Gendering Women's Political Representation and Good Governance in the EU?

A Feminist Approach against informal norms of Corruption

Digdem Soyaltin-Colella and F. Melis Cin

<a> 1 Introduction

Good governance principles are increasingly seen as effective tools to fight against corruption. With the end of the Cold War, they started to appear in anti-corruption strategy papers produced by international and regional organisations including the World Bank, the OECD, and the United Nations. In facilitating the fight against corruption in third countries, the European Union (EU) has also incorporated the good governance principles of participation, accountability, transparency, and rule of law into its policy agenda and developed rather comprehensive tools and incentive mechanisms to encourage countries to enact domestic reforms (Börzel et al., 2008; Soyaltin 2017). Yet, in terms of internal governance transfer, the EU has appeared unwilling to define strict anti-corruption standards for its own member states and institutions (van Hüllen and Börzel, 2015).

However, as indicated in the EU Corruption Report of 2014, corruption remains a major issue for people inside the EU (European Commission, 2014). Several EU member states, such as Poland, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Italy even sometimes backslide in terms of fighting corruption and are listed as 'severely corrupt' in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. The literature highlights the gap between legal institutions and implementation as the main reason for the ongoing corruption and governance-related problems (see Johnson et al., 2013) and underlines the ineffectiveness of traditional anti-corruption interventions (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015) yet to a great extent fails to bring a gender perspective to tackle with the root causes and informal norms of corruption. To address the gap in the literature, this chapter revisits the theoretical discussion regarding the relationship between gender, good governance, and corruption. We argue that the anti-corruption strategies in the EU lack a definition of good governance from a feminist perspective and thus fail to disrupt informal norms and unequal gendered power relations from infusing into political institutions and feeding corrupt and ill practices (Krook and McNay, 2011). This argument is illustrated by focusing on participation, particularly that of women, as the fundamental principle of good governance in the EU. By bringing evidence from its annual reports on equality between women and men in the EU, EU Gender Equality Strategy, and the statistics database of the European Institute of Gender Equality, we show that the EU's approach to

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promoting women's political participation is highly instrumental, fragmented, and limited as it focuses on quantitative measures to increase numbers of women.

However, these attempts usually focus on gender quotas, devising gender-sensitive policies to raise awareness or encourage women, as the ultimate strategies, which are tokenistic, mask the gender bias and include hidden and implicit androcentric norms under their so-called neutral, objective, but equality-seeking practices and values (Cin and Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm, 2021). The gender-friendly governance tools, even for those in favor of empowering women in the liberal western world including the EU, indeed reflect a male point of view (Catherine MacKinnon 1989, p. 162) and have a gender bias. The softly gendered governance approach adopted by the EU in its Gender Equality Strategy, therefore, remains ineffective in terms of deconstructing the informal norms such as hegemonic masculinity (see Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), gendered norms (Mackay, 2014), and masculine power hierarchies embedded in the institutions, interactions, and systems favoring the male leadership and vision. In order to be effective, there needs to be a feminist approach to gendering women's political participation that moves beyond the actions points of collecting data or raising awareness, as identified in the EU Gender Equality Strategy of 2020-2025. Drawing on the key ideas of feminist institutionalism (Mckay et al, 2010) and the bourgeoning feminist literature on gender and the EU's own studies (Kantola, 2010), we discuss how processes, institutions, and networks could be gendered within the EU towards substantial equality and a more effective fight against corruption.

Such a holistic and gender-sensitive approach to good governance could enable international organizations including the EU to dismantle the hegemonic patriarchal norms that reproduce corrupt relations (Brody 2009; UNODC, 2020). By doing so, this chapter seeks to contribute to the literature, in particular to that relating to the participation, gender, and good governance axis of the research (Stensöta and Wängnerud, 2018) by offering a feminist reading of women's roles in decision making and arguing how and what kind of women's participation in local and national offices might promote transparent and just governance. In this chapter, we focus on the dimensions of good governance that speak to gender equality whilst using feminist institutionalism to show the political institutions are not gender-neutral and the gendered power relations and processes that favor men are visible. In doing so, our understanding of gendered informal norms aligns with the Connell and Messerschmidt's hegemonic masculinity (2005: 847) which draws on the formulation

of 'the nature of gender hierarchy, the geography of masculine configurations, the process of social embodiment, and the dynamics of masculinities.'

The following section after the introduction presents the theoretical discussions about the relationship between gender, good governance, and corruption. We then address the gender gap in the good governance approach adopted by the EU to fight corruption. As shown by empirical evidence in section four, the EU's gendered good governance approach is limited in terms of increasing women's participation in the political sphere and has thin solutions that typically fail to generate tangible outcomes within the EU. In the final section instead of a conclusion, we develop a theoretical reasoning that brings insights from the feminist institutionalism to challenge the interaction between gendered norms and good governance.

<a> 2 Good Governance, Gender, and Corruption

A normative trend in the mainstream global governance literature is represented by the emphasis on good governance. With the end of the Cold War, good governance appeared in the development strategies of international and regional organisations such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the OECD. In the context of their surveillance and financial and technical assistance, these institutions aimed to eliminate the poor governance environments that bred widespread corruption in recipient countries (Soyaltin 2017, p. 40-2).

The quest for good governance promoted by such international and regional organizations coincided with the "third wave" of democratisation and has focused on a range of issues ranging from corruption and the rule of law to increased representation and participation (Rai, 2004). The literature distinguishes two main analytical dimensions of good governance. The first implies the management of human and natural resources in such a way as to ensure the public good, and to distribute them so as to create wealth and promote human development. This approach associates good governance with the setting of a sound and efficient administrative and regulatory framework that for the most part is provided by the state. The second dimension of good governance attributes a wider political connotation to the concept and requires normative judgments to be made about what constitutes the legitimate acquisition and efficient exercise of power. This aspect focuses on the input side of governance, emphasizing democracy, respect for human rights, participation, accountability, and social justice (see Börzel et al., 2008). Yet, in the literature on good governance, gender equality has to date not been considered a fundamental concern. Women's participation was included in the human rights reforms and decentralisation, but gender-specific

capacity problems in public administration were largely ignored in the global good governance agenda.

At the beginning of the 2000s, the good governance programs of multilateral agencies have become more sensitive to the issue of gender inequality (Goetz, 2007). In the mainstream governance literature, the inclusion of women in governance processes was regarded as a means to reduce corruption. The work of Dollar et al. (2001), Schwindt-Bayer et al. (2018), and Bauhr et al. (2019) suggests that since women are less likely to engage in corrupt behaviour than men, that is, that women's legislative representation can reduce corruption. One of the explanations puts forward for this draws on the women's interest mechanism (Alexander and Ravlik, 2015) concept, which argues that when women are in office, they work towards improving public services, focus on social policies such as family, health, and violence against women and thus are more likely to use state/public funds to ensure the public good. For instance, Halim et al. (2016) show that public provision of education improves significantly where there are more women politicians/councilors. Thus, such an increase in women's participation in politics has the potential to serve the interests of women and further that this mechanism, in the long run, lowers levels of corruption (Wängnerud and Sundell, 2012). Sung (2003) illustrates that democracies provide a more open means of attaining political power for women than autocracies, thus promoting gender equality and good governance.

There is also a considerable body of research that showcases that political corruption and patronage networks that are often dominated by men prevent women from enacting decision-making mechanisms or holding political office in local and national governments (Bjarnegård, 2013; Sundström and Wängnerud, 2016). This is referred to as the 'exclusion mechanism' (Bauhr et al., 2019) that privileges constructions of masculinity and norms associated with paternalist structures Therefore, female politicians are often excluded from male networks of socialisation in these offices and their exclusion encourages them to mobilize against corruption (Sundström and Wängnerud, 2016). Even though women are elected, it normally takes a relatively long time before they reach the more powerful political positions (Bolzendahl, 2014), and indeed even when they do so this power may not necessarily be in the realm of their reach to use it to address women's interests. Such an exclusion from such inner circles of power suggests that the increasing number of women in parliament or council will not necessarily reduce corruption (Bjarnegård, 2013). This

again implicates how formal and informal politics interact with another to strengthen the masculine ideal in political, legal and administrative settings (Chappell, 2014).

By and large, the literature highlights some nuanced differences and factors that need to be taken into consideration when making claims about the correlation between women's increased participation and levels of corruption. It also makes it clear that a political system with corruption mostly excludes women and that encourages mechanisms that anyway hinder women's inclusion in the decision-making system, making the political arena a playground of male hegemony. Due to this marginalization of women, the power imbalances in politics make it difficult for women either to fight against or speak out against this corruption (Goetz, 2007). This is particularly the case in authoritarian states (Nistotskaya and Stensöta, 2017), whereas in democracies, where there is higher accountability and free press, the link between gender inequality and corruption is much more salient (Stensöta and Wängnerud, 2018).

However, the puzzle as to any correlation between gender equality and good governance is a complex one. On the one hand, the research into European countries, particularly that conducted by Sundström and Wängnerud (2016) in 18 European countries, show high levels of corruption in local councils with few or no women, thus arguing that women's participation can promote good governance. On the other hand, this relationship represents an impasse as the presence of corruption is also argued to discourage women from participating in local governance in the first place (Kenny, 2013). Although there is strong evidence (Stensöta and Wängnerud, 2018) that bringing more women into government, parliament, or local councils or involving them in decision-making processes is likely to alleviate corruption, we do not see women as a quick fix to this problem (Wängnerud, 2015) as such a descriptive representation of women may be symbolic unless their representation is sufficiently large that it will actually make a difference.

Our theoretical reasoning departs from the idea that there is a strong relationship between good governance and higher representation of women both in local and central administrations. Given that women's political participation impinges on both the content and nature of legislation but also on administration, feminist institutionalism unpacks the reproduction of gender issues and hierarchies of power, investigates how institutional processes reproduce gendered outcomes (Hawkesworth, 2005), and challenges the interaction between gender and institutional effects arguing for change (Krook and Mackay, 2011). This chapter argues that the neutrality and impartiality on which institutions and bureaucracy are allegedly built has a gender bias. We argue

that the initiatives and legislations introduced to promote women's participation and empowerment in politics will almost inevitably fail as long as institutions' hierarchical gender culture favouring the male leadership and vision is not disrupted. As illustrated by the empirical evidence derived from the EU Gender Equality Strategy and the gender statistics database of the European Institute of Gender Equality in the following section, this is also the main problem inherent to the EU's good governance policies in general, and women's participation in particular.

3. Good Governance and Corruption in the EU

The EU's support for good governance reform is the cornerstone of its conditionality and funding policies. After the introduction of the White Paper on European Governance in 2000 (van Hüllen and Börzel, 2015; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2019) in particular, the EU assumed a unique role in promoting good governance in third countries. The EU's good governance promotion policies pursued a broader understanding of the concept, not only focusing on administrative capacity but also democratic elements such as respect for human rights, participation, and rule of law (Börzel et al., 2008). Yet, as defined in the White Paper, the EU's good governance principles made no reference to gender (Galligan and Clavero 2007, p. 217–18).

Still, the normative approach adopted by the EU in terms of governance transfer distinguished it from other international organisations and regional organisations as a promoter and protector of "good governance" *par excellence* (van Hüllen and Börzel, 2015, p.227). The EU has been actively engaged in facilitating the fight against corruption and promoting good governance in the third countries (Soyaltin 2017), yet for many years has remained reluctant to harmonize the anti-corruption standards of its own member states; indeed, in many cases, anti-corruption measures are not legally binding for member states (Szarek-Mason 2010, p. 143). Hence, there had been no clear strategy among member states for fighting corruption. Yet, corruption remains a serious problem in many EU member states.

The EU Anti-Corruption Report 2014[1] report underlines that although EU member states have in place most of the necessary legal instruments and institutions in terms of the prevention of, and the fight against corruption, the results they deliver are not satisfactory across the EU due to the lack of implementation, insufficient administrative capacity, and systemic problems (such as weak

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[1] In January 2017, against all expectations, the Commission announced its decision to not publish a second EU Anti-Corruption Report, shifting anti-corruption monitoring to the framework of the European Semester.

accountability of political elites, illegal party funding, limited public procurement oversight, etc.). However, similar to the EU's White Paper on governance, the corruption report does not touch upon the destabilizing consequences of corruption, whether petty or large, on women. Neither does it focus on the strong relationship between higher levels of gender equality and lower levels of corruption as a cross-cutting strategy for promoting good governance.

As opposed to the 2014 report, four years later, the report from the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs reveals a backlash in gender equality and women's rights in several EU countries (Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia), and highlights that some of these countries show also a high perceived level of public sector corruption (European Parliament, 2018). On a scale of 0-100 (where 0 is highly corrupt), the perceived corruption in these countries is Hungary (46), Romania (47), Slovakia (50), Italy (52), and Poland (60) (Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, 2018). In some of these countries, there is also an increase in women's mobilisation against corruption. For instance, the 2012 protests in Romania were largely mobilised against political decisions that were fostering corruption, and the feminist resistance was an important factor in this mobilisation (Baluta and Krizsan, 2017). The increasing corruption also resulted in a series of nationwide mass protests in Romania that were soon followed in Slovakia in 2017 and Poland (Lindberg, 2018). In the midst of these mass protests against the government, the 2018 report by the EP highlights the drastic implications of gender equality backlashes during a political crisis and, overall, in the governance of countries.

The role of governance in such gender equality backsliding has been underlined by the EU. The EP pinpoints "dismantling accountability and inclusion mechanisms" in the backsliding countries in its report (European Parliament, 2018, p 16). Also, backsliding with regard to commitment to gender equality and the increasing authoritarianism in some of these countries (particularly in Poland and Hungary) has exacerbated political corruption along with bearing certain negative implications for the legitimacy and quality of democracy (Bakke and Sitter, 2020; Krizsan and Roggeband, 2018; V-Dem Institute, 2021).

More than three-quarters of EU citizens believe that (particularly political) corruption is widespread in their country (European Commission 2014), which makes corruption a pressing issue for the EU. However, for some, the EU does not have sufficiently robust mechanisms to deal with corruption in its member states, along with patchy legislation (Batory, 2018; Schmidt-Pfister

and Moroff, 2012) that is not informed by gender equality principles. This iterative relationship between backsliding on gender equality and concern for increasing political corruption at the EU level requires gender-responsive public accountability and governance structures to reduce the gendered impacts of corruption, but also to promote a more gender-transparent and equal Europe.

<a> 4. Gender Equality for Good Governance in the EU

Given the amount of research that suggests there is a positive relationship between gender equality and good governance, we argue that any gender equality assessment or strategic plan enacted by the EU should also discuss anti-corruption principles and underline the importance of gender equality for good governance. Therefore, we draw on EU gender equality progress documents, women in decision making, the gender statistics database of the European Institute of Gender Equality, and the relevant EU and gender literature to offer a robust feminist conceptual contribution to the relationship between gendering political participation and good governance. In doing so, our aim is to analyse the extent to which women's decision making and political participation in progress reports or strategy have been addressed in such a way as to promote good governance, in particular, the political dimension of the good governance stipulated by the EU and to disrupt the informal gendered norms feeding dimensions of corruption.

<b> Women Participation at the National level in the EU

The equality in decision making and promoting the participation of women have been among the five key strategy areas[2] of the EU Gender Equality Strategy (EU, 2016). The 2019 EU Evaluation of Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality Report (Gonzalez-Gago, 2019, p.17) identified two key indicators to measure this: i) the proportion of women among members of the highest decision-making bodies of the largest nationally registered companies (which was 14.9% in 2016), and ii) the share of women among members in the single/lower houses of the national parliaments (which was 28.7% in 2016 when the strategy agenda was first set). When the strategy agenda was first set, the EU aimed to 'to improve gender balance in political decision-making and public life, including sports and in research organizations; support the Member States to improve and collect data on decision-making in research organisations; and reach the target of 40% women in senior and middle management positions in the Commission by the end of 2019' (Gonzalez-Gago, 2019, p.

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[2] These five key areas are equal economic independence for women and men; equal pay for work of equal value; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence; and promoting gender equality beyond the EU (EU, 2016).

17). However, as indicated by the 2020 figures, as compiled based on EIGE statistics (see Figure 1), the EU was some considerable way from achieving this goal, although some progress in increasing the number of political decision-making women at the national level in the EU-28 has been achieved.

(insert Figure 6.1 here)

Figure 6.1: The percentage of Women MPs in national parliaments in EU-28 within a year (28 member states, including the UK). The data is the authors' own elaboration, drawing on the EIGE Gender Equality Database.

However, the national parliaments across the EU member states have to date been mostly male-dominated. As of 2020, on average, women only held 32.8 % of the parliamentary seats in EU states, with the highest number of representations in Sweden (49.6 %) and the lowest in Hungary (12.6%), which reflects that the more a country becomes authoritarian the lower the female representation (see figure 2). Although there has been a gradual increase since 2014 in the representation of women in parliaments in general, their representation at the local level shows much less linear progress but still remains slightly higher than the parliamentary figures (see Figure 3). The representation of women across the ministries within the EU states also shows a gendered division of labour. In 2020, women were significantly underrepresented in foreign, internal affairs, defence, and justice ministries, with only one-quarter of women (26.9%) holding these positions. Likewise, women's participation in decision making relating to economic portfolios that encompass finance, trade, industry, and agriculture remains at 25.5%, whereas this figure is 27.7% for infrastructure portfolios (transport, communication, and environment). Women continue to show higher representation in socio-cultural portfolios such as health, education, social affairs, employment, family, culture, and sports ministries, but even this remains at 45%.

<b> Women participation at the EU level

This inequality and gendered culture are also manifest in the European Parliament (EP) itself, which is directly elected by the citizens of member states and party groups. In 2020, women's representation in the EP was 39.3%, with the highest representation from Sweden at 52.4% and the lowest representation from Cyprus, with no women representatives (zero)[3]. Even at the Committee of Regions level, an EU advisory body composed of locally and regionally elected representatives from all 27 member states, and which one might think would accommodate more

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[3] These figures are drawn from EIGE 2020 Data set: https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs

women as it is an advisory committee at the local level, EU-28 members (including the UK) remain at 22.9% whereas there are no women (zero) holding president or leader of committee positions from any country. These figures clearly show that women's participation is relatively low both across national parliaments, ministries, and local administration in the EU states but also in the EP despite the efforts of the European Commission to encourage member states and political parties to achieve gender balance.

This poses an important problem with regard to good governance as the low participation of women also results in their underrepresentation, such that issues of gender equality and decision making in general are less likely to represent women's interests. The EU 2019 Gender Equality Report also acknowledges this low participation, and the gendered outcomes it creates. To mitigate this, the EU has been supporting mutual learning and exchange of good practices, has developed a monitoring tool of gender equality to capture differences across Europe and organised events to raise awareness to promote women in politics. The report also explicitly highlights the importance of gender balance in EU institutions as an essential element of strengthening democracy for good governance and transparency and, indeed, the trust of the citizenry, which are all priority actions in this area in terms of continuing to promote progress and improving data collection at the EU and member state levels. However, this data collection is limited to quantitative concerns and does not include qualitative attempts such as how women in decision making are supported and empowered to enhance democracy or display feminist ethical leadership.

(Insert Figure 6.2 here)

Figure 6.2*:* The percentage of women MPs in EU Member States as of 2020 – Quarter 4 (28 Member states, including the UK). The data is the authors' own elaboration, drawing on the EIGE Gender Equality Database.

(Insert Figure 6.3 here)

Figure 6.3: The percentage of women on local councils/municipalities in the EU-28
according to year (28 member states, including the UK). The data is the authors' own
elaboration, drawing on the EIGE Gender Equality Database.

The European Commission Gender Equality Strategy of 2020-2025 acknowledges the slow progress of the member states and draws attention to the EU Gender Equality Index 2019, which has marginally increased by 5.4 points since 2005 to 67.4 out of 100. Yet, the decision making in gender equality reports by the EU have a systematic emphasis on increasing the number of women on the boards of medium and large corporate businesses, underpinned with the justification that

women's inclusion in decision making is seen as key to making room for a range of talents and skills for economic growth (European Commission 2020, p.13). This shows the instrumentalist approach of the EU, seeing women as the key actors and pawns of economic development and growth but shrinking the meaning of gender equality (Elomäki 2015). The second systematic focus is on achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics according to a rationale driven by ensuring the meaningful participation of citizens from all backgrounds to allow for a well-functioning democracy and effective policymaking. The 2020 Gender Equality Strategy states that the Commission will promote the participation of women as voters and candidates in the 2024 European Parliament elections, in collaboration with the European Parliament, national parliaments, member states, and civil society, and encourage European political parties asking for EU funding to be transparent about the gender balance of their political party members.

The Commission aims to achieve a gender balance of 50% at all levels, including EU agencies, where three out of four of such are headed by men, by the end of 2021 and is committed to the introduction of quantitative targets for women's appointment to leadership positions. While there is a marginal level of progress and achievement in women's participation in politics across the EU member states, the commitment of the EU to gender equality in participation for the cause of economic growth and good governance is evident; however, the EU shows a highly fragmented and limited understanding of gender equality through its focus on a pure quantitative measure of increasing the number of women (Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm and Cin, 2021). Such an understanding masks the gendered nature of institutions as descriptive representation does not bring greater gender equality.

<b>Feminist institutionalism and women participation

Feminist institutionalism can disrupt the historical path dependency of the institutions guarding the norms that exclude women and welcome masculine values but also explain the resistance of the actors and institutions to bring change that will promote gender equality in institutions. Promoting women's effective, active participation in political institutions for greater accountability and transparency is one way of fighting against corruption so long as the way institutions operate and are structured can facilitate representation of women (Thomson, 2018). We consider increasing the numbers of women as an important initiative, yet an insufficient approach which does not go beyond giving lip service to the stakeholders and making institutions

more gender-friendly (Mackay, 2010). We argue that making any institution gender-friendly is highly problematic as it remains the norms essentializing female and male differences untouched. The feminist literature on the EU (Kantola, 2010; Guerrina and Wright, 2016; Süleymaoğlu-Kürüm and Cin, 2021) highlights this problematic understanding of gender equality on the part of the EU, namely that its rests purely on closing the gender gap and achieving balance. Drawing on the impact of the EU's gender equality policies in Turkey, as a candidate country where the EU's influence is greatest, Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm and Cin's (2021) critique is that the EU does not have a robust and comprehensive gender equality policy agenda as the feminist rationale has never been the departure point for gender equality, and argues that the EU should instead go beyond the liberal concerns of feminism to consider issues such as recognising the links between gender regimes and power structures and relations in order to disrupt the underlying gendered structures and power relations.

Given that the EU's instrumental approach to promoting women's political participation is very much driven by the tangible outcome of increasing numbers, we argue that there needs to be a feminist approach to gendering women's political participation that moves beyond the action points of collecting data or raising awareness, as identified in the strategy document. So, the following sections conceptualise how such a gendered political participation that could form the basis of substantive gender equality for good governance should look like.

<a> 5. Gendering Women's Political Participation in the EU for Good Governance

Good governance approaches in the EU address problems of legitimacy in budgetary, judicial, legislative, and administrative institutions and seek to promote participation in the decision-making process. Although gender equality has not been a fundamental concern of good governance in the EU, we can see many initiatives designed to promote women's participation can have a very narrow focus on being tokenistic and even when it does have an agenda of promoting gender equality, it is heteronormative and ignores the intersectionality of women (see Cin and Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm, 2021). The gender-friendly governance tools, even for those in favour of empowering women in the liberal western world including the EU, indeed reflect a male of point of view (Catherine MacKinnon 1989, p. 162) because the public sector governance is run by a male-dominated establishment and it traditionally privileges men, positions women as the objects of policies, and makes them dependent on public policies (Hernes, 1987). The ways states approach gender relations both within and outside (e.g. the link between state and civil society)

their institutions have implications for governance structures whilst acknowledging that authority is also dispersed across intergovernmental institutions, private actors, civil society or different sectors. Drawing on the feminist critique of the multiplicity and complexity of masculine norms, we argue for a good governance that shows affinity with gender concerns and strategies such as gender mainstreaming particularly in anti-corruption programs (Merkle, 2018). As much as we are interested in the process of exploring implications of any planned action for women and men or the ways in which women can be included in the decision making, we are equally concerned with how gendered relations are constructed, challenged and integrated within the institutions. We place our critique on the way the EU approaches women's participation and how it follows a very gender-sensitive model of adapting soft policies, which does not aim to disrupt the formal structures, informal norms (e.g. hegemonic masculinity and androcentric values of governance), and masculine power hierarchies embedded in the institutions, interactions, and systems, but rather just attempts to give room for women. Such an approach, as we have argued above, can neither change the governance structures nor bring transformative change to the political participation of women. Instead, we argue a feminist approach on how such substantive political participation and posit three arguments for effective female participation for good governance: i) gendered participatory processes, ii) gendered institutions, and iii) gendered networks.

Our first argument draws on the much-debated issues of numerical parity, namely the politics of presence framework (Phillips 1995), which establishes the theoretical grounds for the link between descriptive and substantive representation. The feminist literature (Phillips, 1995; Celis et al., 2008; Kantola, 2009) on women's political participation argues that an increase in women's numerical representation in parliaments will not necessarily automatically lead to substantive representation where women's interests and benefits are fully advocated and protected. Promoting women's participation without changing the gendered logic that pervades the institutions is unlikely to lead to good and inclusive governance as they mask the questions of who is included in the governance process (Fraser, 2010).

The EU's commitment to improving data collection at the EU and member states levels is limited to improving numerical data concerning women's participation. For substantive participation and representation, this data should rather focus on the extent to which the women who are in the EP joined in with the construction of legislation and the nature and scope of the legislation they have contributed to. There is little or no discussion with regard to how those who have access to senior

managerial positions and decision-making roles initiate change or can be supported or empowered to dismantle the gendered hierarchy in the institutions. In their work on Party Groups and women MPs in the EP, Kantola and Rolandsen-Agustín (2019) argue how the weakest female representation is seen not only in foreign affairs and economic issues but also in budgetary control, rural development, industry, money laundering, tax avoidance and tax evasion, whereas there is strong female representation on cultural, women's, and human rights. This shows that women are effectively cast out and excluded from the most important pressing issues of governance and corruption, such as budgeting. Even when women are included in the leadership, they still remain on the margins of the decision-making roles of core issues that are likely to end corruption.

A recent report on Gender Budgeting: Mainstreaming Gender into the EU Budget and Macroeconomic Policy Framework likewise shows that in the allocation of structural and mutual funds that gender mainstreaming has been rarely implemented (EIGE 2019). Yet, as depicted by empirical evidence, adopting a gender-responsive perspective in budgeting promotes democratic and good governance by increasing the participation of all citizens (Elson and Sharp, 2010; Cengiz and Beverage, 2015; Galizzi et al., 2018).

The second argument concerns the gendered institutions and the hegemonic masculinity dominating the interactions, relations, and power hierarchies. Feminist institutionalism critiques the gender blindness of the bureaucratic and political processes to the inclusion of women as critical actors of change and advocates a transformative change in the restructuring of institutions (Mackay et al., 2010). The political and the bureaucratic systems can be quite exclusionary and gendered in the way they operate and can be ignorant of the patriarchal values they promote under the guise of impartiality and neutrality. Kantola and Rolandsen Agustín's (2019) research with women MPs in the EP clearly exhibits this canon of thinking in the way gender equality is regarded as an achieved and completed goal, particularly for Nordic countries because there is equal participation of women and men MPs from these countries (e.g., 57.1 % of MPs in the EP from Finland is women). Their research, which also echoes the oft-cited argument that the neutrality in the selection process has nothing to do with gender concerns, cannot open an agenda for gender equality as it fails to acknowledge that women's participation is hindered by the hegemonic masculinity underpinning the gendered relations. Yet, women who do not want to comply with gendered norms or challenge the masculine forms of power hierarchies are likely to be excluded or removed from high-ranked offices (Kenny, 2013).

Although the EU's approach to governance accommodates conflicting or diverse interests and challenges rigid, hierarchical policy-making, masculinity manifests itself in the formal networks within the EU, which are dominated by men (Chappell 2014). These interactions welcome male bodies, impose norms of masculinity (domineering, exclusionary, sexist values and practices that govern the institutions and relationships), and create separate gendered spaces of labour for women and men (Kronsell, 2005). These gendered structures, embedded as they are in the political institutions and everyday practices, are so deeply seated that introducing gender-sensitive policies to institutions or taking up women-friendly approaches cannot unsettle the institutional power, structure, and agency because such institutions rest on androcentric governance and can be resistant to change (Thomson, 2018; Hay and Wincott, 1998). This necessitates the need to dismantle and re-establish the EU's governance structures as changes and amendments to make them more gender equality is likely to lead to gender-performative actions even from women (because of their token status) due to the embedded masculine moral values, norms, and behaviours that reproduce gendered inequalities and outcomes (Chappell and Waylen, 2013).

Our third argument regarding the gendering of women's participation draws on empowerment with regard to the formation of gendered networks in the form of feminist triangles within institutions. The feminist triangle includes femocrats (also known as feminists in policy and bureaucratic positions in government – see Krook and Mackay, 2011), who work within the bureaucratic structure, civil society organisations, and feminist epistemic communities (networks of professional experts) (Woodward 2004) and provides a platform for feminist advocacy (Guerrina et al., 2018). This triangle has a pivotal role as an agent of change in line with feminist goals (Guerrina and Wright 2016). The governance approach in the EU provides a multilevel playing field and offers a greater number of possibilities for women's and feminist groups to increase their influence, build their advocacy networks and epistemic community, and press for and gain the opportunity to monitor the implementation of gender policies (True-Frost, 2007; Greenwood, 2007). Woodword (2004) shows the key role such a triangle played in the European gender acquis of employment governance. Stratigaki (2005) adds the role of individual women politicians and gender experts in challenging the hierarchical gender distribution of power and promoting a positive environment for gender equality in the EU structure. Likewise, the research of Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm and Cin (2021) demonstrates the strategic position of femocrats and feminist triangles in pushing for gender equality policies, legislation, and protecting women's

interests in governance in Turkey, even when the gender policies came to a halt in terms of their implementation. Therefore, creating the opportunities for the formation of such triangles and supporting femocrats[4] within institutions can strengthen and maximise the effectiveness of the soft-gender policies on the participation of women and indeed increase the effectiveness of such policies.

The empowerment of femocrats, women's organisations, and grassroots movements have the potential to push the key EU bodies towards a broader feminist agenda and mobilise key actors for the more substantive participation of women in EU policy-making, both at the national and local levels (Guerrina et al., 2018). Such strategic partnerships can challenge the entrenched, unequal gendered power relations that have been inbuilt and thus inherent to the governing processes and institutions in the EU and strengthen gendered approaches to promote good governance and the fight against corruption.

These three arguments provide a holistic and a gender-sensitive approach to good governance which is urgently needed at a time when the current governance of corruption has largely failed. The leaked Panama Papers of 2016, which exposed a global network of corruption (dominated by male politicians and CEOs), made it evident that corruption is still a problem inflicting destructive effects on social justice, equality, and democracy in many parts of the world, including the EU despite its strong global good governance agenda (Transparency International, 2021). Our conceptualisation of gendered political participation could provide a new lens through which to analyse governance institutions and processes from a gender perspective and stimulate further research on gender and governance. The reframing of the principles and objectives of good governance in a gendered manner could promote a real fight against corruption and create gender-just institutions and democracies.

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[4] Femocrats are the feminists who work at policy positions in governments and promote the gender equality agenda in the public sector and legislation. See Krrok and Mackay, 2011.

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