

A typology of gender-based policies in the post-Communist EU member states

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Abstract

Gender equality policies represent an essential part of the liberalization and democratization of the state. Although these are prerequisites for the EU membership it is not necessarily that newly admitted member satisfy these requirements in that specific field. The existing literature on gender equality policies tends to focus on the democratic backsliding phenomenon and the cases of Hungary and Poland are quite well-studied, therefore. This master thesis suggests a case study of Bulgaria based on the theoretical framework of this literature. Although Bulgaria is not a backsliding country, the state of its gender equality policies represents a perturbing case, especially after the refusal to ratify the Istanbul Convention on violence against women. By making a content analysis of existing legislature, government addresses, and international organizations' recommendations, this master thesis proposes a typology of gender equality policies. Two dimensions: the supply and demand side of such policies serve as a basis of the classification. Findings suggest that Bulgaria exemplifies a state where limited state provision of gender equality policies, as well as the limited public discourse on the issue, places it in the “third party, dominated gender equality policies” type of system.

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Chapter 1: Introduction, significance, justification of case

Although the accession to the EU suggests democratization and liberalization of states, gender equality policies are not always as advanced as one might expect them. Democratization is universally accepted that it goes hand in hand with the expansion of women's rights (Alonso and Lombardo, 2018, p. 79). The introduction of universal suffrage, the availability of the opportunity to contest power, and the emergence of pro-feminist political parties allowed women's interests to be represented as well as actively promoted in the democratic government. The gender equality policy in Europe gained a particular scholarly interest with the rise of right-wing populist parties traditionally associated with traditional family values and man-centered political orientation (Rashkova and Zankina 2017, p. 849). While some scholars identify potentially perturbing signs of gender equality policies in young democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, such as Poland and Hungary (Kovats and Peto 2017, p. 117, Darakchi 2019, p. 1212), the literature tends to pay relatively less attention to the Southeastern part of the EU such as Bulgaria (Chiva 2009, 197). Possibly, this could be explained by the significant attention of scholars studying the de-democratization trend of the region closely linked with Poland and Hungary and the related promotion of traditional family values by the government.

To understand the phenomenon of the backlash in the gender equality policies in the EU it is worth separating the effect of de-democratization trends from traditional authoritarian values which is the reason to shift the general focus of the literature from the CEE region to the SE of Europe. Consequently, studying the Bulgarian case sheds light on the way inherently authoritarian institutions could affect gender equality policies and distinguish between mechanisms of backsliding from the post-Communist legacies. Furthermore, the Bulgarian case acts as a

benchmark for the authoritarianization process in the EU in the field of gender equality politics, because despite being labeled as “Free” by the Freedom House it still represents the lowest level of inclusion for women and LGBTQ policies in the EU according to the European Institute for Gender Equality analysis made in 2017 (Margolis 2018; Freedom House 2022). Therefore, Bulgaria represents a more evident case of gender-based policies compared to other European states which can significantly contribute to the literature on gender equality policies.

Another factor making the Bulgarian case specifically valuable is the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Treaty which the government did not ratify. Although most of the EU members signed the treaty to make it binding, Bulgaria created a concerning precedent by refusing to do that (Council of Europe 2022). The state justifies that by appealing to the traditional role of women and men in society with reference to Christianity. Although it is not necessarily a direct effect of the decision of Bulgaria to ratify the treaty, several other European states later followed the trend (Margolis 2018). To be more specific, Slovakia refused to ratify the treaty as well; Poland intensely questioned the need for ratification because it could undermine the foundation of traditional society there, and Croatia experienced significant pressure from the population before ratifying the treaty. Finally, Hungary refused to ratify the treaty following the linguistic ambiguity used by Bulgaria to justify that and banned gender studies at the university level (Margolis 2018). Thus, the role of the Bulgarian perspective could contribute to the study of gender policies in Europe.

The development of a common typology for studying gender equality policies based on the Bulgarian case could contribute not only to the literature on political science but gender studies as well. The majority of scholarly works are done in the merge of these two disciplines and, therefore, may require the development of a common framework that unites the perspective and methodology

of both. This master thesis offers a typology of gender-based politics in the EU with reference to Bulgaria with an aim to classify existing regimes based on that. By answering the research question on what is the place of Bulgaria in the typology of gender-equality policies this master thesis contributes to the recent developments in the field of gender equality policies.

To develop such a typology two different dimensions of gender policies are introduced: the extent to which the government develops gender policies on the state level and the existence of public discourse on gender policies in the state. The state dimension is assessed through the Gender Inequality Index developed by the UNDP which examines the state policies on healthcare, employment, and empowerment in general (UNDP 2020). The relative success of these policies represents the extent to which gender equality policies exist and thrive in the state, i.e. the supply side of them. The existence of public discourse, in turn, measures the demand side of such policies and is measured through mass protests, public debates, and organized movements (Kovats and Peto 2017, p. 127). In the Bulgarian case, there are unlikely to be many of them, so the media and NGO information is used to assess this dimension of the typology. Overall, the findings suggest that Bulgaria could be classified as a third-party dominant gender policy state while the other two cases exemplify the top-down and bottom-top approaches.

Chapter 2: Theoretical perspective on the typology of gender equality policies in Europe

The EU stance on gender equality politics refers to the equal opportunities and state benefits for each citizen regardless of their gender, including but not limited to equal pay, parental leave, social security, and non-discrimination at the workplace (Chiva 2009, p. 198). Therefore, in the context of this master thesis, these features would be referred to as “gender equality policies”. Although there are different possibilities to interpret “gender equality policies” including the UNDP concept of the share of women in the parliament and government offices, for the sake of parsimony of the analysis, policies related to the healthcare and labor participation would be considered in this master thesis (UNDP 2017). Furthermore, the very definition of “feminist policies” considers the existence of additional duties in relation to domestic responsibilities that are not necessarily reflected in this piece directly given the complexity in identifying and measuring this phenomenon. As gender theorists have pointed out, the division of labor and existence of the “second shift” for women as caregivers at home could be considered a gender-based culture, but it is not possible to fully capture the extent to which women engage in that (Gheaus 2011, p. 4). The “second shift” would be used in the context of the traditional family values and women’s role in society but rather as a dummy variable, not a categorical one, therefore. Even if scholars struggle to capture the extent of them such practices still exist even in most consolidated democracies. Nevertheless, given the liberal nature of the democratic regime in the EU member states, the policies which allows for maternal and paternal leaves equally could be necessary. While it is quite an ambitious task to introduce this in a relatively conservative society, policies aimed at women’s emancipation in Bulgaria could be an indicator of why and how this is done, especially in terms of the uneven labor market of the state (UNDP 2017).

The existence of the state policy on gender equality suggests the first dimension of the typology, namely the supply side from the government. In the EU sense, this could be reflected in the increased liberalization and the availability of alternatives for women besides caregiver role in society (Alosno and Lombardo 2018, p. 79). However, states such as Bulgaria tend to be pretty restrictive on these. An example could be increased promotion of traditional family values, critics of LGBTQ rights and same-sex marriages, and promotion of religious sentiments about the role of women and men in society (Darakchi 2019, p. 1211; Krizsan and Roggeband 2018, p. 93). Essentially, the government protects the traditional culture of gender based policies despite being criticized by the international organization and the EU as a superstate authority. Despite the fact that the majority of the Bulgarian population is Christian, which was mentioned above, it does not make it unique compared to other Christian-majority states in the EU which promote equality and inclusivity in gender related policies. Therefore, the extent to which the state intervenes private matters in Bulgaria could be a concerning sign for other members of the EU, where competing political parties could eventually use the same rhetoric as part of their election campaign.

By abstaining from the supposedly hostile inclusive policy associated with Western values the Bulgarian government encourages what they present as traditional Christian ones in order to protect their future in the office. By using the classical “us” against “them” populist perspective, the government is advocating for legitimacy and claiming to represent the only true nature of society (Darakchi 2019, p. 1211). Additionally, the state-level policies could potentially attack any other agencies promoting equal opportunities to all the groups of the population by labelling them as pro-Western and implying that these threaten the very core of the traditional value of family. Some of these policy rhetoric includes banning pro-feminist organizations as well as interferences in policies oriented toward the emancipation of women both on the socio-economic and political

aspects (Krizsan and Roggeband 2018, p. 92). In other words, these states limit the exposure of the population to different opinions promoted by these agencies and leave little space for them by promoting ideas which contribute their chances of being reelected. Finally, while the EU as an actor encourages more freedom and inclusion in both private and public spheres, it is not necessarily that it is able to enforce that in the case of the former among their member states.

The second dimension of the typology is a discourse on gender policies, i.e. the demand of the population, i.e. voters, for the development of gender equality-based policies. This might include different sub-dimensions, including the intensified discourse between the EU and local government, the cleavages between different parties in the parliament, and the conflict between the local government and independent domestic actors. For the comparison purposes and the parsimony of the argument, only the latter would be considered because not all states mentioned in this master thesis have drawn the attention of the EU or the international community in general on the matter of gender equality policies as in the case of Bulgaria. Furthermore, although one may reasonably suggest that most modern political parties' approach center to incorporate more votes, it is still not necessary that these parties will promote traditional family values and the existence of ideological cleavages between them do not necessarily exist. Therefore, the existence of bottom to top demands in relation to healthcare, labor conditions, and empowerment will be used to provide a context for the analysis. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that the extent to which the bottom requires changes could be subject to interpretation based on the source and the intended impact; therefore, for the purpose of this research work, only official media and government documents would be considered.

The table below summarizes the proposed typology of gender politics

	No public discourse on gender policies	Existence of public discourse on gender policies
No/Limited state provision of gender equality policies	a. Third-party dominant GEP	b. Bottom-to-top GEP
State extensively and forcefully provides gender equality policies	c. Top-to-bottom GEP	d. Consolidated democracy GEP

Table 1: Simplified typology of gender-based politics in EU member states.

The table above presents the proposed typology of gender equality policies initiation and implementation in the European context. The X-axis represents the demand side of the GEP where the existence of public discourse acts as a proxy for the necessity of introducing them. The classification was primarily based on the argument of Kovats and Peto (2017, p. 117) where they suggest that there is no significant gender movement in Hungary. The existence of public discourse could significantly strengthen the willingness of the government to initiate policies related to gender equality in democratic settings. Therefore, the demand side is represented by the existence of public debates, active NGO and media promotion of these policies, and protests (Kovats and Peto 2017, p. 120). It is not necessary that all these have to be present in the state to qualify the demand side, but the consistency and wider range definitely should be there.

The supply side of gender equality policies is represented on the Y-axis of the typology. The provision of state policies on gender equality could occur based on two scenarios: the population starts the agenda and forces the ruling party to adopt new initiatives or the international community expresses their concerns with growing issues in the area of gender equality policies (Chiva 2009, p. 198). Obviously, in the analysis of the EU member states, the supranational government would be the first party to do that, however, an international organization such as the UNDP or UN Women could serve this role as well. An example could be the Human Rights Watch

which promotes changes in the existing system of Bulgarian state in the field of gender equality policies (Margolis 2018). For the purpose of this master thesis, the source of authority is important: either the third party or the population domestically. The following paragraphs describe the intersection points, i.e. the nature of typology in more detail.

a. Third-party dominant gender equality policies

The combination of no or limited state provision of gender equality policies and no public discourse on them in the EU member state suggests that a third party might promote such. By a third party, one could refer to the EU as a supranational body, the international organization focused on the promotion of gender equality policies, and local NGOs with a similar purpose. Since the focus of this paper is on the EU member states it is expected that the leadership might want to promote these values as a part of the liberalization process. From the other perspective, it is not necessary that the target state might align with such initiatives. Since the government of this state is unlikely to introduce such policies, their relative success could be attributed to the efforts, threats, and encouragement of third parties.

b. Bottom-to-top gender equality policies

This part of the proposed typology could incorporate two major groups of cases: usual democratic settings where the government adjusts policies to reflect the demand of the population based on their willingness to do that or based on the threat of not being re-elected. Nevertheless, regardless of the motive that the government has, the bottom-to-top gender equality policies require mass mobilization and demand for such changes in society and the official legislative documents.

c. Top-to-bottom gender equality policies

This could be a relatively unusual type of gender equality policies initiatives because the government could be less interested in promoting values not of a top priority such as economic growth unless there is another powerful actor interested in that as in the cases above. However, it is not necessarily the case that the government will not promote gender equality policies, especially in the case if their ideological identity or party manifesto during the elections included them or a snowballing effect from neighboring countries. Thus, this typology characterizes the secondary nature of gender equality policies.

d. Consolidated democracy gender equality policies

The traditional view of a democratic state where the top and the bottom are interdependent and policies are initiated accordingly is represented in this type of typology. One could expect advanced industrialized democracies to be classified here, but given the absence of extensive research in this master thesis this is not stated. Also, given the limitation in space and time this study does not elaborate on this cell in details.

Since the focus of this master thesis is on the Bulgarian case primarily, it focuses on their gender equality-based policies in more detail as a main contribution to the literature. However, given the relatively well-researched state of Hungary and Poland in terms of de-democratization and gender-based policies, these are included in the typology as well. First, it allows understanding of the accuracy of the typology in whether it captures the necessary details to compare and contrast these states. Second, it provides a more solid foundation for the typology so that certain cases could be already classified and labeled based on the proposed criteria. The choice of cases to support the typology is simple: the post-Communist young democracy relatively recently accepted the European Union membership: Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria. Although the existence of a right-wing populist party could be included as an independent variable as well, in fact, all EU

states in general experience the rise of such rhetoric. Hungary and Poland are widely known cases of democratic backsliding, whereas Bulgaria did not make such significant progress in gender equality policies to experience a crisis of liberal values (Freedom House 2022). All the countries experienced Soviet ideology and were attributable to the third democratization wave. Since the existence of the common Soviet past could affect these states of a similar nature but different extent these cases represent a quite interesting set to study. Furthermore, all of them currently experience gender inequality processes even though their past in the area was different. Probably, this suggests that the mechanism behind the erosion of gender equality policies could be quite diverse within these cases. Although this master thesis does not necessarily target this diversity it will provide preliminary answers to the nature of the difference.

Case: Bulgaria and traditional Christian values

The Bulgarian case gained particular attention from the scholarly and international communities after the refusal to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence which was initiated in 2011 (Darakchi 2019, p. 1209). The literature on gender equality policies tends to focus on the states where these values undergo erosion associated with the crisis of liberal values. This section will provide justifications for the choice of Bulgaria as a case study for this master thesis as well as the background information on the issue.

The gender equality rhetoric in post-Communist Europe is strongly linked with the process of the EU integration and accession of new member states and Bulgaria is not an exception (Chiva 2017, p. 197). The liberalization process on both political and socioeconomic levels of former Communist states as a conditionality for the EU membership was slowed down and even reversed after these states became part of the Union. In general terms, Europeanization is a concept that

captures larger tendencies in the appearance of more gender-inclusive politics, especially the healthcare and labor-related ones. One of the major problems challenging contemporary policy-makers is the traditional division of labor which usually involves double-shift roles of a caregiver for women in addition to their professional careers (Gheaus 2011, p. 4). Although the state could encourage compensation schemes for such overtime work, it is obviously unattainable in the near future due to the complexity of capturing the mechanism of private household labor division. From the other perspective, the young democracies could adopt a liberal perspective without interfering with the private life of people by simply offering a more generous maternity and paternal leaves regardless of their experience level or occupational role. Nevertheless, most governments of currently democratic post-Communist European states tend to adopt a traditional and conservative perspective on family values there.

In defining the extent to which the government initiates gender equality policies in Bulgaria, one should be aware of the fact that the culture and the structure of society there are aligned to represent the traditional values. The Eurobarometer data described in the analytical part demonstrates that the Bulgarian society internalized the general EU perspective on gender equality policies (Eurobarometer 2017). For example, the traditional labor division where women are caregivers and men are breadwinners is quite popular there based on the survey data. Also, these are incorporated ideas of masculinity and femininity divisions which shape public opinion there. For example, the Istanbul Convention targeting domestic violence was reinterpreted as a tool to promote the LGBTQ lifestyle and relationships (Margolis 2018). Probably this is the way for right-wing political parties to prevent more leftist parties to be elected to the office. Despite the fact that the local and international experts engaged in the discussion on the distinction between the terms gender and sex the population bought the argument used by the state to not ratify the treaty and

supported it (Darakchi 2019, p. 1209). Consequently, it is safe to assume that the government does not have to invest much effort in the development of strategies aimed at promoting traditional values. This will be discussed in the analytical part of this master thesis in more detail.

In the examination of the existence of public discourse, the justification of the government to refuse the ratification of the treaty may take different forms based on the strategy and objectives of the state. Bulgaria is not a unique case where the government used language ambiguity to discredit the inclusive policies in favor of gender equality, but it is quite a representative one. As it was already mentioned with reference to Darakchi (2019, p. 1209) who reports that the absence of separate words in the Bulgarian language in relation to “gender” and “sex” allows the government to appeal against the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. By deliberately using the meaning of “sex” instead of “gender,” the government discredits the very idea of the Convention by attributing it to LGBTQ rights labeled as “unnatural” to traditional Christian values of Bulgarians (Margolis 2018). At the same time, the state promotes these religious values on women’s roles in families and societies to encourage them to be less financially independent and career-oriented, but this did not gain much attention from the ordinary public because of this resonance case. Obviously, this is not a solely religious phenomenon, but appealing to that could be more effective in a state where the majority of the population are Christians (Margolis 2018). Although promoting religious values is necessarily a negative phenomenon, the stance of a supposedly liberal democratic state is not in line with such rhetoric. Traditionally, the liberal government was kept away from the inside the family matters as well as individual choices of people.

In the public sphere, namely political participation, Bulgarian women have less representation compared to men, possibly due to the rhetoric of the state in relation to traditional

occupations for women. Rashkova and Zankina (2017, p. 848), in assessing the proportion of gender representation in the Bulgarian Parliament and far-right parties in general, identified that female candidates were less elected compared to men. Probably this is a representation of a traditional view that women are not related and can not be professional in politics. Furthermore, it is common that those female politicians who were able to be elected are associated with traditionally more female-dominated areas: healthcare, education, and childcare (Rashkova and Zankina 2017, p. 860). One can safely assume that chauvinism not only inherent to the general public but also point out to the dominance of traditional values in the political culture including female politicians as well. Possibly, these are Soviet legacies where women were not active politically and require significant attention from the scholars of gender equality politics. Therefore, the dimension of supply side of gender equality policies in Bulgaria is affected not only by the history of the state but deliberately supported by the state's political system.

Case: de-democratizing states Hungary and Poland

Although this master thesis claims to have Bulgaria as a major case study, the typology of gender equality policies proposed here could be strengthened by the alignment of existing well-researched states to different dimensions of it. First, it demonstrates the completeness of the typology and the accuracy of variables introduced to make classifications. Second, it allows classifying Bulgaria based on the existing knowledge about de-democratizing states and identify which factors make them different from the state which did not fully democratize in the field of gender equality. Thus, the following section introduces the case of Poland and Hungary in the area of gender equality policy crisis.

Extensive state interference in gender politics tends to be attributable to states where democratic institutions were altered by the government to secure the majority of votes and are mainly attributable to Hungary and Poland. The research on de-democratization is quite popular in the scholarly literature these days given the overall authoritarianization trend in the world. Some scholars argue that the backsliding is a result of a reverse developmental path: third-wave democracies adopted universal suffrage and elections before the rule of law and vertical accountability which normally appeared in reverse order (Rose and Shin, 2001). Such artificially transitioned newly-democratized states tend to be relatively less experienced in terms of gender politics as well, given their historical development paths. It is directly associated with conservative and traditional values supposedly incompatible with the traditional views common to most of the states in the Post-Soviet area (Krizsan and Roggeband 2018, p. 93). Indeed, Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria were exposed to the Communist regime during the last decades of the Soviet Union's existence which clearly had an impact on their institutional settings. To be more specific, democratic erosion of these states could be associated with their post-authoritarian nature of institutions but, in fact, could be more complex than simply defective institutions as Bogaards (2018) suggests. It is common that such regimes tend to rely on the "electoral" aspect of democracy only, which, in fact, does not necessarily produce a real well-functioning state apparatus (Merkel, 2005). Hungary's democratic backsliding suggests that it is a "deviant and exemplary" case by experiencing different mechanisms of defective democracies than those discussed by Merkel (Bogaards, 2018). Also, it is striking that fresh democratic institutions there produced an authoritarian government in the first place. As a result, the consolidated de-democratization process makes it a relevant case for this study.

The existence of gender-based rhetoric does not necessarily signal the existence of de-democratization, but it could be an alarming sign that the state extensively encourages that. Young democracies developed gender equality-oriented policies along with their democratic institutions, but the backsliding trend jeopardizes them on each step from the initiation to implementation. As a result, such interventions could be a potential mechanism exclusively attributable to backsliding countries. Four major dimensions of backsliding representing state interventions could be identified accordingly. The first one is the delegitimization of gender policy objectives. These challenges the very foundations of gender-equality rhetoric among high-level officials who set up the tone for policymaking (Pitkin, 1967). The second one is dismantling and reframing current policies. An example of such could be reframing the Criminal Code of Croatia in 2011, which decriminalized violence within a family (Krizsan and Roggeband, 2018). Since women are more likely to become the victims of domestic violence, such policy reframing negatively affects their rights in general. The next one is negatively affecting the implementation of gender-equality policies. One could point to the funding cut to feminist organizations as a case in point (Bettio et al., 2012). Another one could be the dissolving of gender equality institutions by the Orban government after they came to power (Krizsan and Roggeband, 2018). Finally, there is an erosion of inclusion mechanisms. Since populist parties came to power, they tend to adopt a selective approach in determining which groups of civil society to incorporate into the policy-making debates. Pro-feminist groups were unlikely to be included to that in both Poland and Hungary, states closely associated with the de-democratization trend in general (Krizsan and Roggeband, 2018; Grzebalska and Peto, 2018; Gaweda, 2021). Therefore, the role of the gender-based rhetoric remains quite significant in the political sphere.

In contrast to authoritarian and illiberal states where one could expect the dominance of traditional values, the effect of the de-democratization trend remains less predictable given the complex nature of the process. Some scholars argue that de-democratization is the largest threat to gender equality in Central and Eastern Europe due to voters' preferences shifting away from leftist and more inclusive political parties (Alonso and Lombardo, 2018; Krizsan and Roggeband, 2018). The de-democratization trend in Hungary in the gender equality field could be characterized as an attempt to "disguise gender discrimination under an ideology of conservative family values" (UNWG, 2016). Women-rights groups were deprived of funding and forced to shut down whereas organizations advocating for traditional gender roles in the society were promoted (Krizsan and Roggeband, 2018). Finally, the government aggressively promotes the caregiver role of women by promoting prolonged maternity leave and decreasing the access to "institutions of care" for a group of the population less advantaged economically (Fodor, 2022). Similarly, current right-wing populist parties throughout the world tend to have more anti-feminist, anti-migration, and homophobic beliefs reflected in their decision in policy-making (Lombardo et al., 2021; Kantola and Lombardo, 2021). As a result, the issue represents a concern for the future of democracy in the region.

Based on the discussion above one may assume that in de-democratizing states the public sphere is affected more compared to the private one. However, considering the push of the government in Hungary and Poland towards more traditional views on labor divisions in families as an attempt to "disguise gender discrimination under an ideology of conservative family values" (UNWG, 2016). In other words, the mechanism of gender inequality policies is pretty similar to the Bulgarian case described above. The role of Christian values and traditional values on families

as unions between man and woman could be used as a distraction by the government from more important political affairs going on in the state.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Data

The main purpose of this master thesis is to produce a typology of gender equality policies based on the freshly accepted EU member states. Although it is quite an important question to understand how the erosion of liberal values develops in these cases and why the EU might lose the leverage to address these concerns, this master thesis is aimed to provide the very foundation and identify the patterns among these cases. Therefore, a descriptive rather than an empirical study is proposed. From the other perspective, given that the case of Hungary is relatively well-researched along with the case of Poland by the scholars of political science and gender studies their place in the typology is proposed in the concluding sections of this master thesis. Furthermore, based on similar characteristics, the Bulgarian gender equality policies are included in the typology as well. This section will describe the methodology in more detail.

As it was mentioned above this is a descriptive study, the content analysis of the data from government sources, international organizations, and media was extensively done. All the information available in public access was used and examined. Since the researcher has knowledge of Bulgarian, the documents reviewed were read directly without English sources to make extensive and unbiased inferences without claims lost in translation. To support the argument about the source of support for the government's illiberal policies the structure and nature of the Bulgarian society are defined at the beginning of the analysis. Therefore, the special Eurobarometer data on gender equality policies from 2017 is used, which incorporates the information on all the EU member states. Additionally, official Bulgarian legislative documents and local media sources are introduced in the second part of the analysis. That examines existing laws and state laws on gender equality policies to understand the nature of the values that the government promotes in contrary to generally expected European liberal ones. Finally, the

emancipation index data from the UNDP Human Development Reports related to the governmental policies on healthcare, education, and employment is evaluated as an illustration of supply side of gender equality policies interventions. Thus, this master thesis is limited to the content analysis of existing documents and the state legislature rather than empirical research.

The next section provides an extensive analysis of the data available for public use and the inferences are made based on that. Although there could be some specific government or the NGO based information available for the limited number of people, the researcher do not have access to them and, therefore, do not have a sensitive data. This will be discussed in more details in the discussions and limitations section of this master thesis.

Chapter 4: Analysis

As mentioned in the introductory section, Bulgaria created a perturbing case for the EU by not ratifying the Istanbul Treaty and setting a supporting precedent for other states such as Croatia, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary to either denounce or abstain from the initiative of gender equality politics in general (Human Rights Watch 2014). Obviously, it is not certain that it was the Bulgarian case that forced other states mentioned above to follow the example, but the existence of a unifying pattern, erosion of democratic institutions in the field of gender equality policies, is a potentially fruitful phenomenon to study. Since states following the lead are mostly represented by a long history of authoritarian rule under the Communist regime, being the youngest among the members in the EU, and a crisis of liberal values, one could safely assume that political regime directly influences the issue of gender equality policies. However, this master thesis does not identify the magnitude and the extent to which such relationships exist. The main purpose of this study is to identify patterns to classify these cases and the following section specifies on this analysis in more detail.

The proposed dimensions for the typology include the initiative of the state to introduce more inclusive social policies on the healthcare and empowerment of women compared to men and the existence of public discourse on gender issues, supply and demand for such policies respectively. The existing literature on well-studied cases of Hungary and Poland allows for more elaborative analysis in the case of Bulgaria, because the pattern of gender equality erosion is quite represented there (Kovats and Peto 2017, p. 117). To identify the place of Bulgaria in the proposed typology, more specifically, the existing documents from independent international sources and media will be assessed. Furthermore, the state perspective is examined through the official legislative documents and government addresses with references to traditional family values and

the stance of women in society (Gender Mainstreaming 2022). The next section is devoted to providing more detailed information on the issue.

The nature of Bulgarian society

The Bulgarian government adopted a rhetoric of gender equality in 2015 when the EU expressed its concerns about the state of legislation related to women-related violence (Margolis 2018). Despite the successful membership in the EU, the state did not achieve significant achievements in the field of gender equality (UNDP 2017). One of the potential factors contributing to the political agenda there is the nature of society which inherently favors traditional values and allows the government to manipulate the language of the EU policy recommendations to legitimize them.

To begin, the relationship between the regime type and traditional family values could be observed through the Eurobarometer data which presented the special issue on gender equality policies in 2017. The main purpose of the data is to compare and contrast the level to which men and women are treated in the different contexts of all 27 member states of the EU. The relevance of data from the report on Gender Equality is directly linked to the recommendation of the international community issued in 2017 because the collection of responses occurred just after the Bulgarian government announced steps in combatting gender inequality. The main questions related to the traditional family roles as a man is a breadwinner, and a woman is a caregiver were asked to the population of all member states across the EU. Therefore, the averaged pattern could be observed where Bulgaria represents an outlier (Eurobarometer 2017). Although the majority of European states achieved significant progress in their gender equality policies and emancipation of women level, Bulgaria still lags behind all of them.

To illustrate why the population welcomed the traditional family rhetoric of the government in Bulgaria the responses to the questions representing these could be assessed. The first question included in the survey was framed as “The most important role of a woman is to take care of her home and family” (Eurobarometer 2017). As it was already mentioned, the liberalization of society includes the empowerment of women and allows them to have more opportunities to decide on their future (Alonso and Lombardo 2018, p.79). It is striking that the highest proportion of support for this statement was provided by the Bulgarian, Hungarian, Poland, and Czech Republic (Eurobarometer 2017).¹ In contrast, more democratic states such as Germany and France tend to have the lowest scores of support for this statement. Similarly, the answers to the question on the role of men as breadwinners demonstrate the same pattern: younger democracies tend to represent more support to such statements as well compared to consolidated ones (Eurobarometer 2017). This trend suggests that the more authoritarian a state gets, the more likely it is to support the traditional family values in society because this allows the government to have more control over power contestation during the elections. Although this data does not allow us to identify the direction of the relationship between the authoritarianization trend and the jeopardy of gender equality politics it is safe to assume that these are certainly interconnected.

Furthermore, states experiencing the decay of gender equality policies do not view this as problematic which suggests that their population internalized this perspective. For example, in assessing the success of gender equality politics and the achievement of an equal society the Bulgarian population is quite supportive of that view. To be more specific, the respondents evaluate the gender equality in their country as quite successful (Eurobarometer 2017). This suggests that the rhetoric of the government in Bulgaria concerning gender equality is quite

¹ For more details please refer to Appendix 1.

representative of the population and cultural values there. Possibly, existing biases and prejudices create an obstacle for the liberalization of the state. As it was discussed in the theoretical part of this master thesis, the democratization and expansion of gender equality politics are linked (Alonso and Lombardo 2018, p. 78). Therefore, the existence of state intervention in gender equality could represent a unique phenomenon not only for the backsliding states of the EU but states who did not fully democratize in this area.

To conclude, the role of Bulgarian society as a fruitful ground for gender based policies can not be exaggerated (see UN Women 2015). The accuracy of the view that the government forces the population to adopt more traditional values is not complete, because the population tends to be interested in them and supportive of the state course. Therefore, the Bulgarian case could allow us to assume that the existence of gender-based policies is rather an inherent phenomenon for the authoritarian state rather than the immediate result of the de-democratization trend. The Polish and Hungarian cases, thus, support this view rather than challenge it.

The demand side: the existence of public discourse in Bulgaria

The first dimension of the proposed typology includes the demand side for the initiation of gender equality policies from the population. As Kovats and Peto (2017) argue the existence of public demand for the empowerment of women could change the course of the political agenda in the state in the case of Hungary. Similarly, the prospects of the widespread unified movements on gender equality policies in Bulgaria remain shady. This section is devoted to elaborating on this statement and why it is crucial for the typology to incorporate the perspective of the general population on the issue.

Given the information on values existing in Bulgarian society, it is safe to assume that people there support the traditional view on gender equality promoted by the government.

Consequently, it is a top-down approach in policy-making which leaves little space for public discourse in the illiberal type of regime as in Bulgaria. The structure of the electoral system there suggests that a populist leader will use the idea that they are the same as the people and promote that through traditional values (Gurov and Zankina 2013, p. 4) While the liberal state is expected to have little interference in the private sphere of individuals and family matters, the Bulgarian government tends to have a strong opinion about the role of women and men in society and quite a limited tolerance of other representatives of the gender spectrum (Margolis 2018). Interestingly, the population widely supports their government in that view (Eurobarometer 2017). The existence of an opportunity and willingness to make propositions related to private matters such as sexual orientation or abortions and ignorance towards violence against women suggest that the Bulgarian state could be classified as being eager to control family roles and traditional conservative perspective on private issues. From the other perspective, if the population already shares these views, then it is unlikely that the government's actions could be viewed as interventions in private life. This section develops this claim further with references to individual government officials.

To examine the existence of discourse on gender issues, two layers would be considered: the state and independent human rights activists. In 2018 when Bulgaria refused to ratify the Istanbul Convention and the criticism associated with that, the state announced strategies and developed legislative documents to compensate for that (National Strategy 2021; Council of Europe 2022). Although, theoretically, these initiatives could significantly improve the situation, the real state of the issue remains acute. The existence of a right-wing party rule supporting traditional views on family and political debates on gender equality during the elections could represent the discourse (Gurov and Zankina 2013, p. 4). Furthermore, the Bulgarian state did not experience a burst of significant protests such as the one forcing the treaty ratification in Croatia

which could act as a sign of social and political cleavages in the field of gender equality (Margolis 2018). Additionally, this dimension is aimed to capture the nature of the discourse: whether the government adopts reactive or proactive measures to address potential issues related to gender equality policies. As was discussed in the theoretical part of this master thesis, the division between traditional “us” and Western values representing “them” could be done to discredit potential opposition forces and mobilization of voters by the latter.

The official documents concerning the Bulgarian state legislature on gender equality for domestic use and international audience represent different perspectives on how the government views the role of women in society. To be more specific, the official strategy developed in 2015 to address the issue of gender inequality does not mention any factors affecting the increase of the marriage age among Bulgarian women and the decrease in the birth rate associated with that (UN Women 2017). The document attempts to represent the progress made by the Bulgarian government by adopting the *Law on Equality between Women and Men*, which specifically targets state policies in the field (Lex 2022; BMLSP 2022). Although one may suggest that this document allows for greater protection for women in the workforce, it still lacks the grounds on which gender-based violence could be assessed and punished which is an essential part of women empowerment strategy. Furthermore, the content of the Law tends to be quite general and does not specify how exactly the recommendations should have proceeded. In such framing, it could be viewed as a recommendation mechanism rather than an enforcement one based on the perspective of the reader to interpret it. Given the tendency to intervene in the private sphere by the authoritarian or backsliding government discussed above, this document could be viewed as an attempt to compensate for the reputational damage made by the refusal to ratify the Istanbul Convention

One may link the initiatives in the sphere of gender equality with the political debates related to the Euroscepticism trend that recently became quite popular in Bulgaria and all the controversies associated with populist parties' electoral campaigns. According to Stoyanov and Kostandinova (2021), although the general perspective on the EU integration is positive among Bulgarians, the state is afraid of the influx of foreigners and privatization of national entities (p 15). Because of the size and economic situation, the Bulgarian state has fears of security issues associated with external actors. These fears are represented in the slogans and rhetoric of major Bulgarian parties: "To regain Bulgaria" – Ataka, "Bulgaria above all" – Ataka, "It's time for revenge" – Ataka (Ataka 2022). It is safe to assume that most parties in Bulgarian politics adopt nationalist and populist perspectives making the strong position of alternative liberal views highly unlikely. Therefore, the supply side of gender equality policies could be quite limited in this state.

In relation to very specific instances of gender-based discrimination and traditional family values, public statements made by the state officials raised particular attention of the EU. A vivid example could be a deliberate change of the purpose and meaning of the Istanbul Convention made by former Deputy Premier Minister Karakachanov (Cross 2018). In his remarks, he argued that the initiative is aimed at recognizing a "third sex" and promoting same-sex marriages. Partially this is explained by the background of the politician who served as a member of the Communist State Security Service and definitely brought that perspective to a more recent political rhetoric (Stoyanov and Kostandinova 2021). Although the Istanbul Convention specifically targets acts of violence against women, the absence of separate words for "sex" and "gender" in the Bulgarian language allowed them to make such claims. While the government promoted traditional family values, such rhetoric was considered inappropriate among the general population, supporting the state's skeptical view on it. Additionally, the hate speeches against the female part of the Roma

population targeted by the government officials in relation to the free abortion issue increased concerns of human rights activists in Bulgaria and Europe in general (Crosby 2019). This case demonstrates not only the chauvinistic nature of the government official but the nationalist far-right ideology at the same. The populist ideology in Bulgaria, therefore, is quite popular which makes it unlikely for the government to provide more liberal policy initiatives. Overall, the attitude of the state to gender equality politics represents a one-sided and narrow perspective on the gender equality policy perspective and it is unlikely to be changed in the near future due to the popularity of these among the ordinary population.

In linking the Bulgarian political situation and gender equality policies, the development of the latter is likely to represent the external pressure and influence rather than the state. In fact, it is not surprising that the Bulgarian state might want to preserve the status quo and prevent the permeating of the Western values a priori viewed as alien to traditional Bulgarian society, because this may give an empowerment tool to leftist parties during the next elections. Furthermore, attempts by international organizations such as UNHR to interfere and draw attention to the issues of violence against women are unlikely to create a significant response from the government because the general public remains satisfied with the current situation (Eurobarometer 2017). Although individual actors such as Human Rights Watch try to point to the issue, it is still unlikely to be heard in Bulgaria. Therefore, the demand side of gender equality policies in the typology remains limited for the Bulgarian case.

Therefore, in contrast to Poland, which experienced mass protests against the government's gender politics initiated by the population, Bulgaria is closer to the Hungarian case in the current typology, where no mass campaign against the issue was initiated (Fodor 2022). The existence of mechanical measures supported by the widely accepted cultural norms in society makes the

outburst of such protest movements in Bulgaria highly unlikely. In classifying the Bulgarian cause in the dimension of political discourse, the domestic layer is more relevant because it represents a comparable one with other states experiencing crises of gender equality politics: Hungary, Poland, and Croatia.

To conclude on the demand side, it is highly unlikely that the ordinary population would demand for changes on the issue. The widespread level of support for the populist parties and welcoming of hate speeches against the minorities in Bulgaria, both sociological and ethnic, suggests that people there prefer status quo to liberalization. As a result, the typology would classify Bulgaria on the “limited or no discourse” part of it rather than the “active” part of it.

The supply side: the Gender Inequality Index (GII)

This section aims to elaborate on the gender inequality index (GII) developed by the UNDP to capture the quality of life for men and women in all states which reasonably could be included in the analysis (UNDP 2022). Using the data from open resources this master thesis introduces the supply side of gender equality policies proxied through the government policies on healthcare, empowerment, and labor participation of women compared to men in the selected set of European countries.

The extent to which the government engages in private matters of families as well as develops the general framework to promote traditional Christian values could be viewed through the lens of the gender inequality index developed by UNDP. It is composed of three dimensions: health, empowerment, and the state of the labor market of the state. It takes a range from 1 where men and women are completely unequal in terms of their opportunities and life quality to 0 which represents equality between sexes (UNDP 2022). The indicators of the gender inequality index include the following:

1. The maternal mortality ratio: collected from the WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, WB, and UN institutions represents the number of deaths per 100,000 births (UNDP 2022). Since the calculation of the geometric mean does not allow 0 values, the minimum percentage for the indicator is 0.1%.
2. The adolescent birth rate is overall the number of births per 1000 teenagers (15-19 years old) (UNDP 2022). Together with the MMR constitute the reproductive health index which shows how the state addresses the issue of gender inequality caused by the existence of natural biological difference between genders.
3. The level of literacy, namely the existence of the secondary education diploma, and the share of parliamentary seats taken by women represent the empowerment dimension (UNDP 2022). This indicator is particularly relevant in absolute terms in the context of authoritarian states where women tend to be deprived of access to secondary education. In relative terms, the dynamics of this indicator through time suggest the magnitude of change towards more restrictive gender-based policies in the state.
4. Finally, the labor market participation dimension includes the data from the International Labor Organization and represents the ratio between the number of men and women engaged in general employment and political institutions of the state (UNDP 2022). This is particularly relevant to the case of Bulgaria where the state tends to be dominated by men in the political sphere (Rashkova and Zankina 2017, p. 849). This is where the “second shift” elaborated by Gheaus (2011, p. 4) comes into the analysis. Thus, the indicator represents the advancement of political representation and inclusive labor policies overall in the context of this typology.

Although all these dimensions represent very complex calculations with multiple steps and different sources of information, for the sake of the typology development the final outcome of these is taken. The higher figure for the GII implies a relatively more successful gender equality policies implementations by the government of the state. Accordingly, the highest rankings belong to advanced industrialized democracies while the de-democratizing states and Bulgaria are in the lower strata of the EU population. Despite the GII data used for this master thesis being collected in 2019, it is quite representative in terms of gender equality politics because it illustrates the immediate results of initiatives of the Bulgarian government discussed above and acts as an indicator of overall trends in Europe. Moreover, this indicates the period of populist parties rise in both Poland and Hungary and illustrates how their political agenda affected the issue.

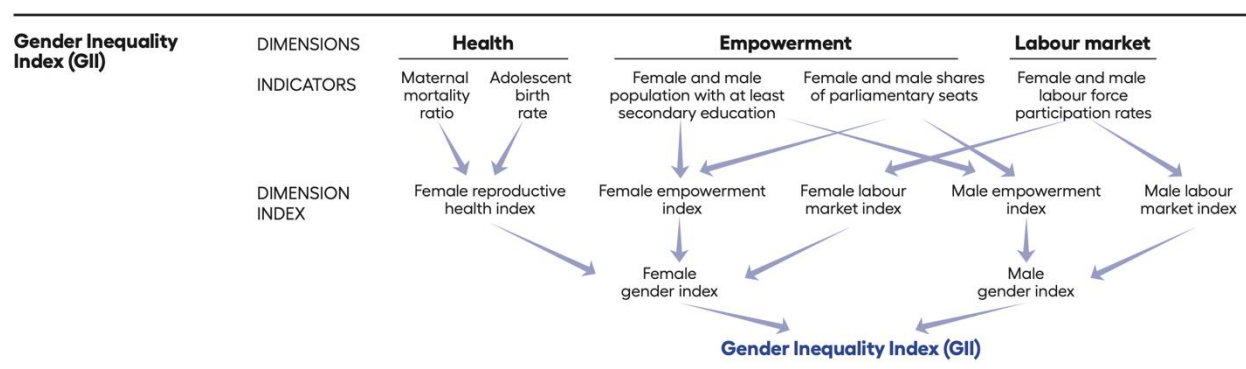


Table 2: Gender Inequality Index

Source: (UNDP, 2022)

Although theoretically, Bulgaria is a member of the EU, the achievements in the field of gender equality politics remain humble. Among all 189 countries on which the data is presented, Bulgaria stays in 48th place closer to Post-Soviet authoritarian states such as Kazakhstan (44st) and Russia (50th), and significantly behind other European states (UNDP 2017). In comparison, other states associated with issues in their gender equality policies are slightly higher in the rating:

Croatia stays on the 29th and Poland on the 28th with an exception of Hungary on the 51st (UNDP 2017). Therefore, one could assume that the democratization process of Bulgaria and its further accession to the EU did not much affect gender equality policies there, because of the neighborhood with other traditionally authoritarian states in the rating.

In the specific dimension, the Bulgarian state tends to be relatively well-performing in its educational policies: the difference between the male and female part of the population is 2% which is negligible given the overall level of education coverage higher than 90% (UNDP 2017). From the other perspective, the healthcare issue in terms of maternal mortality ratio and the adolescent birth rate is a perturbing one (UNDP 2017). This indicator is quite close to the authoritarian states' ones and could potentially be a driving force for the development of public discourse as in the Polish case. Finally, the share of women in parliament remains low in absolute terms but is not much different from the majority of other European states (UNDP 2017). Therefore, the government should address the crucial elements of the HDI data.

It is interesting to note that the difference between labor participation among women and men is not significantly different from the leaders of the rating: Switzerland (1st) and the Netherlands (4th): 12.7%, 10.9%, and 10.8% respectively. Obviously, there is a lower participation rate in general, but the data suggests that Bulgaria was relatively successful in determining its equal opportunity employment policies. The government policies on gender equality in the workplace could bring such results in the first place.

To conclude, the development of GII demonstrates the relative success of government policies on gender equality. While this data was prepared by the UNDP agency and the exact performance of calculation is not disclosed it still represents a credible source of information.

Consequently, the statements above on the individual level could be interpreted as less significant as in the case of abrupt differences on the scale.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The emergence of gender-based policies could be attributable to the willingness of the government to use this card against potential challengers in the pre-election period, including both

domestic and international ones. However, in the case of Bulgaria, the development of such policies was natural and in line with the expectations and ideas of the population. The evidence suggests that the Bulgarian population does not need to be forced to adopt traditional values because their perceptions are already based on them (Eurobarometer 2017). Bulgaria possesses the highest score on the existing gender prejudices and stereotypes among all the members of the European Union. Partially, this could be attributable to the political regime there, which opposes modern Western values in fear of being engulfed by foreign influence. From the other perspective, human rights organizations constantly point out the problems with enforcing the legislature on gender equality in Bulgaria. Although it did not yet happen, these discontents could potentially generate heated public discussions led by individual activists, eventually leading to wider campaigns against the government.

Considering the other cases of de-democratizing nature, the situation is quite similar to the Bulgarian one. The Hungarian government, for example, manages to keep the boundary for the population, so that no major social movement appeared there. Kovats and Peto (2017) suggest that this is not necessarily applicable to the future of the state. Currently, the situation with reproductive rights in Bulgaria remains under control, but it has the potential to fuel the fire of mass protests in Bulgaria as well. Anti-abortion laws, which are usually in line with basic religious ideas limiting the freedom of women to decide their future as a parent and body autonomy, could lead to public frustration and wide discussions about gender equality politics when the overall level of education and the quality of life in society increases (Darakchi 2019, p. 1212). Even though, at the moment, the majority of the Bulgarian population supports the traditional perspective on family roles and the division of labor, it is not cast in stone. As a result, the government might want to introduce alternative measures to keep the status quo in the future, such as increasing the popularity of

traditional gendered lifestyles by prolonging the period of maternity leave or limiting the activity of the pro-gender equality NGOs.

To forecast the future of gender policies in Bulgaria, one could draw a parallel with the well-studied example of Poland, where anti-abortion law created a resonance case after the unexpected death of a mother. The process started in 2021 when the government stated that abortions are unconstitutional. Access to them was granted based on medical prescriptions, and the wish of a future mother was no longer considered a valid reason. It is expected that the demand for abortions did not decrease because of the ban. In fact, the law forbids any intervention in the woman's body; the doctors could put the lives of women in danger. The resonance case, which fueled public protests, was brought as evidence of the state law deficiency by the international community and media sources. As a result, thousands of people openly expressed their dissatisfaction with this new legislature (BBC 2021). The government supposed that they could rely on gender-based traditional values promotion could be an effective solution to protect it domestically and avoid criticism at the EU level and therefore heavily promoted that by interfering in the public sphere of these women. Although the situation in Bulgaria is far from fueling, the similarity in the attitude towards gender roles revealed with the help of Eurobarometer (2017) data suggests that it could be potentially dangerous for the Bulgarian government to engage in radical measures.

From the other perspective, the difference between the Polish and Bulgarian governments is likely to be explained by the fear of external influence and taking the land by foreigners and the Roma population discussed above. To prevent that, the state adopted a strategy in the events in Bulgaria from a pure mechanical evolution of gender-based rhetoric given the situation prior to the discussions of the Istanbul conventions (Darakchi 2019, p. 1212). The government used the

opportunity to discredit Western values and the socially constructed term “gender,” equating it to “sex” by having a linguistic advantage. Moreover, they deliberately used misleading messages in media to keep the discourse ongoing while the more important gender-related violence was not shed light on (Darakchi 2019). These unfolding events could demonstrate how the state mobilizes the population along religious and cultural lines to prevent further liberalization of society. In contrast to the Polish case, the government in Bulgaria did not introduce any specific right-wing policies but used the linguistic feature to increase the possibility of being re-elected and discredit left-wing parties.

Bulgaria and Hungary tend to share the absence of public discourse on gender equality politics which places them on the one side of the demand side of the proposed typology. Although Darakchi (2019) claims that Hungary experienced protests against the gender-based policies in 2008, Kovats and Peto (2017) suggest that there were still no centralized pro-gender equality movements in Hungary. But they did not exclude the possibility of them appearing soon. Since 2008 was before the current ruling party Fidesz came to power in 2010, it is questionable whether the effect of these movements was direct for the new government to introduce radical reforms in the sphere of private life. Since the Orban’s government had a different course from the general one adopted by the European Union, they had to justify their choices and create a cleavage between traditional “us” and Western “them” by discrediting the latter. Another one could be the dissolving of Western gender equality institutions by the Orban government after they came to power (Krizsan and Roggeband, 2018).

Finally, there is an erosion of inclusion mechanisms which is attributable to all the cases mentioned in this master thesis. Since the moment populist parties came to power, they tended to adopt a selective approach in determining which groups of civil society to incorporate into the

policy-making debates. Pro-feminist groups were unlikely to be included to that in both Poland and Hungary, states closely associated with the de-democratization trend in general (Fodor, 2022; Krizsan and Roggeband, 2018; Grzebalska and Peto, 2018; Gaweda, 2021). Consequently, it is reasonable to expect the same pattern in Bulgaria as well. However, it is questionable whether it had any particularly powerful feminist organizations to begin with. Therefore, one could argue that this is more of a historically determined type of policy-making. In a more general perspective, since the process emerged recently and continues at the very moment it is difficult to predict whether the pro-feminist politics in the CEE region would bounce back or remain in jeopardy in the near future. It is safe to infer that there is a gap in the literature related to the public response to the government policy-making process in Bulgaria related to women's rights and this master thesis could lay a foundation to study that in-depth. Essentially, the bottom-up approach will be adopted in the Bulgarian case classification which could provide new perspectives on the absence of gender movements there.

Chapter 6: Conclusion, limitations, recommendations

To conclude, the development of gender equality policies is associated with state liberalization and democratization (Kriszan and Roggeband 2018). Although Bulgaria as a

member of the EU is considered a young democracy the idea behind its gender equality policy agenda resembles an authoritarian one. The refusal to ratify the Istanbul Treaty in 2018 turned the attention of the international community and the EU supranational governance on the state (Margolis 2018). The state used the populist rhetoric to distinguish between “them” West and “us” Bulgarians to support their claims. Moreover, the government engaged in the delegitimization of gender equality policies by presenting them as LGBTQ promoting values unnatural to the traditional structure of Bulgarian society (Darakchi 2019, p. 1209). To be more specific, by manipulating the translation of gender as social sex they managed to get the support from the ordinary population. Similarly, the recent developments in the Hungarian and Polish political systems suggest that these are experiencing a de-democratization trend not only in the political system but in liberal values as well. For example, the leader of the ruling party of Hungary Viktor Orban uses the same populist rhetoric as the Bulgarian government to discredit potential opposition (Gurov and Zankina 2013, p. 3). Although the ultimate outcomes of all Hungarian, Polish, and Bulgarian are the same, they are going in different ways. Since Bulgaria was never a fully flourished democracy the literature on de-democratization and gender equality policies tends to overlook it. However, separating unique traits of the ,authoritarian system would be helpful to identify perturbing changes in the de-democratizing state.

This master thesis focused on the typology of gender equality politics and identified the place of Bulgaria in it. The typology classification suggests that the Bulgarian case fits the third-party dominant nature of gender equality policies where neither the government provides them nor the population demands these from the state. The cases of Poland and Hungary mainly differ in the existence of gender equality-related discourse, especially after the protests against the abortion rule in the former. Therefore, these are classified accordingly. Finally, the existence of similar

policy patterns in consolidated democracies is less evident. The focus of this master thesis was mainly on states which experience the crisis of their democratic institutions, thus, the last part of the typology is not exemplified by a specific case.

Below the results of the assessment are presented in a simplified way by filling the table proposed in the theoretical section of this master thesis in accordance with major findings related to the issue.

	No public discourse on gender policies	Existence of public discourse on gender policies
No/Limited state provision of gender equality policies	a. Third-party dominant GEP: Bulgaria, Hungary	b. Bottom-to-top GEP: Poland
State extensively and forcefully provides gender equality policies	c. Top-to-bottom GEP	d. Consolidated democracy GEP: potential for the further research

Table 3: Simplified typology of gender-based politics in EU member states with cases

The limitations in terms of time and space attributable to the requirements of this master thesis workload did not allow for more extensive research in the field which could yield more substantial analysis and findings. First, the dimensions of typology could be expanded further to capture the nature of the regime and the identity of the ruling party through time. In other words, it is not necessary that since the very establishment as an EU member state each of these cases possessed deficiencies in the field of gender equality policies. Such a time-sensitive analysis could provide more solid forecasting on the prospects of the issue not only for the studied cases but generalized to capture the whole region and serve as a baseline for authoritarian states in transition to democracy. Additionally, the nature of policies provided by the government could be further separated to distinguish between the Bulgarian and Hungarian cases: whether the state actively

provides gender-based policies (Hungary) and where the state provide a limited degree of gender equality policies (Bulgaria). Thus, the mechanism for classification could be and should be revised and expanded in future studies on the topic.

The limitation of this master thesis also includes the methodological issue in relation to case studies. Second, the examination of Hungary and Poland cases in this master thesis was made based on the existing studies rather than the analysis of their legislative documents and government addresses. Despite the fact that the researcher does not have proficiency in their official state languages the availability of additional time and resources such as the access to translation devices and software could increase the depth of analysis in these cases similar to the Bulgarian one. Additionally, the existing trend of de-democratization in these states and the absence of such in Bulgaria suggests another dimension which could have been incorporated into the typology to identify which initiatives are commonly contributing to eroding democracies specifically. Nevertheless, the relatively well-researched state of these states in the literature allowed the researcher to incorporate them into the assessment and classification.

Although the main purpose of this study was to identify patterns in European states with a specific focus on young democracies of the third wave generation, the results could be expanded further to capture the nature of gender equality policies in other authoritarian states. The nature of classification and the parsimony of the typology allows for broader applications including the Post-Soviet area where this could indicate the magnitude of their liberalization paths and achievements. The existence of the last cell exemplifies a more idealized case that is active and efficient both on the government and population levels in the field of gender equality policies. Nevertheless, it is not necessary that existing consolidated democracies will satisfy the criteria for that. This outlines the potential for further research in the area.

Furthermore, similar to gender equality policies one could study the attitude of the state and the population toward the LGBTQ minorities which are generally discriminated against in states such as Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland. The development of a similar typology could be useful to identify what steps the government takes to prevent the exposure to what they claim to be Western values irrelevant to the context of a traditional Christian state. Obviously, the supply side of the typology should be adjusted based on the government policies on LGBTQ inclusive policies and not necessarily represented through the international organization data. Further research in the area could significantly contribute to these developments in the field of gender equality policies.

Overall, this master thesis provides an overview of gender equality policies with specific reference to Bulgaria based on the existing literature on the issue of de-democratizing Hungary and Poland. The authoritarian nature of Bulgarian politics in the field of gender equality policies helps to forecast the dynamics of Hungary and Poland as well as other authoritarian states. Despite the relative simplicity of the typology, it is safe to claim that it captures basic features of supply and demand on gender equality policies and allows to make general inferences on the nature of the phenomenon. The future research in the area could use this typology as a starting point to unpack the phenomenon. In this way this master thesis addresses the issue of the common theoretical framework absence to unify gender studies and political science students. Finally, the proposed recommendations lay the foundation for further research in the field of gender equality policies in the EU and different contexts as well.

Appendix 1. Eurobarometer data on gender prejudices

QC1.4 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

The most important role of a woman is to take care of her home and family

	UE28 EU28	BG	HU	PL
TOTAL	28093	1017	1076	1005
Tout à fait d'accord Totally agree	4652 17%	512 50%	410 38%	276 27%
Plutôt d'accord Tend to agree	7521 27%	311 31%	432 40%	505 50%
Plutôt pas d'accord Tend to disagree	7682 27%	124 12%	161 15%	178 18%
Pas du tout d'accord Totally disagree	7722 27%	50 5%	56 5%	29 3%
Cela dépend (SPONTANE) It depends (SPONTANEOUS)	316 1%	8 1%	2 -	9 1%
NSP DK	201 1%	13 1%	16 2%	8 1%
Total 'D'accord' Total 'Agree'	12173 44%	823 81%	842 78%	781 77%
Total 'Pas d'accord' Total 'Disagree'	15404 54%	174 17%	216 20%	207 21%

QC1.3 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

The most important role of a man is to earn money

	UE28 EU28	BG	HU	PL
TOTAL	28093	1017	1076	1005
Tout à fait d'accord Totally agree	4634 16%	520 51%	382 36%	235 23%
Plutôt d'accord Tend to agree	7651 27%	309 30%	468 43%	427 42%
Plutôt pas d'accord Tend to disagree	8383 30%	127 13%	150 14%	287 29%
Pas du tout d'accord Totally disagree	6967 25%	40 4%	61 6%	41 4%
Cela dépend (SPONTANE) It depends (SPONTANEOUS)	287 1%	8 1%	3 -	9 1%
NSP DK	170 1%	12 1%	14 1%	6 1%
Total 'D'accord' Total 'Agree'	12285 43%	829 81%	849 79%	661 65%
Total 'Pas d'accord' Total 'Disagree'	15351 55%	167 17%	210 20%	329 33%

QC1.2 Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Women are more likely than men to make decisions based on their emotions

	UE28 EU28	BG	HU	PL
TOTAL	28093	1017	1076	1005
Tout à fait d'accord Totally agree	6976 25%	518 51%	500 46%	261 26%
Plutôt d'accord Tend to agree	12299 44%	326 32%	445 41%	543 54%
Plutôt pas d'accord Tend to disagree	5026 18%	83 8%	91 9%	130 13%
Pas du tout d'accord Totally disagree	2543 9%	49 5%	22 2%	21 2%
Cela dépend (SPONTANE) It depends (SPONTANEOUS)	386 1%	10 1%	2 -	5 1%
NSP DK	862 3%	31 3%	17 2%	44 4%
Total 'D'accord' Total 'Agree'	19275 69%	844 83%	944 87%	804 80%
Total 'Pas d'accord' Total 'Disagree'	7569 27%	132 13%	113 11%	152 15%

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