The EP as a constant promoter of gender equality: another European myth?

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2. The EP as a champion for gender equality

• Foundational myth?
• Every strengthening welcomed by feminist activists and scholars

But

• Not recognized by women in the EU (Eurobarometer)
• Puzzling
  - EP no discussion and disagreement on gender equality?
  - Institutional changes (decision making power; increase member states)

1. Facts – 3 phases
2. explanations
3. First phase, 1957-1978: a supranational assembly with national parliamentarians

- Agendasetting → resolutions (e.g., maternity protection, equal treatment)
- Implementation → Article 119, equal pay → resolutions
- Decision making → advisory role

Henk Vredeling, Cornelis Berkhouwer, Astrid Lulling
4. 2nd phase, 1979-1991, directly elected supranational advisory body

Yvette Roudy
Hanja Maij-Weggen
5. 3rd phase, 1992-2015, a real parliament?

- Treaty of Maastricht, 1992
  1. Social partners
  2. Cooperation procedure
  3. Hearings of candidate-Commissioners

- Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997
  1. Codecision and QMV
  2. Extended treaty base: GMS, non-discrimination, human rights

But shift away from legislative action to soft law and rankings

- Budgetary powers
6. Another European myth?

• EP or FEMM?

• Patterns detected

• But: how to explain these patterns?
7. Possible explanations

1. High number of women MEPs?
   - Yes, but how come?
   - ‘Only women represent women’s interests’
   - No agreement between liberal –
   - Christian democrat – traditional/conservative – social democrat
   - male MEPs
8. Further possible explanations

2. Newness of the institution
   - Window of opportunity
   - Search for legitimacy

3. Transnational pressure and a velvet triangle
   - Committed individuals (mainly women)
   - Personal contacts across positions and levels of governance

A myth? No, a fact – but not cast in stone
- Status FEMM
- Position EP