

Gender quota in European Elections and their effect on political performance in the European Parliament

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Abstract

This study explores the effects of gender quotas in European elections on the performance of Members of European Parliament (MEPs). Opponents argue that quotas deteriorate the quality political institutions because under qualified candidates enter politics at the expense of more qualified politicians. Supporters, by contrast, claim that diversity improves political decisions and increases legitimacy. We explore this relationship between gender quotas and political performance. More specifically, we examine whether MEPs elected in states or parties with a binding minimum representation of women on the electoral lists perform on par with their non-quota colleague in terms of speech-making. Several studies have explored how quotas affect legislators' behavior, also with regard to parliamentary speeches (e.g., Murray 2012; Wang 2014), but hardly any of them shed light on its effect in the European Parliament (EP). The European Parliament is especially interesting to study in this context because quotas vary not only on the national but also on the party level. Besides the focus on this new parliamentary arena, the study sticks out with a novel and very comprehensive dataset comprising electoral rules for all national parties in the 2009 European election and data on parliamentary speech-making of all MEPs of the 7th legislative period. We discover that gender quotas impact positively on the political performance of all MEPs. Not only female MEPs but all deputies tend to talk more in parliament, when being elected via quotas. Moreover, the design of gender quotas influences speech-making systematically: MEPs tend to speak more in plenary if they belong to parties with a nationally-mandated quotas system for European elections.

¹ This study is work in progress. For further information please contact the authors.

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