

## **Bachelor Thesis**

The Role of the European Women's Lobby within the European Gender  
Policy Discourse:

In what ways does the European Women's Lobby influence the hege-  
monic gender policy discourse on the topic of violence against women in  
the European Parliament?

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## **Abstract**

This research paper focuses on the role of Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) within the global policy process. Keck and Sikkink (1998) define TANs as international networks that bring together organizations from different national backgrounds based on shared values and principles. The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the biggest European TAN within the context of the gender policy discourse. How the EWL tries to influence the European Union (EU) institutions, with what goal in mind, and how successful it is in establishing influence concerning the issue of violence against women (VAW) within the European Parliament (EP) is being researched. EWL releases from their official website as well as EP resolutions from this parliamentary term will be analyzed with the use of a critical discourse analysis (CDA) and with coding. The strategies accountability and information politics are used the most by the EWL to influence the gender discourse. The goal is to bring attention to special aspects within the discourse and to steer the direction of the agenda setting stage. No direct counter-discourse is being introduced and it mostly follows the same discourse as the EP. The EWL is successful in establishing an influence within the EP on the topic of VAW but only non-linearly, and in the long-term. Information politics is the most successful strategy.

## **List of Abbreviations**

CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
EU	European Union
EP	European Parliament
EWL	European Women's Lobby
NGO	Non-Governmental organization
SQ	Sub Question
TAN	Transnational Advocacy Network
UN	United Nations
VAW	Violence against Women

# 1 Introduction

Even in current democratic states, where women are allowed to vote and are treated equally before the law, inequality and discrimination based on gender remain. The gender pay-gap and the right to abortion are very present in today's media. The recent overturn of *Roe v. Wade*, the legal decision that made abortion possible, in some states of the US, and the massive protests in Iran for gender equality highlight that policies and laws regarding women's rights are still highly debated by policymakers and can be subject to change (Coen-Sanchez et al., 2022 and Afary & Anderson, 2023). Another example of a relapse in gender equality advancements can be found in Afghanistan where women are denied many freedoms after the takeover of the Taliban in 2021 (Sahill, 2023). About 30% of adult women from EU countries have experienced physical and/or sexual violence and 50% have been sexually harassed at least once in their life (European Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). The unsteadiness, the existing inequalities, and dangers women face, demonstrate that gender policies are relevant for all members of society. The political discourse on different women's rights topics, such as the problem of violence against women (VAW), is influenced by many different actors. Analyzing who has power and how this power is being established within the discourse is an essential area of study as it reveals which actors shape or challenge the current gender discourse. This can help with the preservation of women's rights and freedoms.

Protecting and promoting human rights is a core task of the European Union (EU). This involves multiple topics, such as opposing torture, discrimination and promoting rights of children, minorities, and women (European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication, n. d.). A multilevel policy making process with the involvement of many different actors is typical for the EU. The participation of civil society actors in the EU policy cycle is seen as a way to make it more inclusive and more relatable for European citizens. Effectiveness, expertise, and democratic participation increase at a large scale (Kröger, 2008). It is therefore necessary for certain policy fields to include non-governmental actors in the policy making process. Gender policy is one of such fields. The European Parliament (EP) is male dominated with only 39,3% of the Members of the EP being women (EP, 2022). Non-governmental actors that are representing women can increase the inclusiveness and serve as a way to reduce the unequal representation in formal institutions. They have therefore an important role in promoting and protecting women's rights in the policy cycle.

One example of a non-governmental actor that can be involved in the policy process are Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs). Keck and Sikkink (1998) define TANs as net-

works of different types of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that come together based on shared values. Those values are the motivation and the guidelines for the network. The most important goal of TANs is to shape public opinion and political discourse and to advocate for change in political institutions by raising public awareness or by directly influencing governmental actors. The biggest TAN in the context of gender policies in the EU is the European Women's Lobby (EWL) which represents over 2000 different feminist organizations from 26 EU member states, and 21 non-EU countries from Europe (EWL, 2015).

Even though, throughout the last decades, civil society and its role in transnational policy processes have been widely studied in academia, the role of TANs still misses essential recognition. TANs are a powerful actor in the international civil society as they consist of many different organizations which are working together to promote their goal. Despite this, the impact of TANs on different political discourses has not been studied widely. As TANs are networks between different national and local NGOs, they are inclusive and representative. Inviting TANs instead of single elite civil society organizations to take active part in the policy making process promotes democracy and inclusiveness. Additionally, TANs can represent and advocate for minorities such as women that are underrepresented within official political institutions. All of the facts above emphasize that TANs are a worthy unit of analysis for further research. The involvement of many civil society actors during the whole policy making process is a signature aspect of the EU. Assessing if TANs have influence on the political discourse of the EU will give insights on their importance in international policy processes and their relevance.

The international and European gender rights discourse is a highly present topic in the media and in official institutions. Gender policies play an important role for the EU and the political discourse is shaped by many different actors with different opinion. The gender discourse includes a huge variety of topics. VAW is one example. It is an important topic within this discourse that affects many women globally and is a main focus of discussion for the EWL. Therefore, it holds much importance for this TAN. Such a sensitive topic can lead to different demands and opinion of civil society organizations than of those from formal institutions. As the analysis of the whole gender discourse is not possible with this research paper's resources, VAW is serving as an example of one topic within the discourse that will be used to analyze the influence of the EWL.

With my analysis, I am extending the existing literature on the topic of the involvement of TANs in international policy discourses. This research fills the knowledge gap about the influence of the biggest European TAN in the context of gender policies, the EWL, on the EU. It will be highlighted what strategies the EWL applies to influence the discourse in the EP.

Additionally, it will be studied if the EWL shares the same attitudes towards the gender issue of VAW as the EP, or if it tries to incorporate different ideas into the discourse. The research question “*In what ways does the European Women’s Lobby influence the hegemonic gender policy discourse on the topic of violence against women in the European Parliament?*” will be answered.

In the theory chapter, the EU gender policy process and discourse will be explained. Additionally, a definition for TANs and its strategies will be elaborated on. The EWL will be introduced as well as the problem of VAW and its extent. Concluding the chapter, the sub questions that are employed to answer the research question will be stated. The methodology chapter touches upon the case selection, the method of data analysis, and the selection of textual data. In the analysis, the results from the coding will be presented following the order of the sub questions. The discussion part includes limitations of the used theoretical concepts and the results of this research. In the conclusion, the main points of the research are summarized and possibilities for further research are presented.

## 2 Theory

In the following chapter, the theoretical background that is being used for the analysis and to answer the research question is presented. Firstly, the EU gender discourse is explained and a definition for TANs as well as which strategies they apply is provided. Secondly, the structures and the history of the EWL is introduced. A definition of the issue of VAW and the extent of the issue is stated. Based on this theoretical framework, the sub questions are formulated.

### 2.1 The EU Gender Policy Process and Discourse

The EU policy process is a multilevel and complex procedure. Jones (1970) developed the concept of the policy cycle. In the context of the EU, the stages which policies go through are agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation and policy evaluation. Civil society organizations are an essential actor in the EU gender policy cycle (Buonanno & Nugent, 2020). EU institutions are obliged to “maintain an open, transparent, and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society” (Art. 11(2) TEU). The civil society is included with the aim to represent European citizens and increase the democratic legitimacy and accountability of the EU. The specialized expertise of civil society actors leads to more effective policies. Practical advantages that result with the addition of NGOs into the policy making process are that different tasks can be transferred to relieve workload of EU agencies. Especially for the EP which has, compared to the other EU institutions, a rather weak position in the policy making process, the cooperation with civil society actors is essential (Kröger, 2008). A constant interaction between EU institutions and civil society actors is created through multiple collaborations at different policy stages. Especially in the context of the agenda setting and implementation stage, the EU benefits from the involvement of civil society organizations greatly (Debusscher & Trues, 2009).

Gender policy, as a part of the EU anti-discrimination policy, falls under the field of social policy. Already in the European Economic Community, gender equality played a role and was mentioned in the context of equal pay and equality in other work-related issues such as hiring, promotion, and working conditions in the Treaty of Rome (Zippel, 2004; Art. 157 TFEU). However, this had more economic motivations than the goal of promoting human rights. The sole linkage between gender discrimination to the internal market lasted until the Commission proposed a new, broader approach in 1990. It suggested linking gender issues to more than economic policies which can be described as the strategy of ‘gender mainstreaming’. Instead, gender equality and the impact on women have to be taken into consid-

eration in the context of all policy fields and during all policy stages. However, the new approach was only taken seriously after Members of the EP and women's organizations advocated for the mainstreaming of gender equality into all policy fields (Stratigaki, 2005). The EU accession of Austria, Finland, and Sweden in 1995 also acted in favor of the new strategy as these countries promoted a broader gender equality approach in the policy making process (Buonanno & Nugent, 2020). This all led to gender mainstreaming being formally adopted by the Commission in the Treaty of Amsterdam with the statement that the EU "shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women" (Art. 8 TFEU). To fulfill this goal the EU takes a 'dual-track approach' with the strategy of gender mainstreaming, meaning gender policies bound to other policy fields, and positive action, referring to standalone gender policies (Debusscher & True, 2009). In both parts of this approach, civil society organizations play an important role in the policy process.

The most extensive international legal framework covering the issue of VAW is 'the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence 2011' (hereafter: the Istanbul Convention). It is a treaty that combines human rights and criminal law aspects relevant for the prevention, prohibition, and punishment of acts of VAW. A victim-centered approach is applied with the principles of equality and of non-discrimination being focused on. To this day, the Istanbul Convention is seen as one of the most inclusive and groundbreaking treaties in international law on the topic of VAW (Jurasz, 2015). The Istanbul Convention was signed by all EU member states individually and by the EU itself. However, the ratification has not been completed yet by seven member states: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia. Caused by disagreements between members of the European Council, the ratification of the Istanbul Convention has been only a topic of discussion and has so far not been ratified on EU-level (Balogh, 2020).

## 2.2 Transnational Advocacy Networks

One way NGOs try to influence the policy process is through TANs. TANs are networks between civil society organizations that come together based on shared values and principles. They are organized to exchange knowledge and to promote their norms and causes globally. The strategic mobilization of information gives TANs the ability "to persuade, pressure, and gain leverage over much more powerful organizations and governments" (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p.2). Therefore, TANs can have a high impact on policy outcomes. In addition to influencing the policy making process, TANs aim at transforming the nature of the discourse. Therefore, both political institutions and public opinion are targets of influence for TANs.



They want to promote their causes by redefining the policy debates and by attracting more attention (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). In a current globalizing civil society, TANs gain more and more importance and influence in international policy discourses as they dispose over high resources in staff, money, and knowledge. The combination of a global outlook with the involvement of local organizations and movements makes them an inclusive and reliable civil society actor (Sperling et al., 2001).

TANs employ multiple strategies to influence political institutions and the public (Lang, 2009). As this paper only focuses on the influence of the EWL on the EP, strategies used by TANs to shape public opinion will not be discussed further. Keck and Sikkink (1999) distinguish between four types of strategies used by TANs: information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics. Information politics refers to the efficient information exchange both within the network and between the network and other actors. Here, TANs mainly have the function of an alternative source of information and data. TANs already interpret the facts as 'right' or 'wrong' before consulting a political institution to persuade it. Symbolic politics include the use of frames which are applied to explain and interpret events. Issues are being framed in a way that serves the TANs goals and values. Frames are especially important in the EU agenda setting stage, as they can draw attention to a certain issue (Princen, 2011). Pressuring and persuading powerful political actors are part of leverage politics. TANs pressure political institutions either with the use of moral reasons and by employing 'naming-and-shaming' or with the use of material leverages such as money or the providence with information. Accountability politics refer to TANs pointing out the gap between policy goals or committed principles and the reality to the public. Like this, political institutions are indirectly pressured to work harder and more focused on their goals (Keck and Sikkink 1999).

### 2.3 The European Women's Lobby

The biggest European TAN in the context of women's rights is the EWL. The EWL promotes equal rights and freedom of choice for all women and girls. Women's participation on all aspects of life and being free from sexism and violence is also a central objective (EWL, 2022e). The EWL was initiated by different feminist organizations in 1987 out of the need to strengthen women's representation in the EU which was growing fast in policy competences at that time. In 1990, the EWL was officially founded with the formal and financial support of the Commission. The EWL applies institutional lobbying as well as influencing public discussion. The headquarter is located in Brussels. It perceives its main roles as the provider of information to EU decision- and policymakers as well as the bridge for the participation of

women's organizations at the institutional EU level (EWL, 2015). A statute and an additional protocol about the internal rules formalize the main guidelines and the structure of the TAN. A general assembly consisting of delegates from all member organizations meet every year to discuss important decision-makings and to elect a board of administration every two years. The board of administration votes for an executive committee and the EWL president, also for a two-year term. The executive committee prepares the draft for the annual work plan, the annual budget, makes decision regarding request for membership and regulates its finances as well as external relations. Many of the executive committee's decisions and documents have to be approved by the board of administration to be officially adopted. The president of the executive committee chairs the meetings between the different bodies of the network and organizes external events. The financial monitoring and supervision are being carried out by an elected treasurer. Daily office and organizational work are being completed by the EWL secretariat (EWL, 2014).

The EWL is composed of three different types of members: full members, supporting organizations and honorary members. Full members are national or European-wide umbrella organizations of feminist NGOs from the EU, the European Free Trade Association, and countries in the process of accession to the EU (EWL, 2014). Currently, 48 full member coordination organizations are part of the network which together represent over 2000 different feminist organizations. Only full members have the right to vote in the general assembly and to present candidates for the bodies of the EWL (EWL, n.d.). Supporting organizations have the same goal of promoting women's rights. Honorary members are people invited by the executive committee to attend meetings as observers and to express consultative opinion. To join the EWL as a full member, an application has to be sent and approved by the executive committee and the board of administration. The standards set in the statute have to be met and a membership fee has to be paid (EWL, 2014).

In the year 2016, the EWL had an annual budget of 1.2 million euros. Approx. 80% of this budget was funded by the European Commission. The other 20% came from the members, governments, individuals, and foundations such as the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (EWL, 2018).

## 2.4 The Issue of Violence against Women

One main vision of the EWL is that women live a life free from oppression and violence.

The United Nation's (UN) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993) defines VAW as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women" (UN, 1993, Art. 1). Gender-based violence refers to violence that "is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately" (UN CEDAW Committee, 1992). As becomes clear, the term of VAW and its broad definition includes many different forms of violence and abuses of rights and freedoms such as domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, etc. The EU does not have its own definition for VAW and relies on the stated definitions from the UN (EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). The extent of the problem of VAW and the dimension of affected women in the EU are difficult to measure as many cases remain unreported. A survey conducted in 2014 by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, has revealed that one in three women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since she was 15 years old. Only a third of the victims have reported the violence to the police or another organization. In the same survey, 5% of women have stated that they have been raped at least once since the age of 15. It becomes clear that the problem affects a wide number of women and has a great importance within feminist organizations and the gender policy discourse. A very recent study, released in June 2023, has revealed that one third of 1000 questioned German men, from the ages of 18 to 35, admitted to having used violence in a relationship before and finds VAW acceptable (FOCUS, 2023). These are frightening numbers that prove that the issue is far from being resolved even in democracies and is still of great importance on the EU policy making level.

To answer the research question on how the EWL addresses the EP concerning the gender discourse, the employed strategies based on Keck and Sikkink (1999) have to be determined. As the gender discourse includes a variety of different topics, this paper will only focus on documents that are about the issue of VAW as one important gender issue discussed in the discourse. Therefore, the following Sub-question (SQ) is formulated:

*SQ1: What strategies are used by the EWL to shape the gender policy discourse on the topic of VAW within EU institutions?*

The establishment of the EWL was initiated by the Commission which even today is still the main donor of the network (EWL, 2015). However, the EWL seems to have a different opinion on several gender issues than the EU (Lang, 2009). The EP has a special role in the cooperation with civil society actors and in the promotion of gender equality. As the only directly

elected EU institution, the EP presents itself as the center of democratic legitimacy and a transparent forum for civil society organizations to voice their issues (Neuhold, 2005). The rather weak power position of the EP within the EU raises an interest for this institution to establish relations with civil society organizations (Buonanno & Nugent, 2020). With the involvement of civil society actors, the European Commission is more likely to take the EP's opinion into consideration. Civil society organizations profit from a dialogue with the EP as it invites them to the table of the institutional framework of the EU. A close relation between the EP and civil society organizations therefore raises the power of both actors (Kröger, 2008). In the context of women's rights, the EP has historically sided more often with civil society organizations than with the Commission (Stratigaki, 2005). Due to limited time and resources, the influence of the EWL on the whole EU discourse on the gender issue of VAW cannot be researched. The EP with its special role within the discourse and its relation to civil society organizations serves as an enlightening unit of analysis. If the EWL has influence within the EU discourse it will be especially noticeable within the EP as it serves as a forum for civil society actors to voice their issues and actively maintains a close relationship with them. Seeing if the EWL aligns with the EP's discourse on gender issues, or if it challenges the current dominant discourse and tries to develop a counter-discourse, is important for answering the research question. As a consequence, it becomes clear for what purpose the strategies are being employed and what goal the EWL has.

*SQ2: Does the EWL follow the hegemonic gender discourse on the topic of violence against women of the EP or does it try to establish a counter-discourse?*

The connection between the EWL releases and adopted EP resolutions will reveal the strength of the influence of the EWL on the EP discourse. It will also reveal if the EWL has a power position. Analyzing if the EP touches upon topics shortly after the EWL draws attention to them, or if the EP follows the demands stated by the EWL, is important as it will reveal if the strategies employed by the EWL are successful in either supporting the current discourse or challenging it. The influence of the discourse is therefore mentioned in the context of the influence on the agenda setting stage.

*SQ3: To what extent does the EWL influence the EP's discourse on the gender issue of VAW?*

After having presented the applied methodology, SQ1 – SQ3 will be answered in the sub chapters in the analysis. The order of the SQ is in accordance with the chapters in the analysis. The answers of the SQs combined, will lead to the response to the research question.

### 3 Methodology

In this chapter, I will give reasons for the case selection, and explain the method of data analysis and textual data selection. A critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be conducted with the use of coding tables.

#### 3.1 Case Selection

The EWL has been chosen as the focus of this analysis as it is the biggest existing TAN on the EU level that deals with topics concerning women's rights and focuses on the whole gender discourse. The foundation of the EWL was supported by the Commission. Even today, it is the main funder of the network (EWL, 2015). This leads to the assumption that the EU institutions value it as an important and useful civil society organization for the policy process as it is provided with financial support. The EWL is therefore a trustworthy and serious network for the EU and one can assume that it plays a role in the policy process. It will be useful to assess the influence of a big TAN that has the support of the official institutions as the results of an important TAN can be generalized and adapted for other TANs.

Dealing with the gender discourse in general, but specifically the topic of VAW, is typical for a TAN as it includes issues that are heavily shaped by norms and values. Feminist principles are the basis for the EWL and its reason to advocate for the combat against VAW (EWL, 2022e).

#### 3.2 Method of Data Analysis

To answer the research question *“In what ways does the European Women’s Lobby influence the hegemonic gender policy discourse on the topic of violence against women in the European Parliament?”*, a textual analysis in form of a CDA of official documents from the EWL and the EP will be conducted.

Textual analysis is the study of the production of meaning and structure in texts. With a discourse analysis, the used language, and its relation to constructing the reality is being studied. It lies within the scientific paradigm of Social Constructivism which defines knowledge as something that is created for each individual through social interactions (Given, 2008). Written as well as spoken language has a big influence on politics. There are different definitions of the term political discourse. Some scholars use it to refer to the language of politicians in political contexts and those texts and talks by other agents that are directed at politicians (Wilson, 2015 and Dunmire, 2021). Others point out that the political discourse is shaped by way more people than just politicians such as citizens and the media (Van Dijk, 1997). This

paper only focuses on the gender policy discourse within the EP, and how it is shaped by the EWL, therefore limiting the definition to the first stated one. However, it has to be mentioned that the discourse is created by way more actors than addressed in this research paper.

A special form of discourse analysis is a CDA which is used to research “the intersection of discourse, ideology, and power” (Given, 2008, p. 145). How power relations between different actors are expressed through language in written texts and transcripts of oral data is revealed. The dominant ideology of the discourse is also important (Given, 2008). According to CDA, discourses are marked by the Gramscian idea of hegemony and counter-hegemony. The hegemonic bloc of the discourse, consisting of certain elite institutions, dominate the discourse with their ideology, positions, perspectives, and values. The counter-hegemonic bloc tries to influence the discourse based on a different ideology than the elites. There is a constant battle for power between these two groups of actors (Donoghue, 2018). With the use of a CDA, the different ideologies within a discourse and which one is dominant can be revealed (Erjavec & Erjavec, 2009). The focus of a CDA is therefore on the power relations within the discourse (Aydin-Düzgit, 2016).

In context of this paper, a CDA will be used in SQ1 to study the ways the EWL tries to influence the gender policy discourse on the topic of VAW via the use of strategies. SQ2 will reveal whether the EWL shares the same gender policy discourse as the EU and is a part of the hegemonic bloc or if it tries to establish a counter-discourse by introducing different topics. Additionally, it is being measured in SQ3 whether the EWL has any form of influence or power position in the discourse within the EP.

The analysis of the documents will be done through coding. Coding is a research tool that is used to detect the meaning of texts. Codes are short, essence capturing phrases that are used to summarize the texts to their main messages. The goal is to find patterns within the data and to group the codes to overarching categories to further narrow down the meaning in texts (Saldana, 2016). Coding can be done either only based on the discourse topics (see e.g., Erjavec et al., 2009) and/or the discursive strategies (see e.g., Estol et al., 2018) and/or the linguistic means (see e.g., Aydin-Düzgit, 2016).

Coding is usually done in multiple cycles to improve the tables throughout the process. The first cycle of coding is done based on codes that are expected to be relevant for the analysis of the texts. Every following cycle focuses on narrowing down the meaning and on concentrating on the most important concepts (Saldana, 2016). The analysis of this research paper is based on two rounds of coding. Like this, the preliminary coding table is being improved by a second analysis without taking up too much time. After two rounds of coding, the tables 1 and 2 have been created which can be found in the appendix.

Table 1 is based on the type of strategies identified by Keck and Sikkink (1999). How the strategies were employed in practice was extended with the first round of coding.

Table 2 is divided into topics and demands. The topics were categorized following the UN definition on VAW into mental, physical, and sexual harm. This was extended with the topic of institutionalized harm. Some sub-codes are interconnected and can be sorted to multiple code groups. Human trafficking, for example, is placed within the mental harm category because the act of human trafficking itself mostly affects women mentally. However, it is also closely related to sexual exploitation and physical violence. Another example is rape which was sorted to the category of sexual harm, but it also affects victims mentally and physically. It is important to keep in mind that the problem of VAW is a multidimensional issue with a variety of facets that cannot be put within one table.

To code all the documents, the software ATLAS.TI is used.

### 3.3 Textual Data Selection

Documents from the EWL about the topic of VAW, namely reports, statements, and press releases from their official website from the time span of the start of the current parliamentary term to the start of this thesis (July 2019 – March 2023) will be the basis for the analysis of SQ1. The EWL documents will be coded according to the strategies which are being used. Table 1 demonstrates how the strategies are being operationalized so that they can be analyzed and coded within the documents.

For answering SQ2, adopted EP resolutions from the same time span that include the word 'gender' or 'women' as well as 'violence' in their title or that focus on specific forms of VAW, such as female genital mutilation, will be used in addition to the EWL releases. The main contents of the EWL documents and the EP resolutions will be coded according to table 2. Then, the findings will be compared to discover if they are part of the same discourse bloc or not. If the EWL focuses on different topics and demands than the EP, it is part of the counter-hegemonic bloc. The content from the EWL and EP documents will be compared to reveal if they follow the same concepts or not. VAW is a multidimensional problem and affects many other policy fields, for example foreign and migration policies. This leads to VAW being mentioned in many resolutions in a few paragraphs. Including all of the resolutions that mention VAW in the analysis would exceed the limitations of this paper. Therefore, only resolutions that specifically focus on VAW will be included.

SQ3 is about the influence of the EWL on the EP's gender discourse. To assess this, the coded contents of the documents will be analyzed according to, for example, when the EP addresses a topic that was mentioned before by the EWL. Therefore, the release dates and chronological order of the documents will be taken into consideration. The influence of the

EWL will thus be measured according to their ability to affect the agenda setting stage. It will be analyzed what strategies were used in correlation to the influenced topics. This will reveal if the employed strategies of the EWL are successful in drawing the EP's attention to a certain topic and if the EWL is a relevant actor in the policy discourse.

Both the EWL documents as well as the EP resolutions were chosen for the analysis as they are texts that were solely produced by those two actors. As the EP releases other documents often jointly with other EU institutions or only approves or rejects texts from the Commission, resolutions serve as the form of official texts only produced by the EP. Documents released only from certain Committees or Delegations are also not included as they do not represent the EP's opinion as a whole. A full list of the documents that are used for the analysis can be found in the tables 3 and 4 in the appendix.



## 4 Analysis

In the following, the results from the textual analysis of the documents will be presented. The order of the sub questions will be followed. Therefore, firstly, the strategies used by the EWL are explained. Secondly, a comparison between the topics and demands formulated by the EWL and the EP are presented. The analyzed influence the EWL has on the EP discourse in the context of the problem of VAW is elaborated on afterwards.

### 4.1 Strategies used by the EWL

To understand if the EWL is successful in having influence within the EP gender discourse on VAW, it is essential to analyze what goal the EWL is trying to achieve and what stage on the policy cycle the EWL tries to have an influence. This will be discovered by assessing what type of strategies are being used and by answering SQ1 of this research paper. The strategies of the TAN have been coded based on coding table 1 and will be analyzed based on Keck and Sikkink (1999). The results are presented in table 3 in the appendix.

#### 4.1.1 Information Politics

Information politics is a strategy that is used extensively by the EWL. Both codes “labeling information as right or wrong” and “presenting statistical data” combined have been used 36 times. In the documents, the EWL presents statistical data assessed and collected by trustworthy sources, such as Eurostat (EWL, 2023a) or from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (EWL, 2021a). Overall, statistics were cited in over 10% of the applied codes. One reason why data was included so frequently, is to emphasize the importance and the extent of the problem of VAW. Presenting how many women are affected by the problem is a strategy which aims at leading to quicker action being taken at the political level. The EWL therefore tries to draw attention to the problem itself and why it has to be discussed.

The network also collects its own data. In 2020, the EWL published its own report about the developments in European countries after the ratification and implementation of the Istanbul Convention (EWL, 2021a). Its results are based on desk research and a questionnaire which was answered by EWL observatory experts. The collection of own data is a way of the network to prove to the EU institutions that it has expertise. The production of more knowledge also leads to the drawing of attention to new issues. Additionally, the EWL uses the report to back up their own demands and to seem more convincing. All of this makes the EWL appear as a suited civil society actor that could be included in the policy process.

In the context of “labeling information as right or wrong”, the EWL does not contradict or deny information presented by the EU institutions. However, it hides its own opinion and demands

often in the form of facts and right information. In other words, it does not state that certain information is wrong, but it labels its opinion as right information. One example is the statement that “any demand for prostitution encourages sexual exploitation” (EWL, 2022c). This is a debatable statement as different studies illustrate that it depends on how prostitution is being legalized and regulated is linked to the level of sexual exploitation, not prostitution in itself (Cho et al., 2013 and Batsyukova, 2007). In the document, the EWL does not provide a source to prove their claim. This makes it clear that the EWL partially presents its opinion and demands, such as the ban of prostitution, in form of facts and labels them as right information. As a result, they appear more persuasive and their arguments and demands gain agreement.

#### 4.1.2 Symbolic Politics

Compared to the other types of strategies, symbolic politics is used the least. No personal stories or a frequently reoccurring frames are used in the documents. This has multiple reasons. On the one hand, the EWL tries to keep its texts short and comprehensible for the public. On the other hand, by often mentioning how many women are affected by the problem of VAW and by not focusing on personal stories, the extent of the problem is being emphasized instead of individual issues.

One part of symbolic politics the EWL uses is the inclusion of direct quotes from EWL delegates, such as the president or the secretary general. This conveys a level of expertise to the institutions. The position the EWL has on certain issues and topics also becomes evident as the statements are short and people that directly represent the EWL clearly state their and the network’s opinion. It also makes the texts more emotional. Strong statements, such as “[t]his threatens the security of half of the EU population, affecting over 250 million women and girls. We must eradicate VAW now, there is no more time to wait“ (EWL, 2021c) for example, are often used in the quotations. As can be seen, this statement combines emotional language, part of symbolic politics, with the mentioning of statistics, part of information politics. Many strategies are used in combination to maximize their effect on the readers and on the policymakers.

Most emotional statements rely more on linguistic strategies than those of symbolic politics. These were not included in the coding, as they are not part of Keck and Sikkink’s (1999) theoretical framework and will not be further analyzed in this thesis. They are worth mentioning though, as they are another strategy used by the EWL to show the importance of the topic of VAW and appeals to the public and the EU institutions.

### 4.1.3 Leverage Politics and Accountability Politics

Leverage politics are strategies that are directly addressed towards the EU institutions. They include naming-and-shaming and urging the EU bodies to take action. Especially the Commission and the Parliament are being directly called out by the EWL to act in a certain way, for example to advocate for a stronger EU Directive on the topic of VAW. The pressuring of EU institutions by directly requesting them to do something in particular is being done in 7% of the codes.

Accountability politics and leverage politics are tightly connected. Naming-and-shaming the EU institutions can be a part of both forms of strategies. Calling the Commission out, for example for not fulfilling its role as a leader, holds it accountable while also increasing the leverage towards it to fulfil its promises and its tasks.

With an overall usage of 20% of the codes, accountability politics is the strategy that is being applied the most by the EWL. Both forms of feedback, praising and naming-and-shaming, are used in almost every document. Praising and presenting support towards actions such as towards certain EP resolutions, is being done more than twice as often as stating disappointment or disapproval. This reveals that the EWL tries to have a good relationship by not shaming the institutions too often and by mainly reinforcing those activities that the EWL sees as accomplishments through positive feedback. Leverage is being increased by presenting best practice examples and by emphasizing on what the institutions are capable of doing in the context of fighting against VAW. This becomes especially evident in the report published by the EWL on the improvements in different EU countries after the ratification of the Istanbul Convention (EWL, 2021a). Countries that have not yet ratified the Istanbul Convention are indirectly pressured by the presentation of positive change in other regions. The EU institutions are being shown how beneficial an EU wide ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the Commission would be. As a result, the EWL has a good relation to the EU institutions. The EWL hopes to increase its possibility of being heard by institutions and of being included as a consultant in agenda setting and implementation discussions.

### 4.1.4 Concluding Remarks

The main functions of the strategies applied by the EWL are to emphasize the extent and the importance of the problem of VAW and to underline the expertise of the network. SQ1 (*What strategies are used by the EWL to shape the gender policy discourse on the topic of VAW within EU institutions?*) can be answered as all of the strategies mentioned by Keck and Sikkink (1999) are being used and are often interconnected. The number of usages of information and accountability politics outweighs the one of symbolic and leverage politics. Being part of the implementation process and a consultant is one goal of the EWL. The main focus

of the EWL is however the agenda setting stage. Putting certain topics and demands on the radar of the EU institutions is the ultimate goal. This becomes evident by focusing on statistical numbers and on best practice examples to demonstrate to the institutions what can be done to resolve the problem of VAW.

## 4.2 Comparison between the EWL and EP Discourse on the Topic of VAW

Analyzing whether the EWL tries to influence the EP by being part of the same hegemonic discourse through touching upon the same topics and formulating similar demands, or if it tries to establish a counter discourse with different demands and topics, is essential for answering the research question. The results for SQ2 will provide answers for what form of influence the EWL tries to have. This will then be important for assessing if the EWL is able to achieve this influence on the EP. The results can be found in the appendix in the tables 6 and 7.

### 4.2.1 Topics

Overall, both the EWL and the EP see VAW as an important issue that needs to be combated with more measures to guarantee the protection of women.

Concerning the concrete topics addressed by the EWL and the EP, several differences can be pointed out. A large discrepancy in codes exists concerning institutionalized violence. The EP touches upon this topic in 13% of the codes while the EWL only mentions it under 5%. The EP sees VAW as “rooted in gender stereotypes, heteropatriarchal structures, power asymmetries and structural and institutional inequalities” (EP, 2021a). This emphasis that VAW is an issue that is caused by institutionalized sexism is mentioned in 4% of the codes throughout the resolutions while the EWL only mentions it in 1%. The EP sees VAW therefore more of a problem that needs to be focused on in the context of other policy fields and as a part of overall gender inequality. The subcode “access to justice, health and support services” is also applied more by the EP than the EWL. Again, this shows that the EP sees VAW as an issue that is multidimensional by referring to other policy fields, such as healthcare, that are important for preventing and dealing with the issue. The EWL on the other hand views VAW as a topic that needs special attention, as indicated by often using codes that refer to the topic of VAW alone such as sexual exploitation (11%), domestic violence (5%), and online harassment (7%).

In other words, the EWL focuses more on the problem of VAW itself whereas the EP addresses more the causes surrounding the issue and other areas of the victims' life that are affected. Only the subcode ‘structural inequality in economic life’ from the category ‘institu-

tionalized violence' is used similarly. Another commonality can be seen with regards to the code category 'mental harm' which is touched upon by both the EWL and the EP in around 10% of the texts. For both of the two actors the subcode 'online violence' is the most used sub-code in the category.

'Sexual harm' is the category touched upon the least by the EP (5%) but the most by the EWL (15%). The EP does not focus on one specific aspect of sexual harm but addresses all subcodes almost equally. The EWL however especially focuses on the topic of sexual exploitation with roughly 10% of codes being assigned to this subcode. Once more, this highlights that the EWL concentrates more on specific issues in the discourse and not the overall problem of VAW like the EP does. This also becomes evident when looking at the category of physical harm. It is slightly more addressed by the EP than by the EWL. Both actors touch upon the topic of domestic violence the most in this category. A striking difference is that for the EP 'violence in childhood' is the second most used code in that category. It becomes clear that the EP sees VAW as an overarching issue which also includes violence against children (independent from the gender) and custody rights. Even though the EWL also mentions the issue of violence against children, they specifically only refer to girls. Again, the EP has a wider approach to the issue and includes many different topics into the discourse.

#### 4.2.2 Demands

Many similarities can be found when taking a look at the demands the EWL and the EP pose. Both favor the introduction of new and stricter regulation over the enforcement of already existing regulations. However, the responsibility of who should propose and implement new regulations is seen differently by the two actors. The EWL encourages the EU institutions to introduce an EU wide legal framework in form of directives that combats against multiple forms of VAW. It sees the EU institutions responsible to establish a common EU wide approach with the same laws applying in all member states in the context of VAW.

The EP appeals more to the member states to draft new national legislation themselves to tackle the issue and to achieve a common standard between them.

The enforcement of the Istanbul Convention is also seen as an important demand by both the EWL and the EP, dedicating around 10% of the codes to this demand. The ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the European Council, as well as by those member states that yet have not done it, is strongly requested. A stronger implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy is by both, the EWL and the EP, not touched upon often. This reveals that both actors see positive action in the form of laws and regulations specifically addressing the problem of VAW as more effective and needed than the mainstreaming of the topic into other policy fields.

The category 'other demands' is also referred to multiple times by both actors throughout the texts. Raising awareness and access to information is being most requested in this category. Following this, are the demands for common definitions and more research. One difference that is striking is that the EP demands more gender sensitive training for staff in the judicial, health, and support system while the EWL does not mention this at all. It becomes clear again that the EP focuses on multiple different areas surrounding VAW and not just the problem itself.

The EP also demands a deeper inclusion of civil society actors and increasing their available funding. It is therefore acting in favor for the EWL by requesting especially the Commission to further support, among others, the EWL. The EWL itself does not demand this as it could come across as unprofessional to publicly request more funding and more involvement. This again supports the results from 4.1 where it is analyzed that presenting a high level of expertise is important for the EWL.

#### 4.2.3 Concluding Remarks

Overall, the EWL tries to gain influence by following the same hegemonic discourse on VAW as the EP. Concerning the touched upon topics, the EP has a wider approach to the issue of VAW and acknowledges the problem as multidimensional and overlapping to other policy fields. The EWL does not deal with other topics than the EP, but it puts a focus on certain issues within the discourse. The goal is therefore to influence the EP by shifting its focus in a certain direction, mainly towards the topic of sexual harm in form of sexual exploitation. This also correlates with the results from 4.1 as the EWL tries to have influence mainly on the agenda setting stage. The EWL therefore does not introduce a counter discourse, but it perceives the problem of VAW more individually.

The stated demands of the EP and the EWL also do not differ on a large scale. Both are requesting a wide variety of demands which especially include more positive action. The responsibility of who should introduce new legislature is however perceived differently. While the EP encourages the member states, the EWL views the EU institutions responsible for introducing new and stricter regulations.

### 4.3 The Influence of the EWL on the EP Discourse

Analyzing whether the EWL has influence on the discourse within the EP in the context of VAW will bring results about TANs' influence on the global policy level. SQ3 will be answered in the following through the assessment of the change in codes concerning topics and demands in the EP and the EWL over time. The results are summarized in the tables 9 – 12 which can be found in the appendix.

Often, the EP and the EWL both release texts about VAW during the same periods of time. In the year 2019 and 2020, only one EWL release and two EP resolutions were published. This could have a variety of reasons, for example other topics surrounding the gender discourse being seen as more urgent.

Since 2021, the gender discourse brought attention again to VAW with the EP releasing four resolutions surrounding the issue and the EWL publishing three press releases and one report. The press releases were either released a few days before, or on the same day as the resolution. It can therefore be assumed that these releases did not influence the resolutions as the texts were chronologically too close together. When looking at the strategies from 4.1 those press releases were aimed at increasing accountability and leverage.

In the year 2019, a press release was published one month before a resolution (EP, 2019; EWL, 2019). No correlations between the topics and demands from these two documents can be found. It can therefore be concluded, that the EWL's press releases do not have a short-term influence on the discourse other than bringing general attention to the topic of VAW in the gender discourse. In the year 2022, no resolutions concerning the topic of VAW were adopted by the EP. During the same time, the EWL released 4 documents, such as press releases and news articles. The newest resolution from the time of this analysis, was adopted in the beginning of 2023. Therefore, the similar release pattern does not always apply or has implications for an influence.

However, when looking at the EWL report from 2021, which was released several months before the first EP resolution on VAW from 2021, influence can be measured (EWL, 2021a, EP 2021a). One element is the inclusion of women with disabilities as a group of women especially vulnerable to violence in the 2021 EP resolutions. In the report, the EWL presents statistics and reasons why women with disabilities are especially vulnerable victims of VAW (EWL, 2021a). Even though, in the resolutions from 2019 and 2020, disabled women were mentioned in numerations of women who are especially vulnerable of VAW, in the resolutions from 2021 the EP dedicates individual passages in the document towards women with disabilities. In the report, the EWL also voices several demands such as the inclusion of

VAW in the list of crimes mentioned in Art. 83(1). This demand was already mentioned by the EP in a resolution from 2019 but not in the resolution from 2020. After the release of the EWL report, the demand was included again. This time, the EP put a special emphasis on this demand by including it in the title (EP, 2021a). Therefore, the report had a significant influence on the direction of the discourse on the topic of VAW in the EP by steering the focus on certain specific demands. However, it has to be mentioned that the topics and demands that were brought to attention by the EWL, were already mentioned by the EP beforehand. These topics and demands were already part of the discourse and not introduced newly by the EWL. The EWL however did put special attention to them.

The code “enforcing already existing regulation” was used less in the resolution from 2019 and 2020 than the code “adopting new regulations”. The difference between the codes has increased again strongly in three out of the four resolutions from 2021. Overall, the percentage of codes used for the demand for an EU-legal framework, which is an important demand of the EWL, increased between the years 2019 and 2023, but not linearly.

Similar results can be recognized when looking at the topic of sexual harm, which is an important focus for the EWL, as became clear in the results from 4.2.1. The overall percentage of codes under the category ‘sexual harm’ used by the EP does not increase linearly over time. However, one resolution dealing with the problem of sexual harassment was adopted in the end of 2021 (EP, 2021b). This has put the particular issue in focus for the first time in this parliamentary term. Again, the discourse was influenced by the EWL by shifting the thematic focus over a longer period of time. However, the subcode ‘sexual exploitation’ which is of great importance for the EWL, does not increase, even in the resolution about sexual harassment. Therefore, no influence on specific topics and only on the general direction of the discourse can be assessed.

The change in topics and demands overtime demonstrate that the EWL has a small influence on the EP discourse over a long period of time. This influence in topics and demands however is only weak, nonlinear, and applies only to the general topics the EWL wants to put on the agenda. Only a few specific aspects posed by the EWL, such as the inclusion of VAW in Art. 83(1) TFEU and the importance of addressing disabled women as vulnerable victims, are able to reach the discourse in the EP. What is worth mentioning, is that these aspects that were included in the EP discourse on VAW, were mentioned in the EWL report from 2020.

Topics and demands voiced in the press releases and statements only reached the EP on a general basis which can be seen by the increase in codes in the category sexual harm. The specific focus the EWL tries to establish in the discourse, such as on sexual exploitation,



does not take place. It can therefore be concluded that the influence of the EWL's press releases on the EP discourse concerning VAW is existent but weak and only on a general level. This does not apply to the report the EWL has published as this document has shown to influence the EP discourse significantly.

To further increase the influence, the EWL should focus on releasing more reports. Concerning the strategies from 4.1, the EWL should start doing more information politics instead of accountability and leverage politics to strengthen the influence.

## 5 Discussion

The analysis poses several limitations surrounding the applied method, the data selection, the theoretical models, and the results. In this section, I will be presenting those limitations and will discuss the implications it has on the veracity of the analysis.

A political discourse is a complex process that is influenced by many different actors and circumstances. The EU institutions are influenced by many civil society actors, national governments, and EU delegates. This makes it difficult to say if the change in topics and demands concerning VAW can be backtracked solely to the EWL or if a different reason for the change exists. However, the EWL is the biggest network combining several civil society organizations in the context of gender issues. It can therefore be summarized that the EWL is an important member in the discourse and the changes are likely resulted by the EWL. Still, it has to be mentioned that other actors influence the topic of VAW as well.

Another main aspect to consider with the data selection, is that the EWL does not only use releases of different forms of texts on their website as a way to influence the EP. Other activities that aim at influencing the EU institutions, such as demonstrations and social media campaigns, were not considered in the analysis. This means that the measured percentages of topics and demands addressed by the EWL and EP might not be completely accurate. However, the texts represent the general opinion and views on VAW the EWL has. Therefore, the analysis is still valid, but it can be complemented through the inclusion of other activities.

The theoretical model by Keck & Sikkink (1999) which was used to assess the strategies employed by the EWL is missing certain elements. One of them is the linguistic means applied in the texts to influence the reader. The theory only refers to the reasons the texts are formulated: to inform, to create leverage, symbolism, or accountability. To make up for the missing elements, the theory can be extended with another framework which refers to the linguistic and persuasive means.

The strict distinguishment between hegemonic and counter hegemonic discourse, which is essential for a CDA, can be seen skeptically as not every actor fits within these two categories. The EWL for example, touches upon similar demands and topics as the powerful actors within the discourse which leads to the network being sorted more towards the hegemonic side of the discourse. However, the thematic focuses are different which makes the strict classification of the EWL to the hegemonic bloc difficult. Still, the EWL shares more topics and demands with the EP than it tries to challenge the current direction of the discourse which makes the categorization of the EWL as hegemonic valid.

Additionally, the results from the analysis are only based on the current EP parliamentary term. Consequently, the influence of the EWL is assessed on a more short-term basis. Looking at the parliamentary terms before as well would lead to insights on the long-term influence.

All in all, it becomes clear that the results from the analysis are valid. However, the analysis is not free of limitations which have to be kept in mind in order to interpret the results correctly. Those limitations include the complexity of the discourse, other actions taken by the EWL to influence EU institutions, the strict division in hegemonic and counter-hegemonic blocs, as well as the short-term outlook of the analysis.

## 6 Conclusion

This research has assessed the influence of the EWL, a TAN that acts on the European policy level, within the EP gender discourse on the topic of VAW. TANs are important actors within the civil society sector as they are international networks that are combined of NGOs from different national backgrounds based on shared values, norms, and principles. Civil society organizations can join a TAN to increase their level of influence on political institutions or on public opinion. The civil society is also affected by globalization and by growing international cooperation. TANs are an essential platform for local and national organizations to join the global policy level even when they lack the expertise to do this on their own. The inclusion of civil society actors is an essential part of EU policy making as it adds to the expertise and democratic legitimacy of the EU. The EP is especially dependent on cooperation with civil society actors as it strengthens its rather weak position within the process. The EU gender discourse is marked by the strategy of gender mainstreaming and positive action such as the Istanbul Convention. The EWL tries to influence the gender discourse within the EU institutions to act in favor of their own feminist goals.

Concerning the research question, it can be concluded that the EWL tries to influence the EP by applying mainly information and accountability strategies as well as by following the hegemonic discourse of the EP. The EWL's goal is to steer the discourse in a specific direction, such as for example on sexual exploitation, and not the introduction of new aspects. The EWL is successful in establishing an influence but only nonlinearly, and only on certain aspects in the discourse. The report and the use of information strategies have been proven to be the most useful tool for the EWL to influence the EP. A TAN should therefore research their own data and present statistics when trying to influence policy institutions. The EWL has a level of influence on the global policy level, even though it is weak and nonlinear. Certain claims, such as the inclusion of women with disabilities as a group of vulnerable victims of VAW, have been successfully brought attention to by the EWL.

This research paper expands the state of knowledge about TANs' role in the European policy process. TANs are able to influence policy institutions and can be powerful civil society actors in the discourse when the right strategies are applied. A practical implication that can be concluded from this research is that joining a TAN is an opportunity for local and national civil society organizations to be included on the global policy level. TANs are important actors in the EU civil society sector and should be researched further. Especially the role of TANs in other policy fields, such as environmental or migration policy, should be studied. What is also still missing in the state of knowledge is the long-term influence of TANs and the influence of

other types of strategies that are not text based, such as demonstrations and marches. The internal organization of the networks and its implications on the effectiveness of TANS have also not been researched enough yet.

Including TANS within the policy process makes it more representative, more democratic, and more inclusive. Smaller NGOs are able to join the global policy level and their voices are being heard. TANS have a high level of expertise on the policy field they focus on, and their inclusion leads to more effective policies. These networks are based on values and principles. The topics they deal with are about protecting human, animal, or environmental rights and are based on moral and ethical norms. Therefore, TANS are important to guarantee the protection of those rights and to make sure they are included in policies.

This important actor within the civil society deserves more recognition within academia. Researching how these networks can be more included within the policy making process and how they can be successful in having a say at the table of global politics could lead to them being more successful in promoting their causes. Their human rights centered approach is needed in global politics to guarantee the protection of minorities.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A: Coding Tables

Type of Strategy (Category)	How the strategy is being employed (Code)
Information politics	Presenting own documented data and information
	Labeling information as right and wrong
Symbolic politics	Quotes from EWL Delegates
	Personal stories
Leverage politics	Naming-and-shaming in the context of not addressed topics
	Directly addressing EU institutions
Accountability politics	Naming-and-shaming in the context of failed promises
	Positive Feedback

*Table 1: Coding for the Discursive Strategies based on Keck and Sikkink (1999) and extended by own results from two rounds of coding*

Category	Code Group	Sub-Code
Topics	Mental and psychological harm	Verbal abuse and hate speech
		Psychological partner violence
		Online Violence (e.g., Cyber-harassment, Online identity theft, sharing private data without consent...).
		Stalking

		Victim blaming
		Forced marriage
		Human trafficking
	Physical harm	Domestic violence
		Non-partner violence
		Genital mutilation
		Violence in childhood
	Sexual harm	Sexual harassment and assault
		Sexual Exploitation (e.g., prostitution)
		Rape
		Denial of autonomy over reproductive rights (e.g., forced or denied abortion, surrogacy etc.)
	Institutionalized harm	Access to justice, health, and support services
		Structural inequality in economic life
VAW as one element of institutionalized gender inequality		

Demands	Developing new and stricter regulations	EU legal framework
		National legislation from the member states
		Including VAW to the list of Euro-crimes
		Equality Model (ban of prostitution)
		Including esp. vulnerable women such as migrants, disabled and LGBTQ+ women
	Enforcing already existing regulations	Gender Mainstreaming
		Istanbul Convention
		EU Treaties
		Human Rights Charter
	Other demands	Raising awareness and access to information
		Conducting more research and data collection
		Establishment of consensus over common definitions
		Gender sensitive training for staff (judicial, healthcare, politicians, etc.)
		Establishment of a specialized EU wide institution/court/coordinator that deals with VAW

*Table 2: Coding for the Content and Demands concerning the Problem 'Violence against Women' in the Gender Policy Discourse*

## Appendix B: Documents Used in the Analysis

Date	Title	Link
28.11.2019	EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence.	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0080_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0080_EN.html</a>
12.02.2020	An EU strategy to put an end to female genital mutilation around the world.	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0031_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0031_EN.html</a>
16.09.2021	Identifying gender-based violence as a new area of crime listed in Article 83(1) TFEU.	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0388_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0388_EN.html</a>
06.10.2021	The impact of intimate partner violence and custody rights on women and children.	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0406_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0406_EN.html</a>
14.12.2021	Combating gender-based violence: cyberviolence.	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0489_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0489_EN.html</a>
16.12.2021	MeToo and harassment – the consequences for the EU institutions	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0514_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0514_EN.html</a>
15.02.2023	Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence: EU accession.	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0047_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0047_EN.html</a>

Table 3: EP resolutions used in the analysis



Date	Type of document	Title	Link
22.10.2019	Press Release	International leaders come together for a Europe free from prostitution.	<a href="https://www.womenlobby.org/International-leaders-come-together-for-a-Europe-free-from-prostitution?lang=en">https://www.womenlobby.org/International-leaders-come-together-for-a-Europe-free-from-prostitution?lang=en</a>
14.04.2021	Report	Towards a Europe Free from Male Violence Against Women and Girls – Marking 10 years of the Istanbul Convention.	<a href="https://womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/ic-2.pdf">https://womenlobby.org/IMG/pdf/ic-2.pdf</a>
16.09.2021	Press Release	The European Parliament calls to step up the fight against violence	<a href="https://www.womenlobby.org/The-European-Parliament-calls-to-step-up-the-fight-against-violence?lang=en">https://www.womenlobby.org/The-European-Parliament-calls-to-step-up-the-fight-against-violence?lang=en</a>
06.10.2021	Press Release	ECJ Decision on the Istanbul Convention: a missed opportunity	<a href="https://www.womenlobby.org/ECJ-Decision-on-the-Istanbul-Convention-a-missed-opportunity?lang=en">https://www.womenlobby.org/ECJ-Decision-on-the-Istanbul-Convention-a-missed-opportunity?lang=en</a>
13.12.2021	Press Release	Sexist and misogynist hate speech and hate crime have no place in the EU.	<a href="https://www.womenlobby.org/Sexist-and-misogynist-hate-speech-and-hate-crime-have-no-place-in-the-EU?lang=en">https://www.womenlobby.org/Sexist-and-misogynist-hate-speech-and-hate-crime-have-no-place-in-the-EU?lang=en</a>
08.03.2022	Press Release	Historic landmark: the European Commission publishes its Directive proposal to fight violence against women and domestic violence	<a href="https://www.womenlobby.org/EC_Directive?lang=en">https://www.womenlobby.org/EC_Directive?lang=en</a>

23.03.2022	Statement	Historic moment and lost opportunity for women and girls in the EU Release of a Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence	<a href="https://www.womenlobby.org/Historic-moment-and-lost-opportunity-for-women-and-girls-in-the-EU?lang=en">https://www.womenlobby.org/Historic-moment-and-lost-opportunity-for-women-and-girls-in-the-EU?lang=en</a>
28.04.2022	Press Release	Protect Women and Children from sexual exploitation now and tomorrow	<a href="https://www.womenlobby.org/Protect-Women-and-Children-from-sexual-exploitation-now-and-tomorrow?lang=en">https://www.womenlobby.org/Protect-Women-and-Children-from-sexual-exploitation-now-and-tomorrow?lang=en</a>
25.11.2022	Press Release	Time to Deliver! The European Union closer than ever to concrete action to end violence against women	<a href="https://www.womenlobby.org/Time-to-Deliver?lang=en">https://www.womenlobby.org/Time-to-Deliver?lang=en</a>
26.01.2023	Statement	Time to deliver: Recognize rape as sexual exploitation at EU level	<a href="https://www.womenlobby.org/Time-to-deliver-Recognise-rape-as-sexual-exploitation-at-EU-level?lang=en">https://www.womenlobby.org/Time-to-deliver-Recognise-rape-as-sexual-exploitation-at-EU-level?lang=en</a>
07.03.2023	Press Release	One year after: Europe needs a strong Directive to combat violence against women NOW!	<a href="https://www.womenlobby.org/IWD2023?lang=en">https://www.womenlobby.org/IWD2023?lang=en</a>

*Table 4: EWL releases used in the analysis*

## Appendix C: Results after Coding Process

Code-groups and subcodes from table 1	All EWL Releases on Violence against Women
<b>accountability politics</b>	<b>19,12%</b>
naming- and shaming in the context of failed promises	5,88%
positive feedback/ praising	13,73%
<b>information politics</b>	<b>16,67%</b>
labeling information as right and wrong	6,37%
presenting statistical data and information	11,28%
<b>leverage politics</b>	<b>8,33%</b>
naming and shaming in not addressed contexts	2,45%
Directly addressing EU institutions	7,35%
<b>symbolic politics</b>	<b>4,41%</b>
personal stories	0,00%
Quotes from EWL Delegates	4,41%
<i>Sum</i>	<i>100,00%</i>

Table 5: percentages of coded strategies applied by the EWL in the analyzed releases

<b>Code-groups and subcodes from the category 'topics' from table 2</b>	<b>EP Resolutions on Violence against Women</b>	<b>EWL Releases on Violence against Women</b>
<b>institutionalized harm</b>	<b>13,11%</b>	<b>5,32%</b>
access to justice, health and support services	6,61%	0,28%
structural inequality in economic life	3,30%	3,92%
VAW as one element of institutionalized sexism	4,23%	1,12%
<b>mental harm</b>	<b>11,56%</b>	<b>12,04%</b>
forced marriage	0,72%	0,28%
human trafficking	0,93%	2,24%
online violence	7,74%	7,00%
psychological partner violence	1,03%	1,40%
stalking	1,34%	1,40%
verbal discrimination and hate speech	1,75%	2,80%
victim blaming	2,27%	1,40%
<b>physical harm</b>	<b>11,66%</b>	<b>8,68%</b>
domestic violence	5,78%	5,32%
femicide	1,14%	0,56%

genital mutilation	3,41%	2,52%
non-partner violence	0,52%	1,12%
violence in childhood	5,26%	1,40%
<b>sexual harm</b>	<b>7,74%</b>	<b>17,09%</b>
denial of sexual autonomy	1,96%	4,48%
rape	1,14%	3,92%
sexual exploitation	1,86%	11,20%
sexual harassment and abuse	4,95%	4,48%
<i>Sum</i>	<i>100,00%</i>	<i>100,00%</i>

*Table 6: percentages of coded topics in the EWL an EP documents*

<b>Code-groups and subcodes from the category 'demands' from table 2</b>	<b>EP Resolutions on Violence against Women</b>	<b>EWL Releases on Violence against Women</b>
<b>enforcing already existing regulation</b>	<b>11,58%</b>	<b>14,57%</b>
EU Treaties	1,20%	1,99%
Gender mainstreaming	1,20%	1,32%
Human Rights Charter	1,05%	0,00%

Istanbul convention	8,72%	11,26%
<b>New and stricter regulation</b>	<b>19,85%</b>	<b>20,86%</b>
Equality Model	0,00%	2,32%
EU legal framework	8,42%	12,25%
Including esp. vulnerable women	4,06%	5,63%
Including VAW to the list of Eurocrimes	2,26%	4,97%
National legislation from the Member State	7,67%	3,64%
<b>Other demands</b>	<b>16,09%</b>	<b>9,93%</b>
Conducting more research and data collection	3,63%	3,64%
Establishment of consensus over common definitions	1,36%	2,32%
Gender sensitive training for staff (judicial, healthcare, politicians, etc.)	4,84%	0,00%
Establishment of a specialized EU wide institution/ court/ coordinator that deals with VAW	1,21%	0,66%
Raising Awareness and access to information	6,96%	4,64%
<i>Sum</i>	<i>100,00%</i>	<i>100,00%</i>

*Table 7: percentages of coded demands in the EWL an EP documents*

Code-groups and subcodes from the category 'topics' from table 2	EP (2019)	EP (2020)	EP (2021a)	EP (2021b)	EP (2021c)	EP (2021d)	EP (2023)
<b>institutionalized harm</b>	<b>11,29%</b>	<b>7,32%</b>	<b>16,86%</b>	<b>14,60%</b>	<b>11,89%</b>	<b>7,14%</b>	<b>15,93%</b>
access to justice, health and support services	4,84%	4,88%	7,56%	8,85%	5,33%	2,86%	7,96%
structural inequality in economic life	6,45%	2,44%	4,07%	3,98%	2,05%	2,86%	2,66%
VAW as one element of institutionalized sexism	1,61%	4,88%	7,56%	2,21%	4,51%	1,43%	5,31%
<b>mental harm</b>	<b>12,90%</b>	<b>2,44%</b>	<b>8,14%</b>	<b>4,43%</b>	<b>26,23%</b>	<b>8,57%</b>	<b>7,08%</b>
forced marriage	0,00%	2,44%	1,16%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	2,66%
human trafficking	3,23%	0,00%	1,74%	0,00%	0,82%	0,00%	1,77%
online violence	4,84%	0,00%	4,07%	1,33%	23,77%	1,43%	2,66%
psychological partner violence	3,23%	0,00%	1,16%	2,21%	0,00%	0,00%	0,88%
Stalking	1,61%	0,00%	0,58%	0,44%	2,46%	0,00%	3,54%
verbal discrimination and hate speech	3,23%	0,00%	2,33%	0,44%	2,87%	0,00%	2,66%
victim blaming	1,61%	0,00%	2,91%	2,21%	1,23%	7,14%	2,66%
<b>physical harm</b>	<b>6,45%</b>	<b>32,93%</b>	<b>8,14%</b>	<b>22,57%</b>	<b>2,87%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>8,85%</b>
domestic violence	6,45%	0,00%	4,65%	15,49%	1,23%	0,00%	5,31%

Femicide	0,00%	2,44%	2,33%	1,77%	0,00%	0,00%	0,88%
genital mutilation	1,61%	32,93%	1,74%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	1,77%
non-partner violence	3,23%	0,00%	1,16%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,88%
violence in childhood	1,61%	2,44%	2,91%	15,49%	1,64%	0,00%	3,54%
<b>sexual harm</b>	<b>9,68%</b>	<b>2,44%</b>	<b>8,72%</b>	<b>1,77%</b>	<b>5,74%</b>	<b>34,29%</b>	<b>8,85%</b>
denial of sexual autonomy	4,84%	2,44%	4,07%	0,44%	0,41%	0,00%	4,43%
Rape	3,23%	0,00%	2,33%	0,00%	0,41%	0,00%	3,54%
sexual exploitation	3,23%	0,00%	1,74%	1,33%	3,69%	0,00%	0,88%
sexual harassment and abuse	4,84%	0,00%	4,07%	0,44%	2,87%	34,29%	5,31%
<i>Sum</i>	<i>100,00%</i>	<i>100,00%</i>	<i>100,00%</i>	<i>100,00%</i>	<i>100,00%</i>	<i>100,00%</i>	<i>100,00%</i>

*Table 9: percentages of coded topics within each analyzed EP resolution*

<b>Code-groups and subcodes from the category 'demands' from table 2</b>	<b>EP (2019)</b>	<b>EP (2020)</b>	<b>EP (2021a)</b>	<b>EP (2021b)</b>	<b>EP (2021c)</b>	<b>EP (2021d)</b>	<b>EP (2023)</b>
<b>enforcing already existing regulation</b>	<b>13,85%</b>	<b>12,90%</b>	<b>10,07%</b>	<b>7,09%</b>	<b>3,70%</b>	<b>10,00%</b>	<b>24,41%</b>
EU Treaties	1,54%	0,00%	0,67%	2,84%	0,93%	0,00%	0,79%
Gender Mainstreaming	0,00%	6,45%	1,34%	0,71%	0,00%	5,00%	0,79%



Human Rights Charter	1,54%	0,00%	1,34%	0,00%	0,93%	2,50%	1,58%
Istanbul convention	12,31%	6,45%	7,38%	3,55%	2,78%	2,50%	22,05%
<b>New and stricter regulation</b>	<b>18,46%</b>	<b>19,36%</b>	<b>22,82%</b>	<b>20,57%</b>	<b>22,22%</b>	<b>12,50%</b>	<b>17,32%</b>
Equality Model	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
EU legal framework	6,15%	16,13%	6,04%	10,64%	7,41%	12,50%	7,87%
including esp. vulnerable women	1,54%	3,23%	8,05%	3,55%	4,63%	0,00%	2,36%
including VAW to the list of Eurocrimes	4,61%	0,00%	3,36%	0,71%	4,63%	0,00%	0,79%
Member State legislation	7,69%	0,00%	8,73%	10,64%	8,33%	0,00%	7,09%
<b>other demands</b>	<b>13,85%</b>	<b>16,13%</b>	<b>14,09%</b>	<b>18,44%</b>	<b>20,37%</b>	<b>27,50%</b>	<b>7,09%</b>
Conducting more research and data collection	3,08%	3,23%	2,01%	4,96%	4,63%	5,00%	3,15%
establishment of a specialized EU wide institution/court/coordinator that deals with VAW	1,54%	0,00%	1,34%	1,42%	0,93%	5,00%	0,00%
Establishment of consensus over common definitions	1,54%	0,00%	2,69%	0,71%	2,78%	0,00%	0,00%
Gender sensitive training for staff (judicial, healthcare, politicians, etc.)	6,15%	3,23%	4,03%	7,80%	5,56%	10,00%	0,00%
Raising Awareness and access to information	6,15%	12,90%	6,04%	6,38%	10,19%	7,50%	4,72%

Sum	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%
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Table 10: percentages of coded demands within each analyzed EP resolution

Code-groups and subcodes from the category 'topics' from table 2	EWL (2019)	EWL (2021a)	EWL (2021b)	EWL (2021c)	EWL (2021d)	EWL (2022a)	EWL (2022b)	EWL (2022c)	EWL (2022d)	EWL (2023a)	EWL (2023b)
<b>institutionalized harm</b>	<b>11,77%</b>	<b>6,94%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>8,33%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>6,90%</b>	<b>2,56%</b>	<b>2,86%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>
access to justice, health, and support services	5,88%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
structural inequality in economic life	0,00%	6,36%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	6,90%	2,56%	0,00%	0,00%
VAW as one element of institu- tionalized sexism	5,88%	0,58%	0,00%	0,00%	8,33%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	2,86%	0,00%
<b>mental harm</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>12,14%</b>	<b>16,67%</b>	<b>25,00%</b>	<b>33,33%</b>	<b>22,22%</b>	<b>12,50%</b>	<b>17,24%</b>	<b>10,26%</b>	<b>5,71%</b>	<b>5,88%</b>
forced marriage	0,00%	0,58%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
human trafficking	0,00%	1,16%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	6,25%	17,24%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
online violence	0,00%	6,36%	16,67%	25,00%	16,67%	22,22%	6,25%	0,00%	10,26%	5,71%	5,88%

psychological partner violence	0,00%	1,73%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	5,13%	0,00%	0,00%
Stalking	0,00%	2,31%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	2,56%	0,00%	0,00%
verbal discrimination and hate speech	0,00%	2,31%	0,00%	0,00%	33,33%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	5,13%	0,00%	0,00%
victim blaming	0,00%	2,31%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	2,56%	0,00%	0,00%
<b>physical harm</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>9,25%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>11,11%</b>	<b>6,25%</b>	<b>3,45%</b>	<b>10,26%</b>	<b>17,14%</b>	<b>11,77%</b>	
domestic violence	0,00%	4,05%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	11,11%	0,00%	0,00%	7,69%	17,14%	11,77%	
Femicide	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	2,86%	5,88%	
genital mutilation	0,00%	2,89%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	11,11%	6,25%	0,00%	2,56%	2,86%	0,00%	
non-partner violence	0,00%	1,73%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	2,56%	0,00%	0,00%	
violence in childhood	0,00%	1,73%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	3,45%	0,00%	2,86%	0,00%	
<b>sexual harm</b>	<b>35,29%</b>	<b>15,61%</b>	<b>33,33%</b>	<b>25,00%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>11,11%</b>	<b>31,25%</b>	<b>17,24%</b>	<b>12,82%</b>	<b>17,14%</b>	<b>17,65%</b>	
denial of sexual autonomy	0,00%	7,51%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	3,45%	2,56%	0,00%	5,88%	
Rape	5,88%	1,73%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	11,11%	6,25%	3,45%	5,13%	5,71%	17,65%	
sexual exploitation	35,29%	6,94%	16,67%	25,00%	0,00%	0,00%	25,00%	17,24%	10,26%	14,29%	11,77%	
sexual harassment and abuse	0,00%	5,78%	16,67%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	3,45%	5,13%	2,86%	5,88%	
Sum	00%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	10%	100%	

Table 11: percentages of coded topics within each analyzed EWL release

<b>Code-groups and subcodes from the category 'demands' from table 2</b>	<b>EWL (2019)</b>	<b>EWL (2021a)</b>	<b>EWL (2021b)</b>	<b>EWL (2021c)</b>	<b>EWL (2021d)</b>	<b>EWL (2022a)</b>	<b>EWL (2022b)</b>	<b>EWL (2022c)</b>	<b>EWL (2022d)</b>	<b>EWL (2023a)</b>	<b>EWL (2023b)</b>
<b>enforcing already existing regulation</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>17,47%</b>	<b>14,29%</b>	<b>22,73%</b>	<b>11,77%</b>	<b>10,00%</b>	<b>7,69%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>13,79%</b>	<b>11,11%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>
EU Treaties	0,00%	0,00%	14,29%	0,00%	5,88%	0,00%	7,69%	0,00%	6,90%	11,11%	0,00%
Gender Mainstreaming	0,00%	2,41%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
Human Rights Charter	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
Istanbul convention	0,00%	15,06%	0,00%	22,73%	5,88%	10,00%	0,00%	0,00%	6,90%	0,00%	0,00%
<b>New and stricter regulation</b>	<b>50,00%</b>	<b>14,46%</b>	<b>28,57%</b>	<b>22,73%</b>	<b>29,41%</b>	<b>30,00%</b>	<b>15,39%</b>	<b>40,00%</b>	<b>27,59%</b>	<b>33,33%</b>	<b>30,00%</b>
Equality Model	25,00%	1,81%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	10,00%	7,69%	6,67%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
EU legal framework	25,00%	6,63%	14,29%	13,64%	17,65%	30,00%	15,39%	6,67%	24,14%	22,22%	30,00%
including esp. vulnerable women	0,00%	6,02%	0,00%	0,00%	5,88%	0,00%	0,00%	40,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
including VAW to the list of Eu- rocrimes	0,00%	0,60%	28,57%	13,64%	23,53%	10,00%	7,69%	0,00%	3,45%	22,22%	0,00%
Member State legislation	0,00%	4,82%	0,00%	4,54%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	6,67%	3,45%	0,00%	0,00%
<b>other demands</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>14,46%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>15,39%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>6,90%</b>	<b>0,00%</b>	<b>20,00%</b>

Conducting more research and data collection	0,00%	6,02%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	7,69%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
Establishment of a specialized EU wide institution/ court/ coordinator that deals with VAW	0,00%	0,60%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	3,45%	0,00%	0,00%
Establishment of consensus over common definitions	0,00%	1,21%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	15,39%	0,00%	3,45%	0,00%	20,00%
Gender sensitive training for staff (judicial, healthcare, politicians, etc.)	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
Raising Awareness and access to information	0,00%	8,43%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
<i>Sum</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>100%</i>

*Table 12: percentages of coded demands within each analyzed EWL release*

