

Gender Quotas on Corporate Boards: Similarities and Differences in Quota Scenarios

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In this article, the use of gender quotas to strengthen gender equality on corporate boards is explored. Examining national practices in ten European countries we provide an overview, categorizing the design of various corporate board quotas (CBQs) and the contexts in which they are embedded. In particular, similarities and differences along two dimensions are investigated: the design of the CBQs in terms of their hardness and progressiveness, and the institutional context in which they are embedded. From patterns of design and context configurations, different quota scenarios are discerned. We advance the discussion of female representation and the strategies of corporate boards beyond the rather misleading dichotomy of voluntary targets versus mandatory quotas, proposing a framework for understanding various CBQ designs. Moreover, we suggest that the configuration of design and institutional context, resulting in different quota scenarios affects female representation on corporate boards.

Introduction

Women remain underrepresented on corporate boards worldwide. Alongside major gender equality pillars such as equal rights and equal pay, equality in decision-making, including a better gender balance in business leadership, is an important goal of strategies such as those implemented by the European Union and various institutions and countries (e.g., European Commission, 2016). Despite a basic agreement about the theoretical desirability of gender equality, many instances of inequality remain, most saliently in top corporate positions. The proportion of women at the board level is around only 23.9% in Europe's largest listed companies even though an array

of initiatives to remedy this situation have been introduced in various countries in recent years (European Commission, 2017).

Much debate has ensued over which policies or initiatives are most likely to achieve the goal of gender equality in top corporate positions (Klettner *et al.*, 2016). Within political discussions and academic research, two differing pathways to equality are often presented: the *radical* approach and the *liberal* approach. The former is concerned with outcomes (i.e., quotas), and the latter is concerned with fair procedures (i.e., bureaucratic impartiality) (Jewson and Mason, 1986). On corporate boards, various initiatives have become increasingly popular. They include quotas and soft initiatives (targets). Klettner *et al.* (2016, p. 413) stated that the discussion about quotas vs. targets revolves around this question: 'Is it best to prescribe outcomes and force compliance, or suggest outcomes and permit flexibility around their achievement?' Soft approaches aim for incremental and gradual increases in the number of women on boards (WoB), assuming a shared desire to change the culture

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and procedures for selecting and nominating board members (Sojo *et al.*, 2016). The intention is to persuade companies and key actors to work toward cultural change (Spender, 2012; Klettner *et al.*, 2016). Proponents of radical approaches doubt a shared desire and/or the speed of change, assuming that enforced obligation is necessary to create change. Thus, the radical intervention of gender quotas is often considered the ‘ultimate’ political option when voluntary attempts to increase female representation on boards fail (Grosvold and Brammer, 2011). European countries that have introduced corporate board quotas (CBQs) were the focus of this study.

In 2003, Norway became the first country to introduce a CBQ, having major international impact. While CBQs remain controversial, by the beginning of 2018, ten European countries had introduced them,¹ although with significant differences in design. While the implementation of CBQs are assumed to strengthen basic gender equality (Seierstad *et al.*, 2017), triggering social and cultural change toward greater gender equality is a complex process. In particular, change is considered a collaborative societal endeavor, contingent upon both broad societal support and situational ‘fit’ (Burnes, 1996). Political initiatives such as CBQs are embedded in a contextual setting that can foster or hinder success. Moreover, the design of the laws might affect their mandate for change (Schwindt-Bayer, 2009; Paxton and Hughes, 2015). Thus, research suggests that CBQ designs vary, and the contextual environments in which they operate allude to acceptability and potential for change (Lépinard and Rubio-Marín, 2018). Despite developments and interest from various arenas, knowledge of the CBQs in Europe is marginal because comprehensive, systematic, and comparative studies are lacking (Hughes *et al.*, 2017; Kirsch, 2018).

Hence, in this paper, the CBQs introduced in ten European countries were explored, aiming to provide a systematic understanding of those CBQs. Their design and content were analyzed for *hardness* (enforcement and precision) and *progressiveness* (year of acceptance, implementation schedule, quota target, requested increase, duration, and scope). Moreover, the specific *institutional contexts* (gender equality, history of interventions, and political support) in which the CBQs were embedded were explored. We suggest that configurations of CBQ design and the institutional context result in differing quota scenarios, affecting the potential for increasing female representation on boards and beyond.

¹These are: Norway, Spain, Iceland, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Portugal. The Dutch CBQ expired in 2016; however, the Parliament passed a bill that foresees legal targets in a two-stage period: 20% by 2019 and, if met, 30% by 2023; if not met, sanctions will be imposed in 2019 (Kruisinga and Senden, 2017). Because of the legal nature of this target, we continue to consider it a CBQ (recently, as of December 2019 (after the acceptance of this article), steps have been taken by the Dutch Government to harden the quota from 2020).

Subsequently, new insights into the transformative potential of CBQs are introduced, and we propose that this potential depends on the countries’ respective designs and contexts. The discussion of board initiatives is advanced beyond the rather misleading dichotomy of voluntary targets vs. mandatory quotas, and we propose a framework for understanding the designs of various CBQs.

Thus, we respond to calls for further comparative studies through assessments of CBQ variations (Kirsch, 2018), calls for understanding quota initiatives and the contexts in which they are embedded (Krook, 2007; Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2010; Terjesen and Sealy, 2016), and calls for research to explore the link between WoBs, CBQs, and potential wider equality reach (Kirsch, 2018).

Theoretical background: conceptualizing and contextualizing quota laws

Since the early 2000s, studies have focused on WoB and the use of policy interventions (Terjesen *et al.*, 2015; Terjesen and Sealy, 2016; Kirsch, 2018). This research has received increased attention from various disciplines in academia (e.g., business, finance, political science, and sociology) and in business and political circles at both national and supranational levels. As highlighted by Kirsch’s (2018) comprehensive review, a recent stream of WoB research has highlighted *regulation of board gender composition*, which tends to follow one of two courses. One focuses on antecedents of regulations, which often examines institutional and cultural contexts (e.g., Terjesen *et al.*, 2015) or the influences of actors (e.g., Seierstad *et al.*, 2017); the other focuses on the effects of regulations on firm outcomes, primarily economic performance outcomes, which has revealed inconclusive results (see Kirsch, 2018). However, few studies focus on CBQ use, design, and impact. This research area is considered to be in its ‘infancy stage’ (Hughes *et al.*, 2017, p. 346) and is dominated by country-specific studies building on descriptive and/or secondary data (Terjesen and Sealy, 2016; Kirsch, 2018).

Design of corporate board quotas

A quota is often seen as the ultimate option when voluntary attempts to increase WoB have failed. However, quotas—whether CBQs or quotas in the political arena—are often used without a clear definition (cf. Klettner *et al.*, 2016; Spender, 2012) and can be considered a ‘fuzzy’ concept that is differently understood and adopted.

Hardness. Klettner *et al.* (2016, p. 413) argue that the debate on interventions to foster gender equality on boards can be reduced to ‘the long running regulatory debate of

[...] hard versus soft law'. Governance literature defines hard and soft laws as two poles on a continuum of enforceability, where hard law is 'the one that is enforced by the state as opposed to voluntary codes' (Aguilera and Jackson, 2010, p. 511). Schwandt-Bayer (2009) highlights enforcement as a means to add to the importance and legally-binding character of quota regulations. While quotas are usually thought of as hard laws (Klettner *et al.*, 2016), a closer look reveals 'a more mosaic picture' (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Vihma, 2009, p. 401) with variations between quota laws and their degrees of hardness.

Abbott and Snidal (2000) formulated criteria for hard law, assuming that a weakening of these will lead to softening. They refer to obligation and delegation (both related to enforcement) and to wording precision. Preciseness of wording is assumed to increase legal certainty (Braithwaite, 2002; Edelman, 2016). Following this logic, we argue that the precision with which a law is worded will affect its potential impact. Imprecise wording results in 'indeterminacy' (i.e., a lack of clarity as to the exact goal of a legal prescription) and thus 'constitutes contested terrain for social and political actors' (Edelman, 2016, p. 43). 'Vagueness is a common affliction of regulatory standards, especially those that rely on such open-ended terms as "in the public interest", "feasible", or "reasonable"' (Diver, 1989, p. 200). Generally, CBQs are assumed to reflect other laws and corporate governance measures in showing disparities in their degrees of hardness. In particular, CBQs might differ in their levels of enforcement and wording precision, which, taken together, affects the degree of hardness.

Progressiveness. Quotas are considered 'radical' political interventions (Jewson and Mason, 1986). However, some are more progressive than others. When Norway introduced the first CBQ, it was progressive. Countries introducing CBQs later were able to build on yearlong experiences of CBQ forerunners; therefore, introducing CBQs later is considered a less radical intervention. Also the schedule for implementing a CBQ, and thus the time to adjust to the intervention, affects progressiveness. When companies are urged to appoint a certain number of members of the underrepresented sex within a short period of time, perceived progressiveness is high.

Moreover, the set quota target might affect gender-related group dynamics. In her seminal work on group types, Kanter (1977) defined a *balanced group* as one with a ratio ranging from about 60:40 to 50:50. A ratio around 65:35 describes a *tilted group*, and a ratio of 85:15 describes a *skewed group*. A *uniform group* comprises one social type only (i.e., men or women). Thus, CBQs prescribing balanced groups are more progressive than CBQs targeting tilted or skewed groups. Additionally, the target quota should be compared against

the level of female representation at the time of implementation. A quota that aims to increase representation ten-fold can be considered more progressive than one that 'merely' intends to double representation. In addition, laws can be designed differently in terms of duration: While most laws are implemented permanently, temporary approaches exist (see Mensi-Klarbach *et al.*, 2017). Another factor determining the progressiveness of a given quota regulation is its scope (the size and number of companies affected).

Thus, the design and content of quotas are herein conceptualized, building on the definition offered by Sojo *et al.* (2016: 520): quotas are 'government or industry mandated percentages of representation or numbers of each gender in leadership positions paired with clear enforcement mechanisms'. Drawing on WoB, legal, and corporate governance literature, we propose that quota *hardness* must be assessed by considering enforcement and wording precision and that quota *progressiveness* should be assessed using the year of acceptance, implementation schedule, quota target, requested increase, and the duration, scope, and coverage of the law.

National institutional contexts

Verloo and Lombardo (2007, p. 30) suggested that 'different national political contexts may, in fact, affect the framing of gender in/equality due to the influence of specific cultural and political histories and ideologies'. Institutional contexts and actors are recognized for their importance in understanding the success or failure of quotas in politics and boards (Terjesen *et al.*, 2015; Seierstad *et al.*, 2017; Hughes *et al.*, 2017; Lépinard and Rubio-Marín, 2018). Because the contexts in which CBQs are embedded impact their transformative potential (Terjesen *et al.*, 2015), it is relevant to 'assess the extent to which the domestic systems display either favourable stimuli and incentives or conflicting structures and adverse forces in the field of gender equality' (Tesoka, 1999, p. 6). Teigen (2012, p. 139) suggested that 'one should look for the interplay between diffusion and national-based factors, circumstances, and events' to understand developments in various countries.

Gender equality. Gender equality, and in particular female labor participation and gendered welfare state provisions, are considered relevant precursors to CBQs (Terjesen *et al.*, 2015). We expand this argument and suggest that existing equality achievements within a country can also affect the acceptability of quotas as a strategy for wider equality. Gender equality achievements are often assessed relative to the concept of gender regime, which can be defined as 'a set of inter-related gendered social relations and gendered institutions that constitutes a system'

(Walby, 2009, p. 301). Thus, we suggest that acknowledging various factors (i.e., labor market participation, prevalence of the male breadwinning model, and welfare policies such as parental leave) and the overall degree of equality in the national institutional context is relevant.

History of equality initiatives. Multiple researchers (e.g., Teigen, 2012; Terjesen *et al.*, 2015; Hughes *et al.*, 2017; Lépinard and Rubio-Marín, 2018) have alluded to the path dependency or diffusion of policy initiatives, particularly quotas in politics, as antecedents for the introduction and acceptance of CBQs. Hence, policy initiatives could explain other initiatives in terms of path dependency and form part of the overall context regarding the acceptability of equality initiatives. Gender equality initiatives have been high on the agendas of international institutions. However, differences among countries, even European countries, regarding the scope and implementation of the respective initiatives can be found (Liebert, 2002).

Terjesen *et al.* (2015, p. 237) suggest that ‘institutional policy legacies in the effort toward gender equality’ are important when introducing CBQs, pointing to policy arenas and a history of equality initiatives in particular. Suffrage was among the first rights fought for, and it was followed by equality legislation, equal pay, and the use of equality initiatives in the political setting. Acknowledging that cultural change takes time, the points of suffrage enactment, equality acts, and policy interventions are important. Thus, countries’ paths and points of introduction, whether of leaders or laggards in gender equality initiatives (Liebert, 2002) and the overall scope of quotas in politics, might affect both CBQ use and acceptance.

Political support. Political support was a proposed precursor of CBQ introduction. Terjesen *et al.* (2015) suggested that left-leaning governments are more prone to introduce CBQs, and Krook *et al.* (2009) proposed that corporatist-consociational and hybrid (social democratic) models are more likely to adopt quotas than liberal and republican citizenship models. Both allude to the importance of political support for introducing quotas as a way to mitigate gender inequality. We expand these two assumptions and propose that investigations into the breadth of political support, not only when CBQs are introduced, but also over time, are relevant, given the volatility of the political setting and how it affects the focus and support of CBQs and their potential. Thus, it is important to examine the political setting, changes, and support for CBQs post introduction.

For these reasons, we suggest taking the aspects of gender equality status, history of political intervention, and political support into account when seeking to understand various contexts. These aspects allude to

distinct institutional contexts that can be considered favorable, neutral, or unfavorable to CBQs and gender equality and can affect both the design (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007) and its potential for change (Terjesen and Sealy, 2016).

Data and analysis

To compare and categorize national CBQs and the contexts in which they are embedded, various methods of data collection and analysis were used (see Hall and Wright, 2008; Barratt *et al.*, 2011). The data consisted of CBQ texts of all European countries that had introduced CBQs as of 2018 (Norway, Spain, Iceland, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Portugal), information about affected companies, female representation on corporate boards, and extensive information about the national, institutional, and political contexts.

Corporate board quota laws. Legal CBQ texts were available at national government websites or via EU websites. Information about their hardness and progressiveness was determined from legal texts, and information about the affected companies was collected, though difficult to obtain or in some cases incomplete. Several databases (e.g., OECD, 2012; EC, 2014; also, Statista and national stock exchanges) were necessarily accessed to discern the approximate number of companies affected by each quota. Moreover, data from the European Institute for Gender Equality (www.eige.europa.eu) were used to identify changes in the proportion of WoBs over time in the largest listed companies for each country.

Institutional contexts. Information about the institutional context for each country was systematically collected, focusing on the status of gender equality, the history of equality initiatives, and the political support both at introduction and over time. Various sources were used to triangulate and verify the data (Barratt *et al.*, 2011). Documents providing evidence of gender equality and economic data were available from sources such as the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report (2006; 2017) and EU documents (European Commission, 2016, 2017). Data describing the history of equality initiatives were collected from EU country case material and webpages about quotas in politics (www.equalitylaw.eu; <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas>; www.quotaproject.org). Information about the CBQ introduction process, including political and societal reception and acceptance, was more difficult to obtain. We intended to grasp ‘information related to the subtle [and hard to detect] contextual conditions that intensively impact the [quota] intervention’ (Pawson

et al., 2005, p. 23); therefore, various academic sources were tapped.²

Data analysis. Criteria derived from the theoretical backgrounds, starting with the legal text and considering it as the materialization of an agreed-upon solution arising through negotiation between various actors in a specific context, were compared across the ten countries. While all CBQs were mandatory, differences in design leveraged some degree of discretion. Thus, each text was content-analyzed to gain ‘a scientific understanding of the *law itself*’ (Hall and Wright, 2008, p. 64). In particular, the degree of hardness, focusing on enforcement mechanisms, sanctions, and wording precision of each law, and progressiveness, focusing on year of acceptance, implementation time, quota target, requested increase, and duration, scope, and coverage of each law, was examined. These criteria were analyzed and ranked, then compared and contrasted between the countries to holistically capture each national case (Hall and Wright, 2008; Ragin, 1987). Data were analyzed by each author individually, and results were compared, discussing incongruities to gain a shared understanding of each country. The analysis was shared with legal scholars, and the study was presented to outside experts to gain an inter-subjective view on the judgments and evaluations made.

The institutional contexts were then assessed, first evaluating the gender equality status, gender rankings, welfare policies, and labor market participation, then evaluating the histories of equality initiatives, comparing the points of introduction of major gender equality regulations in place in each country. Leaders and laggards of gender equality regulation were identified (Liebert, 2002). Additionally, quotas in politics based on comprehensiveness and point of introduction were assessed. Finally, the political support for CBQs at the point of introduction and thereafter were examined. Various sources were utilized and later verified for each country by national experts. Together, these dimensions suggest favorable, neutral, or unfavorable institutional contexts.

In the last step, the CBQ design analysis was combined with the contextual analysis to understand the various combinations of contexts and laws as conjunctures. The countries were compared (Ragin, 1987, p. 49), intending to ‘unpack the mechanisms of *how* complex programs

²For example, Seierstad *et al.*, 2017; Lépinard and Rubio-Marín, 2018, including national case studies from all ten countries (e.g., Lückerath-Rovers, 2016; Casaca, 2017; Arnardottir and Sigurjonsson, 2017; Gabaldon and Gimenez, 2017; Kirsch, 2017; Krusinga and Senden, 2017; Levrau, 2017; Mensi-Klarbach, 2017; Rigolini and Huse, 2017; Seierstad and Huse, 2017; Zenou *et al.*, 2017; Gresch and Sauer, 2018; Espírito-Santo, 2018; Lépinard, 2018; Meier, 2018;).

work ... in particular contexts and settings’ (Pawson *et al.*, 2005:).

Findings and analysis

Quota design: hardness

Enforcement. Seven CBQs were found to impose sanctions for non-compliance and to describe clear *enforcement mechanisms* (see Table 1). Most are amendments to the national Company Acts, and thus rely on enforcement bodies and procedures. A specific enforcement body could not be found for the Spanish quota, a part of the Spanish Equality Act, the Dutch Civil Code, and the Icelandic Company Act.

Key differences in sanctions for non-compliance were found. Norway prescribes dissolution if the regulation is not fulfilled. The Italian CBQ is enforced through a fine determined by company size and violation period. A more common sanctioning mechanism, implemented by France, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, and Austria, is the ‘open seat’ approach: vacant board positions can be filled only by the underrepresented sex. Additionally, in France and Belgium, no fees are paid to the remaining board members while a board seat remains open. In Portugal, companies are fined if seats remain open beyond 360 days. Germany and Austria prescribe the open seat approach only as a legal sanction for non-compliance. In Spain, Iceland, and the Netherlands, CBQs are not backed by sanctions. The Spanish regulation, however, has certain positive incentives in that companies seeking contracts with the Spanish government will be treated preferentially if they comply with the CBQ; thus, it is regarded as advisory rather than compulsory. In the Netherlands, companies that do not comply with the law must provide an explanation of their actions; however, this is not backed by sanctions either.

Wording precision. The ten CBQs were found to vary in precision and length. Monitoring compliance is an important precursor for potential sanctioning and thus hardness of the laws. It serves to reduce ambiguity, and thereby, the potential for circumvention.

The CBQs in all ten countries were found to provide clear definitions of the affected legal entities. However, differences in the ability to accurately identify the number of affected companies were found (see Appendix 1). In Norway, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, and Germany, the CBQs apply to specific companies such as public limited companies or publicly listed companies. These can be identified and monitored via local stock exchanges and official lists. Thus, in addition to clearly defining the affected companies, those that must comply are easily identifiable. On the other hand, in France, Austria, the

Table 1 Hardness

<i>Quota law</i>		<i>Enforcement</i>	<i>Precision</i>	<i>Hardness</i>
	Mechanism	Sanctions		
Norwegian Company Act	Yes	Corporate dissolution	Clear and monitorable	Hard
Portuguese Law	Yes	Open seats, monetary penalties	Clear and monitorable	
Belgian Company Act	Yes	Open seats, suspension of board fee payments	Clear and monitorable	
Italian Golfo Mosca Company Act	Yes	Monetary penalties	Clear and monitorable	
German Company Act	Yes	Open seats	Clear and monitorable	
French Copé Zimmerman Company Act	Yes	Open seats, suspension of board fee payments	Clear definition, hard to monitor	Medium Hard
Austrian Company Act	Yes	Open seats	Clear definition, hard to monitor	
Dutch Civil Code/Legal target	No	No; explain non-compliance	Clear definition, hard to monitor	Soft
Spanish Equality Act	No	No; positive incentive	Clear definition, hard to monitor	
Icelandic Company Act	No	No	Clear definition, hard to monitor	

Netherlands, Iceland, and Spain, CBQs use company size, such as the number of employees, total balance sheet, or assets, as the determining factor. Consequently, it was difficult to ascertain and monitor the affected companies.

Variations in CBQ hardness were classified into three groups (see Table 1). Norway, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, and Germany were found to have hard quotas, Norway being on top of the list. Portugal and Belgium, which use the open seat approach in addition to financial penalties, were considered to have harder quotas than Italy, which uses only financial penalties, and Germany, which uses only the open seat approach. France and Austria were found to have medium-hard quotas, the former prescribing the open seat approach in addition to financial penalties, and the latter, only the open seat approach. The Netherlands, Iceland, and Spain were characterized as using soft quotas because of rather weak enforcement mechanisms and low wording precision. The softest quota is that of Iceland, which has no enforcement mechanisms or sanctions and defines affected companies in a way that makes compliance monitoring difficult.

Quota design: progressiveness

Year of acceptance. All CBQs were accepted between 2003 and 2017, Norway the first to do so. Spain followed in 2007, and the two together were considered early to accept quotas. Iceland, France, Belgium, Italy, and the Netherlands were considered medium-early to accept, given that their CBQs were introduced before European Commissioner Reding's legislative proposal at the EU level in 2012. The third group (Germany, Portugal, and Austria) introduced CBQs most recently (2015 and 2017) and were considered late to accept and thus less progressive.

Quota targets. Although CBQs were meant to increase board gender balance, variations in what this entails were found. The specific terminology ranges from 'balanced

representation, division, or composition' and 'equal representation' to 'guarantee a minimum percentage/proportion of each gender'. Some countries use 'balanced' and 'equal' in different ways. Norway, Spain, Iceland, and France (the first countries to introduce CBQs), define 'balanced' as a minimum 40% representation by either sex (Kanter, 1977). Belgium, Italy, and Portugal prescribe a minimum of 33%, but the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria require a minimum of 30%.

Duration of laws, implementation period, and requested increase. All countries except Italy and the Netherlands have permanent CBQs. Comprehensive data on the proportion of WoBs in affected companies were difficult to obtain, but the proportion among the largest listed companies is often an indicator of the status quo, allowing differences in the requested increase to be determined along with the implementation timeframe (see Appendix 1). Countries were rated from very high (Spain) to very low (Germany) in this regard (see Table 2).

Scope and coverage. The types of companies affected differed as well. In most countries, the affected companies represent a small proportion of the total. Affected companies are the public limited companies in Norway, publicly listed companies in Belgium, Italy, and Portugal, and co-determined and publicly listed companies in Germany (see Appendix 1). By also considering country size, the scope of companies affected were determined as wide for Spain, Iceland, and the Netherlands, medium for Norway, France, and Belgium medium-narrow for Italy, Portugal, and Austria, and narrow for Germany.

Based on progressiveness, each country was generally classified as high, medium, or low (see Table 2). The CBQs in Spain and Iceland were rated the most progressive because their targets are high, and a wide scope of companies is affected. Norway and France were found to be high-medium progressive. The Norwegian CBQ affects as lower scope of companies, but it was the

Table 2 Progressiveness

Quota Laws	Year of Acceptance	Time Schedule for Implementation	Quota Target	Requested Increase	Duration	Scope and Coverage	Progressiveness
Spanish Equality Act	Early	Long	Balanced	Very High	Permanent	Wide	High
Icelandic Company Act	Medium	Short	Balanced	High	Permanent	Wide	
Norwegian Company Act	Early	Short/Medium	Balanced	Medium	Permanent	Medium	
French Copé Zimmerman Company Act	Medium	Short	Balanced	Medium	Permanent	Medium	High-Medium
Belgian Company Act	Medium	Long	Tilted	High	Permanent	Medium	
Italian Golfo Mosca Company Act	Medium	Medium	Tilted	High	Temporary	Medium/ Narrow	Medium-Low
Portuguese Law	Late	Short	Tilted	Medium	Permanent	Medium/ Narrow	
Dutch Civil Code/Legal target	Medium	Medium/Long	Tilted	Low	Temporary	Wide	Low
Austrian Company Act	Late	Medium	Tilted	Low	Permanent	Medium/ Narrow	
German Company Act	Late	Medium	Tilted	Very Low	Permanent	Narrow	

first to be introduced. The French CBQ was introduced later and has a lower requested increase, but its scope and coverage are high. Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and the Netherlands were rated medium progressive, led by Belgium, which has a target of 33%, a rather late introduction of its CBQ, and coverage limited to publicly listed companies. Italy, Portugal, and the Netherlands were found to be medium-low progressive. Italy and the Netherlands have temporary CBQs, the latter having a target of only 30%. Austria and Germany are low progressive because their CBQs were among the latest to be introduced, they require low or very low increases, and they affect a limited number of companies.

Corporate board quota design: Hardness and progressiveness. By combining hardness and

progressiveness, important differences between countries were identified (see Figure 1). Spain, Iceland, Norway, and France were found the most progressive, but they vary in hardness from hard (Norway) to medium-hard (France) to very soft (Iceland and Spain). The Dutch, Portuguese, and Italian CBQs were similar in progressiveness, but also vary in hardness, the Dutch being the softest. The Austrian and German CBQs were low progressive but differed in hardness.

The achievement of each CBQ was measured by evaluating gender balance – the proportion of WoBs – in the largest listed companies. Although some CBQs were recent introductions (Portugal, Austria, and Germany), some have been in place for years and should now be fully implemented (Spain, Iceland, Norway, France, and Italy) (see Appendix 1 for an overview).

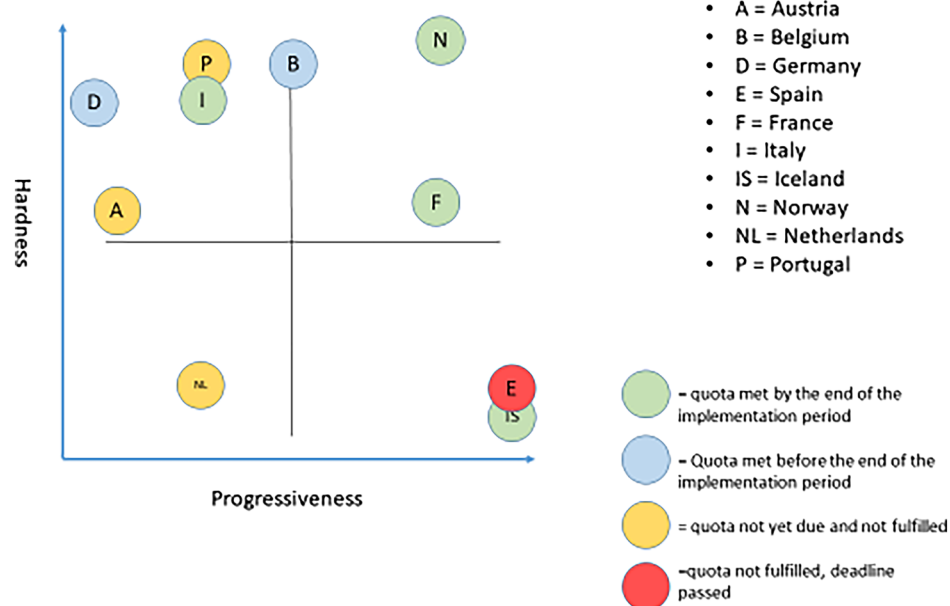


Figure 1 CBQs' Hardness/Progressiveness Matrix [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Figure 1 shows that most of the largest listed companies have complied with the CBQs by the end of the implementation period. The exception is found in Spain. The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, and Austria remain in their implementation periods, but Germany and Belgium have already met the CBQ targets.

Institutional contexts

Gender equality. Equality standards are often measured and benchmarked globally. Equality rankings, female labor market participation, and welfare policies were combined to provide a broad picture of a country's equality achievements (see Appendix 2).

Based on the World Economic Forum (2017) rankings, we clustered Iceland and Norway as scoring high on equality rankings. France, Germany, Spain score medium while Portugal, Belgium and the Netherlands score low followed by Austria and Italy scoring very low. Countries were ranked for their level of female labor force participation, and the group was led by Iceland followed by Norway and the Netherlands. Next, countries scoring medium on this dimension are Germany, Austria, Portugal Spain, France and Belgium. Italy scores low on female labor force participation. In terms of welfare policies Iceland and Norway are comprehensive and balanced while Germany and Italy are comprehensive. Belgium, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal and Austria score medium on welfare.

Taken together, we clustered Iceland and Norway as forming a group with high gender equality. Spain, France, and Germany were deemed to have medium gender equality; Belgium, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Austria, medium-low gender equality; and Italy, low gender equality.

The history of policy initiatives. All countries have Equality Acts in place and universal suffrage, but leaders and laggards were identified. Moreover, although all countries use quotas to a certain extent in politics, the scope of those policies and their points of introduction vary (see Appendix 2).

Women won the right to vote in Norway in 1913, in Iceland in 1915, in Germany and Austria in 1918, and in Belgium and the Netherlands in 1919. However, in France, Italy, and Portugal, this occurred in 1944, 1945, and 1976, respectively. While it is not surprising that all countries have Equality Acts, their points of introduction vary (see Appendix 2). Thus, we divided the countries into groups based on the point of policy initiatives. Norway, Iceland, and the Netherlands were deemed leaders; France, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, and Austria, medium adopters; and Spain and Italy, laggards.

Variations in scope and introduction of quotas in politics, both voluntary and legislative, were found.

Some countries (e.g., Norway and Germany) have had voluntary quotas in place in political parties for decades, but these are restricted to a few political parties for some (e.g., Italy and Spain). Voluntary party quotas have been followed by legislative quotas in some countries (e.g., Spain, France, Italy, Belgium, and Portugal), but their use and scope vary (see Appendix 2). Norway, France, Germany, and Belgium were deemed to have comprehensive use of quotas in politics, taking history and scope into consideration. Iceland, Portugal, Austria, Spain, and Italy were found to have medium use; the Netherlands to have low use.

Political support. Political and other specific factors and events can create urgency, support, and/or legitimacy for CBQs. In most countries, female politicians have played key roles in introducing CBQs (see Appendix 3). Moreover, in all countries, the business sector and conservative politicians have been at the vanguard of CBQ resistance (see Mensi-Klarbach *et al.*, 2017). Despite this opposition, introduction of CBQs suggests a substantial level of political support and/or cooperation between actors, creating a setting for CBQ establishment.

When CBQs were introduced, five of the ten countries had center-left governments, three had center governments, and two had center-right governments (see Appendix 3). Echoing Terjesen *et al.* (2015), we found that left-leaning governments tended to be involved, but half of the countries had center or center-right governments. In Norway and Iceland, CBQs had broad political support when introduced. In Norway, while the law accepted in 2003 was proposed and implemented by a center-right government, this was not the first country to discuss and propose a CBQ. They were also proposed by center and left politicians and political parties (Seierstad and Huse, 2017). In Iceland, the CBQ had broad political support at the point of introduction. However, this country is unique because the financial crisis brought urgency and legitimacy. Ultimately, a wide range of actors from multiple levels and political factions were involved in the process of introducing the CBQ (Arnardottir and Sigurjonsson, 2017).

France, Belgium, and Germany had medium support among politicians when the CBQs were introduced. In France, female politicians played key roles, yet there was resistance from the President, right-wing Members of Parliament, and senators (Lépinard, 2018). The proposal for a CBQ in Belgium was put forth by a coalition of individual Members of Parliament from various factions (Levräu, 2017). The process of introducing a CBQ in Germany was long, and debates were heated. Support from women from various political factions was critical, and in 2013, the CBQ formed part of the Grand Coalition negotiation (Kirsch, 2017).

In countries with medium-low CBQ support among politicians, international diffusion and focus was important, creating legitimacy. In Italy, female politicians from various political factions were important in the introduction of a CBQ after what has been described as a ‘tortuous passage through parliament’ (, p. 201). Reactions to political scandals created urgency and legitimacy for the introduction of a CBQ (Dona, 2018), but a rather narrow group of political actors were crucial for introducing it (Rigolini and Huse, 2017). Despite multiple initiatives, the proportion of WoBs remained low, creating urgency and some level of legitimacy for initiatives in the Netherlands. However, the consensus was that increasing the number of WoBs should be the responsibility of the companies; the CBQ was only moderately supported by politicians (Kruisinga and Senden, 2017). In Portugal, a center-left government proposed the bill in 2016, but throughout the political process, the letter of the bill was weakened to increase its probability of passage (Casaca, 2017). Spain, the second country to introduce a CBQ, did so in 2007 with a left-leaning government that put gender equality, including the CBQ law, part of the Equality Act, on the agenda. However, overall support for the CBQ was rather limited (Gabaldon and Gimenez, 2017). In Austria, a certain reluctance to the CBQ was expressed, and it was introduced following events in Europe, particularly Germany, as opposed to urgency and legitimacy for change among politicians (Mensi-Klarbach, 2017).

The political setting is volatile, and changes in governments and political parties in power can affect the focus on and support for CBQs. In Norway, Iceland, France, and Belgium, support has been maintained or even increased, resulting in broad or medium-broad support after introduction. This occurred despite changes (often multiple) in the political parties in power. In France, Belgium, and Iceland, further quota policies or equality initiatives have been introduced.

In the Netherlands, despite changes in political parties in power, medium-low political support has continued (Kruisinga and Senden, 2017). It has also continued in

Germany, but in an environment without changes in government since the introduction of the CBQ in 2015. Little change in political support has been seen in Portugal since the recent introduction of a CBQ in 2017.

At the introduction stage, Spain showed medium-low political support, and this has continued. Moreover, a significant weakening of focus on both the CBQ and equality in general has occurred with the change to a right-leaning government (Gabaldon and Gimenez, 2017). A CBQ can be fragile without overall and broad political support, as seen in Spain. In Italy, despite the introduction of CBQs and quotas in politics, it is argued that gender quotas are symbolic, and the uncertainty of the political situation makes further equality and CBQ support fragile (Dona, 2018). In Austria, one of the last countries to introduce a CBQ with low initial support, a change in government has resulted in a weakening of the CBQ (Gresch and Sauer, 2018).

Our analysis has led us to identify three broad groups of countries (see Table 3). Norway and Iceland were characterized as having favorable institutional contexts. This is materialized in a high level of equality, leading in equality initiatives, a relatively comprehensive use of quotas in politics (albeit only voluntary), and broad political support for CBQs at the introduction stage and thereafter. France was characterized as having a favorable/neutral institutional context because it has medium gender equality, albeit with comprehensive use of quotas in politics and increasing political support for CBQs. Belgium and Germany were deemed to have neutral contexts. With medium gender equality, they have comprehensive use of quotas in politics (including legal in the case of Belgium) and medium political support for the CBQ at introduction; this has increased. Germany has maintained support, but the CBQ has only recently been introduced. Finally, the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria, Spain, and Italy were deemed to have neutral/unfavorable contexts. They have medium or little (as in the case of the Netherlands) use of quotas in politics, and all, except for the Netherlands, are considered to be medium or laggards in their

Table 3 Institutional contexts

Country	Equality	History of Political Initiatives		Political Support		Institutional Context
		Time of Introduction	Quotas in Politics	At Introduction	Post Introduction	
Norway	High	Leader	Comprehensive	Broad	Maintained	Favourable
Iceland	High	Leader	Medium	Broad	Maintained	
France	Medium	Middle	Comprehensive	Medium	Increased	Favourable/Neutral
Belgium	Medium/Low	Middle	Comprehensive	Medium	Increased	Neutral
Germany	Medium/High	Middle	Comprehensive	Medium	Maintained	
Netherlands	Medium/Low	Leaders	Little	Medium/Low	Maintained	Neutral/Unfavourable
Portugal	Medium/Low	Middle	Medium	Medium/Low	-	Neutral/Unfavourable
Austria	Medium/Low	Middle	Medium	Medium/Low	Declined	
Spain	Medium	Laggards	Medium	Medium/Low	Declined	Neutral/Unfavourable
Italy	Low	Laggards	Medium	Medium/Low	Maintained	

introductions of equality initiatives. All these countries showed medium/low political support for the CBQ at introduction, and in many cases, the CBQ was ‘watered down’ to achieve passage. This level of support has been maintained or has declined, as in Spain and Austria. The change of support for CBQs in these countries results from changes in the government from left- to right-leaning coalitions.

Discussion

In our response to calls for further comparative studies (Terjesen and Sealy, 2016; Kirsch, 2018), we have contributed to the ongoing scholarly and policy debates about CBQs and their implications. We have provided a conceptual framework for CBQ comparisons, suggesting hardness and progressiveness as key dimensions for quota design. In addition, the institutional context in which the CBQs are embedded must be acknowledged and understood.

Variations in CBQ design. State interventions into corporate boards are highly contested and often resisted. While discussions about WoBs often focus on a distinction between hard and soft regulations (i.e., CBQs vs. targets) (Klettner *et al.*, 2016), we found variations among the CBQs. Research alludes to the importance of acknowledging differences related to quota design (Sojo *et al.*, 2016); we extended the literature focus on CBQs and acknowledge the importance of design, proposing use of the dimensions hardness and progressiveness. Both dimensions, which together make up the CBQ design, affect the CBQ mandate for change. Even though CBQs are considered radical (Jewson and Mason, 1986) because they prescribe outcomes, we propose that design variations in CBQs must be taken into account both by policymakers designing CBQs and scholars discussing and researching them.

Relevance of the institutional context. Literature on quotas (e.g., Lépinard and Rubio-Marín, 2018) and WoBs (e.g. Terjesen *et al.*, 2015; Hughes *et al.*, 2017; Mensi-Klarbach *et al.*, 2017) emphasizes the relevance of the institutional context. We argue that unfavorable institutional contexts do not necessarily prevent governments from introducing CBQs (because actors and events might mitigate this, see Seierstad *et al.*, 2017), but they might affect both their design and potential achievements.

Our analysis revealed a pattern: CBQs tend to be more progressive when introduced in a favorable institutional context. Additionally, the point of CBQ introduction is relevant, and countries with highly supportive environments were among the first/early adopters. We found that CBQ introduction triggered heated and

controversial debates and caused resistance. Aguilera and Cuervo-Cazurra (2004) argued that the struggle and resistance against ‘hard solutions’ result in the spread of soft regulations; this argument resonates with the fact that the quota law proposed by the European Commission was blocked (Reding, 2017). We extend this argument and assume that resistance can be manifested in CBQ design. While we do not see a relationship between institutional context and CBQ hardness (i.e., hard quotas can be found in favorable, neutral, and unfavorable contexts), we propose that countries with favorable institutional contexts are likely to introduce CBQs that are more progressive compared to neutral or unfavorable institutional contexts.

An anticipated finding is that hard CBQs are met no matter the institutional context. For instance, in Italy, where there the institutional context is neutral to unfavorable, the number of WoBs among the largest listed companies increased significantly, possibly motivated by strong penalties for non-compliance. This leads us to propose that hard CBQs lead to compliance and a significant increase in WoBs no matter the institutional context. In Spain, where the CBQ is rather soft and the institutional context similar to that in Italy, the CBQ target has not been met. Thus, we propose that in unfavorable/neutral institutional contexts, soft CBQs do not necessarily result in meeting their goals. In contrast, in Iceland, where a favorable institutional context was observed, the CBQ target has been met even though the law was found to be soft (i.e., without strong legal sanctions).

In our study, we found different quota scenarios with countries complying with, but also circumventing the CBQ. We therefore argue that an evaluation of institutional contexts matters when introducing and designing CBQs, acknowledging that in an unfavorable institutional context, a soft CBQ might not lead to the intended increase in WoBs, whereas in a supportive institutional context, even soft CBQs can result in intended changes.

Triggering equality change beyond corporate boards. The extent to which equality beyond the board setting can be fostered by CBQs remains unclear. Our analysis showed that soft CBQs are not met in neutral/unfavorable institutional environments; therefore, a limited wider equality reach can be assumed. The question remains whether equality will be greater if CBQs are met. Klettner *et al.* (2016: 396) argued that ‘Mandatory quotas may achieve early and significant results in terms of female board representation. ... [but] evidence suggests that voluntary targets for women’s participation on boards and in executive ranks, set by the companies themselves may in some circumstances promote more effective cultural and practical change’. Building on this argument, we suggest that softer regulations, though with clear and

ambitious targets and in favorable institutional contexts with the involvement of multiple actors, might have the capacity to facilitate change because they involve more corporate strategic choice, actors, and actions. Thus, while hard CBQs might lead to a focus on compliance in the board setting, a shared desire to increase overall gender equality is not a given. Hence, we could assume that additional initiatives and involvement from a variety of actors is necessary to encourage commitment and potential for wider gender equality.

Areas for further research. While our study provides important findings, we acknowledge its limitations and areas for further research.

The introduction of quotas at the EU level has been heavily debated at multiple points in time, highly supported and advocated for by both the former and current EU Justice Commissioners, Viviane Reding and Vera Jourova. As we found in our study, the EU focus on gender diversity on corporate boards and its support for mandatory quota regulations have impacted CBQ regulations in some countries. Thus, further research could explore the impact of EU in promoting and/or discouraging CBQs in its member states.

Countries outside Europe have introduced CBQs, and we suggest that an important area for further research is a more comprehensive analysis of CBQs, building upon the framework of quota design proposed in this study. Moreover, we acknowledge that within the group of countries that introduced soft targets, variations remain, and a similar study investigating these is important. Moreover, while we have focused on a wide range of institutional contextual factors, we acknowledge that other national specificities are important. In particular, we welcome studies to evaluate the use of various regulations, the corporate governance system, and achievements in terms of WoBs.

Finally, the question of how CBQs impact a wider equality reach is complex, and empirical data is both scarce and inconclusive. Building on our analysis of contexts, acknowledging that cultural change toward increased gender equality needs broad support and persuasion of relevant actors (Spender, 2012), we suggest that future research focus on how gender equality in corporate leadership has changed amid various institutional contexts with or without CBQs (and soft regulations), thus examining the potential of various types of initiatives to accelerate change toward further equality (e.g., at executive levels and boards not affected by CBQs). Because most CBQs were recently introduced, and many remain in their implementation periods, it is too early to comment on their full effects; hence, this is an important area for further research.

Conclusions

Although CBQs are currently in place in ten European countries, they are further discussed within and beyond Europe and at the supranational level. An increase in WoB research has focused on various regulations, but research on CBQs is arguably in its infancy (Hughes *et al.*, 2017). In this study, we examined ten European CBQs and offer a deeper understanding of various CBQ scenarios. Important similarities and differences in what we consider to be two key dimensions—CBQ design (hardness and progressiveness) and the institutional context in which they are embedded—were explored, advancing the discussion of CBQs and WoBs beyond the rather misleading dichotomy of voluntary targets vs. mandatory quotas. We proposed a framework for understanding CBQ design based on hardness and progressiveness, and we suggested that configuration of CBQ design and institutional context in which a CBQ is embedded results in differing scenarios which can affect the CBQ's potential for increasing female representation on boards and beyond.

Statement of conflict of interest:

N/A

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Appendix 1. CBQ Information

<i>Quota law</i>	<i>Acceptance year</i> (<i>Early</i> ⁴ : before 2010 EU debate; <i>Medium</i> : 2010–2013 during EU debate; <i>Late</i> : after 2013)	<i>Implementation period</i> (<i>Short</i> : 0–3 years; <i>Medium</i> : 4–7 years; <i>Long</i> : > 7 years)	<i>Quota target</i> (<i>Balanced</i> : up to 60/40; <i>Tilted</i> : around 65/35)	<i>Requested increase in percentage points</i> (*based on increase of women from the largest listed companies at point of introduction) (<i>Very high</i> : more than 30%; <i>High</i> : between 20% and 30%; <i>Medium</i> : between 15% and 20%; <i>Low</i> : between 5% and 15%; <i>Very low</i> <5)	<i>Female representation in largest listed companies, 2018</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Scope and coverage</i> (based on EURO Next, OECD, SBA Factsheet, European Commission, CBS.nl, FidAr, Statista) (<i>Number of companies affected weighted by country size, n</i>)
Spanish Equality Act	2007	2015	40%	34%	41.0%	Permanent	> 250 emp., > 11.4 M € assets (<i>n</i> ≈ 5000)
Icelandic Company Act	2010	2013	40%	24.2%	23.2%	Permanent	> 50 employees (<i>n</i> ≈ 274)
Norwegian Company Act	2003	2006 for newly established PLCs 2008 for already existing PLCs	40%	19%	44.1%	Permanent	Public limited companies (<i>n</i> ≈ 200)
French Copé Zimmerman Company Act	2011	2014: first ordinary general meeting (20%) 2017: first ordinary general meeting (40%)	40%	18.4%	45.7%	Permanent	Publicly listed companies + > 500 emp., > 50 M € assets (<i>n</i> ≈ 950)
Belgian Company Act	2011	2019	33%	22.5%	35.5%	Permanent	Publicly listed companies (<i>n</i> ≈ 200)
Italian Golfo Mosca Company Act	2011	2016/2018	33%	27%	16.7%	Temporary	Publicly listed companies (<i>n</i> ≈ 353)
Portuguese Law	2017	First elected general meeting after 2018 (20%) First elected general meeting after 2020 (33%)	33%	17.5%	30.9%	Permanent	Publicly listed companies (<i>n</i> ≈ 70)
Dutch Civil Code	2011	2013/2016	30%	12.2%	23.8%	Temporary	Publicly listed companies + > 250 emp., > 20 M € assets > 40 M € returns (<i>n</i> ≈ 147 + 2800)
Legal target	(passed 2017)	2019 (20%)/2023 (30%)					
Austrian Company Act	2017	2022	30%	10.7%	33.1%	Permanent	Publicly listed companies + > 1000 emp. & > 20% female workforce (<i>n</i> ≈ 70)
German Company Act	2015	2020	30%	4.6%	29.8%	Permanent	Publicly listed companies & full co-determination (<i>n</i> ≈ 100)

Appendix 2. Gender Equality and History of Equality Initiatives

	<i>Gender equality</i>	<i>History of equality initiatives</i>		
Country	<p>WEF Global Gender Gap 2006, 2017 (High: 1–10th; Medium: 11–30; Low: 31+) Female labor force participation (2017) (%) (High: >74; Medium: 60–74; Low: <60) Welfare policies (maternity/paternity leave)(days) (Comprehensive: >230; Medium: 100–229; Low: <100; Low. Balanced: > 50 for paternity)</p>	<p>Point of introduction of Equality Act (Early: around introduction of the EEC 1976; Medium: Treaty of Amsterdam 1997; Late: EU Directive 2006) Point of introduction of women's suffrage (Early: 1900–1920; Medium: 1921–1950; Late: 1951+)</p>	<p>Quotas in political parties (comprehensiveness based on timeliness and scope)</p>	
Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rank 2, 2 Labor force participation: 76.2 (male 80.3) Welfare: Maternity 70, Paternity 70, Parental 203/273 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suffrage 1913 Equality Act 1978 	<p>Voluntary Political Party quotas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liberal Party (1974) 40% Social left (1975), 40% Norwegian Labor Party (1983), 50%/ Center Party (1989), 40% Christian People's Party (1989), 40% 	
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rank 11, 24 Labor force participation: 68.9 (79.7 male) Welfare: Maternity 112, Paternity 13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suffrage 1931 Equality Act 2007 	<p>Voluntary Political Party Quotas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (1988/1997), 25/40 United Left (1987/1997), 25/40 Four Regional Parties (1991–2002) 30/40 	
Iceland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rank 4, 1 Labor force participation: 83.2 (87.5 male) Welfare Maternity 90, Paternity 90, Parental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suffrage 1915 Equality Act 1976 	<p>Legislative Quotas (since 2007), 40% Voluntary Political Party Quotas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Social Democratic Alliance (1999), 40% Progressive Party (2005), 50% The Left Green Movement (Gender aware) All Women's Party 	
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rank 70, 11 Labor force participation: 67.2 (75.1 male) Welfare: Maternity 112, Paternity 11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suffrage 1944 Equality in Constitution 1946 	<p>Legislative quotas of 50% electoral lists (since 2000s) Voluntary quotas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labor party (1990), 50% 	
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rank 77, 82 Labor force participation: 54.3 (73.7 male) Welfare: Maternity 150, Paternity 1, Parental 300 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suffrage 1945 Code for Equal Opportunities 2006 	<p>Voluntary Party Quotas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Democratic party (2008), 50% <p>Legislative quotas Sub National Level</p>	
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rank 20, 31 Labor force participation 63.4 (72.8 male) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suffrage 1919 Equality Act 2007 	<p>Legislative quotas (first introduced in 1994)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 out of 20 regions (since the 2003) The single/lower house The Upper House 	

Table (Continued)

	<i>Gender equality</i>	<i>History of equality initiatives</i>
Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welfare: Maternity 105, Paternity 10, Parental 120 Rank 12, 32 Labor force participation: 74.2 (male 84.6) Welfare: Maternity 112, Paternity 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub National Level Voluntary Party Quotas Labor Party (1986), alternated Green Left (not specified)
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rank 5, 12 Labor force participation: 73.1 (82.6 male) Welfare: Maternity 98, Paternity 0, Parental 360 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voluntary Political Party Quotas Social Democratic Party of Germany (1988/1998), 25/40% The Left Party, Zipper system Alliance 90/The Greens (1986), 50% Christian Democratic Union (1996), 33% Legislative quotas (since 2006) of 33.3%
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rank 33, 33 Labor force participation: 70.0 (76.8 male) Welfare: Maternity 120, Paternity 10 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single/Lower House Sub-National Level Voluntary Party Quotas
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rank 27, 57 Labor force participation: 71.0 (80.0 male) Welfare: Maternity 112 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voluntary Party Quotas The Green Alternative (1993), 50% Austrian Peoples Party (1995), 33% Social Democratic Party (1985), 40%

^aSources: European Equality Law Network (<https://www.equalitylaw.eu/>); International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance: Gender Quotas Database (www.idea.in; www.quotaproject.org); Seierstad et al., 2017a,b; Terjesen et al. 2015; WEF, Global Gender Gap Reports 2006/2017.

Appendix 3. Political support

Country	Political parties in power at introduction	Political support at introduction	Push factors	Changes in parties in power postintroduction	Political support postintroduction	Further significant equality policy development/events	Overall support
Norway	Center-Right	Broad	Debate about quotas in Sweden	Yes	Maintained	-	Broad
Spain	Center-Left	Medium/Low	Equality Act/Norwegian example	Yes	Declined	, the focus on equality and equality initiatives has weakened since 2007.	Limited
Iceland	Center-Left	Broad	The financial crisis	Yes	Maintained	"Pay Equality Certification" for companies with 25 or more employees to create equal pay (2018).	Broad
France	Center-Right	Medium	European focus (the Norwegian example)	Yes	Increased	Quotas for specific public sector areas (e.g., electoral lists for university decision-making bodies, sports federation decision-making bodies, commercial and industrial chambers)	Medium broad
Italy	Center	Medium/Low	European focus (the Norwegian example) and EU focus/Political scandals around Berlusconi creating legitimacy for equality focus	Yes	Maintained	-	Limited/Medium
Belgium	Center-Left	Medium	European focus (the Norwegian example) and EU focus	Yes	Increased	Quotas for specific public sector areas (e.g., National Railway, Flemish Universities Councils)	Medium broad
Netherlands	Center-Left	Medium/Low	European focus and EU focus	Yes	Maintained	Initiatives for quotas in various professions (medicine and journalism)	Limited/Medium
Germany	Center	Medium	EU focus	No	Maintained	-	Medium
Portugal	Center-Left	Medium/Low	European focus (the Norwegian example) and EU focus	No	-	-	Medium/Limited
Austria	Center	Medium/Low	European focus (Germany) and EU focus	Yes	Declined	-	Limited

Sources: De Vos and Culliford, 2014; Fagan et al., 2012; Seierstad et al., 2017; Lépinard and Rubio-Marin (eds.), 2018.