at least, how it is applied now, from what I have seen, the best way. I think it would be probably best to give all the people the possibility to apply and go through a selection panel and then decide whether to go or not. Because what I have seen is that from the time being all the people were already Deputy so already in a management part where chose to participate in these programs.
EC official 7	
EC official 8	
EC official 9	The problem with the cabinets is that temporary jobs, they are five years and linked to politicians. I think there it is hard. What von der Leyen did like she wanted gender balance cabinets and that is a good step because that forces politicians to make this choices. But at the end of the day the politicians make their choices. So I am not sure if you can force a particular candidate on someone. It has to be someone they want to work with.
EC official 10	
EC official 11	

	How is the contact between the DGs and the cabinets?
EC official 1	
EC official 2	
EC official 3	
EC official 4	
EC official 5 Translated Dutch-English	<p>We are in contact with everybody a lot. But of course with the Directors-General, let us say, the top of each DG.</p> <p>Absolutely, we need them absolutely. They are, I should not say, but they are the working bees. They have to get everything done, they have really deep knowledge of the dossiers and we, certainly in (...), have to make decisions about everything. And of course we are not perfectly informed about everything or know many details. So we ask for a lot of time. When (...) has a meeting or has to give a speech, the DGs give the input about the content of those speeches. We then rework it to make it a bit more political or to get the general line we want to keep better into it. But we can't do anything without the DGs who are really specialised in those subjects, so it's a very important cooperation.</p>
EC official 6	I speak to them everyday
EC official 7	
EC official 8	
EC official 9	
EC official 10	
EC official 11	

	Is there a difference in work load between working in a cabinet and working in a DG?
EC official 1	
EC official 2	
EC official 3	
EC official 4	
EC official 5 Translated Dutch-English	I have already worked in DGs and now I have worked for five years in the previous cabinet and now almost a year and a half in this cabinet and it is planned that I will stay here for five years. But of course the rhythm here is very hard. I already know for sure that after these five years I want to go back to a DG or a slightly quieter position to catch my breath a bit, especially now with Covid and the vaccines. (...) was also a dossier I had to work very hard on. Times have been hard and I'm already tired after a year and a half so hopefully I'll stick to this rhythm for the next four years.
EC official 6	<p>It is more stressful and you have to work more, it is true.</p> <p>Here it is more about having a (2sec) view on the project, more closer to the political orientation so you see how the Commissioner thinks so you learn a lot. Especially because the Commissioner has a lot of experience (2sec). You see also what the biggest orientations at the Commission are. Also, from the cabinet of the President which is important. In the DG it is a different work. You do the project, and you really are, let's say, you have the concrete possibility to influence the project. I think it is good to have a mix of but I would probably consider going to a DG afterwards as well. What I want to say is that it really depends on the DG. It is not because you are in a DG that you have a less stressful work. What I mean in DG Competition especially in (2sec), if you are a case manager, what means responsible for a case, you work as much as I work in a cabinet.</p>
EC official 7	
EC official 8	For me, it is a bit the same because I think it was to do with how close to the pressure. I think people in the DG in general, not in my position but in a unit, they have less pressure. I think it is easier to have a work-life balance in that sense. For a cabinet, it is very difficult because you are so close to the political person. It might be a Saturday. I remember when I was in the (...) cabinet, it would be 8 A.M. on a Saturday and the Commissioner would be reading a briefing for Monday. She would call and say why would we say that on page 5, you have to pick up the phone. In a DG you have different layers and there is not so much immediately pressure.

EC official 9	
EC official 10	<p>Yes the cabinet job is a very intense job, it is very close to the political decision making. It is different. I think also if you work at the top of the organisation, you do not have any problem that you have when working in the services. If you have something with your computer it was fixed. But at the same time you pay a price in terms of the hours you have to work and you have to sacrifice for your job. But then again it is probably one of the most interesting experiences that you can have at the Commission, certainly from my point of view. Because I was lucky enough to work in cabinets of Commissioners with different nationalities and so on. So it was a great experience.</p>
EC official 11	