



GENDER EQUALITY AT THE TIME OF COVID-19

*Curated by
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The Thinking Watermill Society

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I. OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT OF TTWS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WOMEN'S POLITICAL POWER AND THE ADOPTION OF GENDER MEASURES

I.I. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AND ITS OBJECTIVES

The Thinking Watermill Society (TTWS) is conducting a research project aimed at contributing to the policy debate in relation to gender equality and the political representation of women. Specifically, the project aims to investigate the **correlation between changes in the political power of women and the adoption of legislative measures to increase gender equality (gender measures) in the last 20 years – from 2000 to 2020**. The project focuses on a **specific sample of countries**: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and United Kingdom. TTWS has a team of female and male researchers, most of them are living in the different countries mentioned above, and all of them have specific capacities to carry out searches (see the appendix to this document).

For the purposes of the research project under analysis, gender measures are those legislative measures, which have a direct or indirect impact (such as paternity leave) on the subjective sphere of women. As regards women's political power, the participation of women in the political decision-making process is particularly relevant. Therefore, the central factor is the representation of women among members of Parliament, Ministers and possibly other relevant roles in the legislative process of individual countries.

The research project covers three main phases, two of which are already completed. In the **first phase**, after preparation of a model for the collection of data by Laura Zoboli, each researcher has identified

gender measures taken in the reference country from the year 2000 to the year 2020. At the same time, every researcher has framed the evolution of women's political power in the same country and has drawn up a summary of the operation of the national electoral system, to take due account of its special features. The first result of the project is therefore a systematic synopsis of all the gender legislative measures adopted and a record of the evolution of the representativeness of women in the countries under analysis from 2000 to 2020.

In the **second phase** of the project, each researcher has drawn up a short report on his country of reference, based on a questionnaire prepared by Laura Zoboli, to understand to what extent the evolution of women's political power is (or is not) related to the adoption of gender-based legislative measures in each of the countries.

The research project concludes with a final and **third phase**, which will involve the publication, by the end of 2020, of a systematic report by TTWS. This report is aimed at linking the data collected in the individual countries, responding to the demand for research on the correlation between female political power and the adoption of gender-based measures in the time and geographical sample identified.

I.II. COUNTRIES UNDER ANALYSIS

The research is based on the analysis of nine (9) countries and, specifically:

1. Austria;
2. Belgium;
3. France;
4. Germany;
5. Ireland;
6. Italy;
7. Netherlands;
8. Spain; and
9. United Kingdom.

To understand the importance of conducting a comparative analysis and to better clarify the reasons behind the identification of countries under analysis, reference should be made to the data on gender equality and female political power available for the year 2019. In particular, by referring briefly to the **data published by the European Institute**

for Gender Equality (EIGE),¹ a gender equality index within the European Union of 67.4 can be identified, while the index of the individual countries identified as a sample ranges between 63 and 74.6. The fluctuation is greater if we consider the figure of greater detail relative to the female political power (that oscillates between 44.1 and 80.8 in the countries identified). This difference between the two ranges indicates that they are not directly related, and the research carried out for the years 2000 to 2020 on the sample of countries identified will allow to elaborate systematic observations in this regard.

1. The data processed by EIGE for the year 2019 are available at the following address: <<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2019>>.

II. FOCUS ON THE MEASURES TAKEN IN THE NINE COUNTRIES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

In the light of the pandemic caused by Covid-19 and the resulting health as well as economic crisis that has taken hold globally,² the research team at TTWS considered it essential to expand the research scope of the project, carrying out a **separate analysis of a selection of gender measures adopted from March to October 2020**, without claiming exhaustiveness, **in the countries already part of the sample identified, in reaction to Covid-19**. Numerous studies discuss, although in a preliminary manner, the impact that the crisis caused by Covid-19 may lead to a worsening of the status of women and the possible slowdown in achieving gender equality.³

Given the current status of the measures and the lack of data on their concrete impact, the sample of the measures being analysed is wider than that of the main project, covering not only legislative measures but also measures of different nature (protocols, circulars, task forces, etc.) which, in fact, are justified by the need not to see reduced the gender equality achieved, due to the crisis caused by Covid-19. In addition, a comparative analysis of these measures makes it possible to draw some important considerations as to how gender equality can be

2. Among the many data published in recent weeks, attention is called to the study published by Eurostat on 31 July 2020 where an average euro area GDP reduction of 12.9% was identified as well as a reduction of the GDP within the European Union of 11.9% in the second quarter of 2020, available at the following address: <<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/11156775/2-31072020-BP-EN.pdf/cbe7522c-ebfa-ef08-be60-b1c9d1bd385b>>.

3. For example, noteworthy are the analyses initiated by EIGE (<https://eige.europa.eu/topics/health/covid-19-and-gender-equality>), from the United Nations Development Programme (<<http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-and-covid-19-crisis-human-development-perspective>>), by the Council of Europe (<<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/women-s-rights-and-covid-19>>), by the World Economic Forum (<<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/gender-equality-women-employment-covid19/>>) and by the International Labour Organisation - ILO (<https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_744753/lang--en/index.htm>).

considered a priority in the strategy of the current governments of the countries under analysis.

As described in the tables below, the analysed measures can be subsumed into three macro-categories: (A) measures to support reconciliation of life with work; (B) measures to prevent and combat violence against women; (C) financial support.

A. MEASURES TO SUPPORT RECONCILIATION OF LIFE WITH WORK

Analysis of the data collected shows that **all the countries covered by this research have provided for extraordinary parental leave, compared to the period before the Covid-19, for parents with minor children, with the sole exception of the United Kingdom and France.**⁴ The primary objective of such measures is not to support gender equality; however, they indirectly contribute to reducing the gap between men and women, since welfare activities are currently still predominantly carried out by women. With specific reference to Italy, for example, INPS (the Italian National Social Welfare Institution) data show that 76% of applicants for Covid-19 leave are women, of which 58% in the age group 35-44.⁵

In addition, among the other measures adopted to support reconciliation of life with work, it is worthy of note the Dutch government's measure introducing emergency crèches for the children of parents en-

4. In France, however, by the “*Décret n°2020-467 du 22 avril 2020 relatif aux conditions d'aménagement d'un temps partiel annualisé pour les agents publics à l'occasion de la naissance ou de l'accueil d'un enfant*” (www.legifrance.gouv.fr) in certain cases, the possibility to request an extension of maternity leave has been provided for.

5. ISTAT: Report of the Department of Equal Opportunities – Presidency of the Council of Ministers, “*Donne per un nuovo Rinascimento*”, 2020, p. 9, available at the following address: <<http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/DEF.pdf>>. In Italy, for employees in the private sector, for workers registered in the separate management, for self-employed workers registered with INPS and for public sector employees, the possibility to take a parental leave for a continuous or split period, in any case not exceeding 30 days, was envisaged for their children up to 12 years of age. During the said parental leave, an indemnity equal to 50% of the salary with relative notional contribution, is recognised to the worker. The paternal leave is also granted to workers with children aged between 12 and 16 but, in this case, neither the payment of the economic indemnity nor the notional contribution is envisaged. In the event of children with severe disabilities, who are students of schools of every order and degree, assisted in day-care centres, the leave is granted regardless of the age of the child (Articles 23 and 25 of Law Decree 17 March 2020, no. 18, so called “*Cure Italy Decree*”).

gaged on the front line to face Covid-19,⁶ as well as the choice of the German and British governments to keep the crèches and the schools open for the same category of workers (the so called “critical workers”).⁷

N.	COUNTRY	EXTRAORDINARY PARENTAL LEAVE
1	Austria	✓
2	Belgium	✓
3	France	✗
4	Germany	✓
5	Ireland	✓
6	Italy	✓
7	Netherlands	✓
8	Spain	✓
9	United Kingdom	✗

B. MEASURES TO PREVENT AND COMBAT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The countries under analysis in this study have registered an increase, during lockdown, of the cases of domestic violence against women.⁸ In order to combat the phenomenon, all the analysed countries have implemented or reinforced awareness campaigns in favour of women victims of violence (consider, for example, the initiative #YouAreNotAlone in Great Britain or the campaign “*Libera*

6. For further details: <<https://www.veranderingenkinderopvang.nl/actueel/nieuws/2020/3/18/vragen--antwoorden-advies-vng-aan-gemeenten-over-realiseren-noodopvang>>. The government has discontinued the emergency childcare starting from the 1st of July 2020; however, schools and day cares have reopened regularly in August 2020.

7. For details: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision>>.

8. For a more detailed examination, see UN Women 2020, “*COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls*”, 2020, p. 2 and following, available at the following address: <<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006>>.

puoi” in Italy).

In Germany the initiatives have been adopted by the single federal states whilst, at central level, the government has maintained its own online help service (“Women Helpline 08000 116 016”), already available 365 days a year and in 17 different languages⁹. Likewise, Belgium launched a communication campaign reminding people the various useful numbers during this emergency period, including, among others, the free helpline for domestic violence. Particularly, a task force for “*domestic and inter-family violence*” has been set up to cope with the increased number of calls to the helpline. In the context of information and support initiatives for women, in 5 out of 9 of the countries analysed (*i.e.* Belgium, France, Italy, Netherlands and Spain¹⁰) agreements have been adopted with the orders of pharmacists to allow women who go to the pharmacy to access the first useful indications to prevent and effectively address any stalking or domestic violence situations.

With specific reference to financial support for the protection of women who are victims of violence, they have been provided for in all the countries under analysis, with the sole exception of Belgium. In most cases, these aids have been granted to women’s protection associations and, in particular, in Italy and in the United Kingdom to the safety of Refuge Houses and Anti-Violence Centers. Only in France, Spain and Ireland has direct economic aid been provided to women. In particular, while the French government has paid a compensation to women who have been victims of violence, in Spain and Ireland those aids have been destined to aiding the search for a new accommodation for the victim.¹¹

9. Council of Europe, *Promoting and protecting women’s rights at national level*, available at the following address: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/promoting-and-protecting-women-s-rights#%2263001324%22:\[19\]](https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/promoting-and-protecting-women-s-rights#%2263001324%22:[19]).

10. In Spain, this measure has been adopted by the order of pharmacists in cooperation with some Regional governments.

11. “*Las comunidades autónomas o las ciudades de Ceuta y Melilla podrán conceder estas ayudas de forma inmediata, mediante adjudicación directa, a las personas beneficiarias o por cuenta de estas a las administraciones, empresas o entidades referidas en el punto 2 de este artículo, con la sola acreditación de la condición de víctima de violencia de género, del desahucio o lanzamiento, inminente o ya realizado, de la vivienda habitual, de la condición de persona sin hogar o de la condición de persona especialmente vulnerable. A tal efecto se adjuntará un informe de los servicios sociales autonómicos o locales correspondientes, en el que se atiendan y valoren las circunstancias personales que aconsejen la concesión de la ayuda.*” (Art. 4.6 Orden TMA/336/2020).

N.	COUNTRY	INFORMATION	FINANCIAL SUPPORT
1	Austria	✓	✓
2	Belgium	✓	✗
3	France	✓	✓
4	Germany	✓	✓
5	Ireland	✓	✓
6	Italy	✓	✓
7	Netherlands	✓	✓
8	Spain	✓	✓
9	United Kingdom	✓	✓

This thorny problem of women's hospitality who, following the measures taken to address the health emergency, could not and cannot be hosted in the Anti Violence Centers, has been the subject of reflection and intervention also in other countries. Belgium, Germany, Italy¹², in fact, have identified housing, even temporary, in addition to those already existing.

Simplification of how to apply for a restrictive order, already provided for before the Covid-19 in Spain and Italy, has been adopted in Austria, while France and Ireland have ensured speedy and effective justice in trials for private violence, including, among other things, a priority treatment of domestic violence legal proceedings.¹³ It should be noted that similar measures were already in place in the United Kingdom and in Italy. In Italy, in particular, with Law no. 69 of 19 of July 2019, an obligation has been laid down for the public prosecutor to take information from the offended person no later than three (3) days from the registration of the news of crime¹⁴ and

12. In Italy, the circular of the Ministry of Internal Affairs dated 21 March 2020 invites the prefects to verify, also involving municipalities and associations, the existence of additional housing, compared to the existing ones, for the reception of women victims of violence.

13. It should also be noted that in Spain, although there is no priority order for such legal proceedings, specialised sections are set up to deal with the trials of violence against women (*Juzgados de Violencia sobre la Mujer*).

14. "Quando si procede per i delitti previsti dagli articoli 572, 609-bis, 609-ter, 609-qua-ter, 609-quinquies, 609-octies e 612-bis del codice penale, ovvero dagli articoli 582 e 583-quinquies del codice penale nelle ipotesi aggravate ai sensi degli articoli 576, primo comma, numeri 2, 5 e 5.1, e 577, primo comma, numero 1, e secondo comma, del me-

specialised groups of public prosecutors on crimes against the family, persecutory acts, sexual violence and violence against minors are set up in several Public Prosecutor's Offices.¹⁵

C. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Analysis of the data shows that only in the case of Austria, Italy and the United Kingdom measures have been taken to introduce financial support specifically aimed at women. In most cases, in fact, national governments have taken measures to support households rather than gender measures.

In some cases, for example, subsidies have been granted to families with minors (Belgium, Germany) or following the recurrence of specific events, such as the subsidy provided in France for the loss of children¹⁶. In other cases, the benefits were aimed at supporting parents, due to the closure of childcare centres (Italy and Netherlands) or directly to the maternity support structures (Germany).

Peculiar is the case of Spain, which has introduced an exceptional subsidy for domestic workers who have reduced or ceased their activity during lockdown.

desimo codice, il pubblico ministero assume informazioni dalla persona offesa e da chi ha presentato denuncia, querela o istanza, entro il termine di tre giorni dall'iscrizione della notizia di reato, salvo che sussistano imprescindibili esigenze di tutela di minori di anni diciotto o della riservatezza delle indagini, anche nell'interesse della persona offesa" (art. 2 of Law no. 69 of 19 July 2019).

15. See, for example, the Interinstitutional Operational Protocol between the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Velletri, the Juvenile Court of Rome, the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Juvenile Court of Rome, the Directorate General Regional School Office for Lazio, the Directorate General ASL 6 of Rome, the Police Headquarters of Rome, the Provincial Command Carabinieri of Rome, the Municipalities of the district of the Court of Velletri, available at the following address: <http://www.giustizia.lazio.it/appello.it/proc_velletri/documenti/Modulistica/News/ProtocolloViolenzagenere.pdf>.

16. *Loi n°2020-692 du 8 juin 2020 visant à améliorer les droits des travailleurs et l'accompagnement des familles après le décès d'un enfant* (<www.legifrance.gouv.fr>).

N.	COUNTRY		MEASURE
1	Austria	✓	Extra payment of € 360 for every child and tax reductions for families.
		✓	Corona Emergency Fund for social deprivation for issues such as households, childcare, including baby-sitting.
2	Belgium	✓	Family allowance.
3	France	✓	Allowance for families who have lost a child.
		✓	Allowance for the parent who, due to Covid-19, is forced to stay home to take care of her/his children or a disabled person. ¹⁷
		✓	Financing in favour of the Gender Equality Ministry.
4	Germany	✓	Assistance for spouses on parental leave.
		✓	Supplement to children's allowance until the age of 25.
		✓	Compensation for loss of earnings in favour of maternity rest facilities or similar facilities. ¹⁸
5	Ireland	✓	Extension of the allowance in favour of women who have lost their jobs to all women regardless of their job status.
		✓	In November 2020, the Minister of Health destined €10 million to palliative and end-of-life care services, sectors where workers are usually mainly women.
		✓	In October 2020, the government announced that €4 billion will be destined to health and social care services and to implement universal healthcare, inter alia to protect health care workers.

17. For further details see: *Décret n°2020-467 du 22 avril 2020 relatif aux conditions d'aménagement d'un temps partiel annualisé pour les agents publics à l'occasion de la naissance ou de l'accueil d'un enfant* (<www.legifrance.gouv.fr>).

18. Provision 30 April 2020, *Verordnung zum Ausgleich COVID-19 bedingter finanzieller Belastungen der Zahnärztinnen und Zahnärzte, der Heilmittelerbringer und der Einrichtungen des Müttergenesungswerks oder gleichartigen Einrichtungen sowie zur Pflegehilfsmittelversorgung (COVID-19-Versorgungsstrukturen-Schutzverordnung - COVID-19-VSt-SchutzV)*.

6	Italy	✓	Increase of the Special section of the Fund for SMEs dedicated to female entrepreneurship, with resources of the Department of Equal Opportunities.
		✓	Parental leave for continuous or split periods, in any case not exceeding 30 days, for children up to 12 years of age, of which parents can benefit, alternately, between them. During the period of parental leave, the worker is entitled to an allowance equal to 50% of her/his earnings with the corresponding imputed contribution. As an alternative to taking parental leave, there is the possibility to choose the payment of a bonus for baby-sitting services or for enrolment in summer camps and supplementary childcare services for the period after the closure of educational services.
		✓	Financing for the promotion of projects aimed at disseminating and strengthening scientific culture in the female population in the so called STEM subjects (<i>Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics</i>)
7	Netherlands	✓	Subsidies for the closure of childcare centres.
8	Spain	✓	Exceptional subsidy for domestic workers who have reduced or ceased their activity.
		✓	Use of public funds of the “ <i>Pacto de Estado contra la Violencia de Género</i> ” to support initiatives to protect women victims of violence.
		✓	Aid for women’s associations. ¹⁹
9	United Kingdom	✓	Subsidies for charity organisations in favour of women.
		✓	In September 2020, the government announced a further financing of £1 million to be destined to twenty-five domestic abuse charities.
		✓	The government extended the Furlough Scheme until March 2021 and the Universal Credit, which is expected to dispose of an additional £9 billion in January 2021.

19. *Real Decreto-ley 33/2020, de 3 de noviembre, por el que se adoptan medidas urgentes de apoyo a entidades del Tercer Sector de Acción Social de ámbito estatal.*

AAPPENDIX

FEMALE AND MALE RESEARCHERS



PROJECT COORDINATOR

Laura Zoboli

Laura is Assistant Professor di European Economic Law at the University of Warsaw and contract professor at the Bocconi University, where she obtained a PhD in International Law & Economics. She is a member of the Milan Bar.



AUSTRIA

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Flavia is a lawyer specialized in corporate law, human rights, business development, corporate social responsibility, environmental law and international law. She is the head of the Desk Africa of a law firm operating in Austria and Germany.



BELGIUM & FRANCE

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Giulia is a lawyer who lives between Italy and Belgium, where she holds the role of associate at a primary law firm, dealing with data protection and life sciences. Previously, she obtained a LL.M. in IP e ICT law at KU Leuven. As a woman in politics, she actively pursues equal representation of women.



FRANCE

Henry Fumagalli

Henry, after studying at the French School in Milan, moved to Strasbourg (France) where he studied law, specializing in international and European law, as well as in administrative and comparative law. Back in Milan in 2014 he specialized in criminal law of the so called “white collars



GERMANY

Orsolina Fortini

Orsolina is a lawyer specialized in mergers & acquisitions transactions, corporate and commercial law. She is part of the German Desk of a primary Italian law firm. Previously, she obtained a PhD in Germany at the University of Regensburg. She is a member of the International Bar Association (IBA).



IRELAND

Cheptum Toroitich

Cheptum is currently attending the Advocates Training Programme at the Kenya School of Law. At the same time, she is a researcher at The Thinking Watermill Society. Previously, she earned a degree in law (LL.B.) at the Strathmore University of Nairobi.



IRELAND

Kimberly Mureithi

Born in Nairobi, Kenya, Kimberly is a lawyer with a law degree earned at the Strathmore University of Nairobi and a researcher at The Thinking Watermill Society. Passionate about issues such as economy, gender equality, environmental sustainability and climate change, she loves to find practical solutions to the world's social and economic challenges, with a focus on Africa.



ITALY

Arianna Paoletti

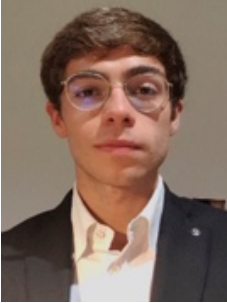
Arianna is a lawyer specialized in litigation and corporate law. She collaborates with the University of Roma 3, in Rome, and has obtained a PhD in comparative private law and European Union law at the University of Macerata. She is a member of the Roman Bar and of the International Bar Association (IBA).



NETHERLANDS

Giverny M.D. van Heemstra

Giverny is a researcher for The Thinking Watermill Society. In the meantime, she works as financial sector auditor (Banking and Capital Markets) for one of the main Big Four. Previously, she earned a Master in Finance and Accounting at the Imperial College of London. .



UNITED KINGDOM

Giacomo Di Giulio

Giacomo is an international student with an IB diploma. He is currently attending the second year of law at the City University of London and is a researcher at The Thinking Watermill Society.



SPAIN

Javier Vicente Garcia

Javier is a lawyer specialized in corporate law and a researcher for The Thinking Watermill Society. He is interested in social and economic issues such as equality, freedom, democracy and in State ruled by law.



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