The role of gender in the European Union's path to earmarked parental leave

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Abstract

Until ratified in 2019, non-transferable paternity leave was debated in the European Parliament (EP) for nearly 20 years. Despite evidence showing its benefits in reducing the gender pay gap and improving family life, many politicians opposed. This paper tests this assumption using process tracing and Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) to analyze key events from 2000 to 2019 within the EP. A key theoretical contribution is the adaptation of ACF for EU-studies by introducing a new parameter: Internal normative developments. This enhancement allows for a deeper understanding of cultural and societal influences within advocacy coalitions. Findings reveal minimal disagreement within the European Parliament on paternity leave, although increased support as gender balance improved. From the analysis it was evident, that conflict emerged between EU institutions rather than within Parliament. This study highlights the importance of incorporating normative developments into ACF, enriching the analysis of policy dynamics in the European context.

Introduction

On July 12, 2019, a new directive, 2019/1158, was adopted in the European Union (EU), mandating that member states should reserve paternity leave for men from August 2, 2022 (EU, 2019/1158). Despite this being a directive, European governments of both liberal, conservative and socialist affiliations declared that they would not implement this EU law. However, many of the member states' members of the European Parliament (EP) had *advocated for* earmarked paternity leave for men for several years. They had formed a political coalition in the EP that crossed their differences – even in cases despite their national governments' view on parental leave.

This paper seeks to investigate these coalitions within the EP, using the theory Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), which focuses on political coalitions and their internal and external dynamics. In brief, ACF theorizes on the constellation of coalitions in political systems, such as the

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cooperation of political groups of differing ideologies in the EP, cooperating on certain single matters of policy which they collectively advocate for. These constellations are called advocacy coalitions (AC), and they are the focal point of the analysis using ACF (Cairney, 2020, p. 173). According to ACF, ACs are characterized by a certain number shared beliefs, values and experience processes of learning. ACs are analyzed using five parameters: policy-oriented learning, shocks, compromise, relatively stable parameters and external events, which all affect the development and constellation of ACs (Sabatier, 1998, p. 118; Weible and Jenkins-Smith, 2016, p. 24; Cairney, 2020, p. 171).

ACF is usually applied to the analysis of national policy processes, however this is surprising given that clear political coalitions also form in the EU institutions. To research these internal coalitions, this paper will attempt to apply ACF to analyze the political coalitions within the EP that influenced the process leading to the adoption of the directive on non-transferable parental leave in the EU, with the hope to contribute to the growing collection of research on ACF in the EU institutions. One of the developers of ACF, Paul Sabatier (1998) argued already in the 1980's that the theory would be beneficial to analyze the policy processes of the EU. However, it is not until recent years, that scholars such as Erik Von Malmborg (2021) and Maren Kreutler (2015) has applied ACF to the EU-institutions, albeit with a focus on the coalitions formed between environmental and energy non-governmental organizations and EU-entities. Sotirov and Winkel (2016) links ACF and Cultural Theory to explain the biases, which the agents in coalitions experience across national divides, however also focusing of partners external of the EU institutions.

In the line of Sotirov and Winkel, this paper will also contribute with research on the cultural developments within ACs, but without including an additional theory. I will do so by adding the parameter for analysis, *internal normative changes* to ACF, thus revising one of the hypotheses ACF regarding policy developments. I believe, ACF can stand in its own as a way of analyzing EU-policy processes by adding a facet of normative and cultural changes within the ACs. Including this parameter in the form of the development of gender balance within the political groups in the EP – compared to the developments in the legislative process towards adaptation – will allow us to see, if cultural and normative changes such as gender balance can affect policy processes within the EP.

Given the causal-mechanism assumptions made in ACF (van der Heijden *et al.*, 2021, p. 167), this paper utilizes ideational case-centered process tracing, which is an abductive longitudinal methodology featuring qualitative document analysis of the individual causal links in official documents. The research design of combining ACF with process tracing is as well a new approach to using ACF. Among the scholars to use ACF in conjunction with process tracing are aforementioned Erik Von Malmborg (2021) as well as Derek Beach and Rasmus Bruun Pedersen (Teixeira and Gabriel, 2022, p. 4). I choose to follow in their footsteps, since particularly the ideational process

tracing is able to trace the development of ideas (such as political initiative and policies) in official documents, such as legislative texts from the EP.

The above considerations and questions have led to the following research question:

What characterizes the process towards the adoption of the EU directive on earmarked paternity leave in the European Parliament, and can this contribute to making the Advocacy Coalition Framework more suitable for the study of the European Union?

1. Advocacy coalition framework

Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is a theory that seeks to explain how groups of actors can influence policy processes (Cairney, 2020, p. 170). This is particularly investigated through three dimensions of coalition development: Belief systems, policy-oriented learning, and policy change (Sabatier, 1988, p. 130). Originally, ACF only examined national policy processes (Cairney, 2020, p. 1972), but since 2011, it has been developed to encompass the influence of interest groups on supranational and intergovernmental politics (Sabatier, 1998, p. 119). Both the three dimensions, core concepts, development, and how this paper aims to extend the theory will be discussed in the following sections.

As the name "Advocacy Coalition Framework" suggests, the theory investigates which coalitions of actors influence the development and implementation of a given policy they favor (Cairney, 2020, p. 173). These can be coalitions of parties in parliament, as well as interest groups lobbying for their causes, trade unions forming partnerships, or even businesses promoting their own interests (Cairney, 2020, p. 172). An Advocacy Coalition (AC) arises in the intersection between highly structured institutions—such as interest groups—and less organized groups, such as discursive coalitions (e.g., Black Lives Matter). Furthermore, an AC has a narrower political focus than political parties but a more flexible and compromise-seeking political objective than social movements (e.g., the #MeToo-movement) (Sabatier, 1998, p. 111). This is illustrated in Figure 1, where the differences between each group and an AC are indicated in parentheses.

The institutions and movements in the figure are not mutually exclusive; an AC can have traits from all four fields but is characterized by lying somewhere between them in terms of structure, organization, and value-sharing (Sabatier, 1988, p. 136). While this view of a coalition may appear diffuse, one of ACF's founders, Paul A. Sabatier, emphasizes that the key characteristic of an AC is that it is a group of actors sharing specific belief systems and seeking to promote these over time: "[Advocacy Coalitions] share a particular belief system—i.e., a set of basic values, causal

assumptions, and problem perceptions—and who show a non-trivial degree of coordinated activity over time" (Sabatier, 1988, p. 139).

Figure 1. The theoretical placement of advocacy coalitions
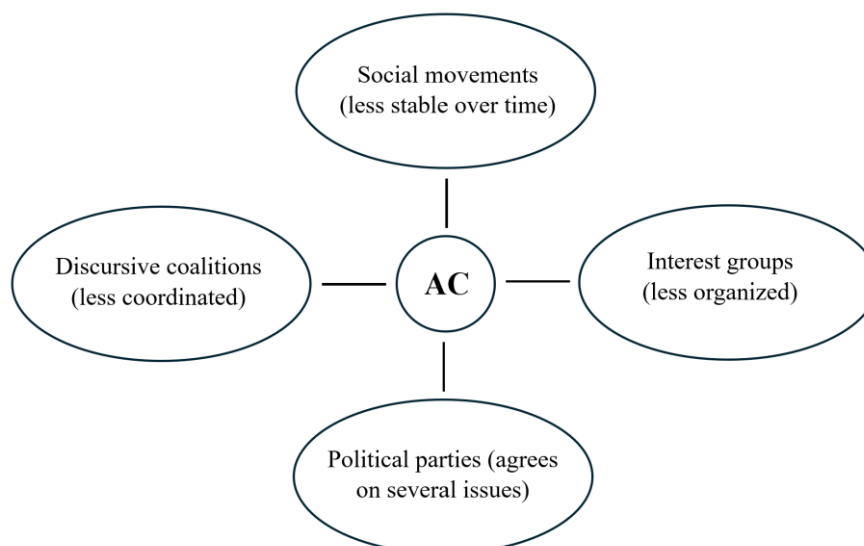
Source: Own illustration adapted from Sabatier, 1998

Sabatier also stresses that the key difference between discursive coalitions and social movements, compared to ACs, is that ACs do not necessarily cooperate on specific short-term issues but share core and policy beliefs. It is important to examine ACs over long periods – at least a decade – because the values within an AC can change through processes such as policy-oriented learning, despite a shared value base (2011, p. 103). This will be explained in the following sections.

First, the role of values should be reviewed. ACF is based on the concept of bounded rationality and therefore does not assume that individuals are entirely rational and can act without influence from beliefs in policy actions – In ACF described as *belief systems* (Cairney, 2020, p. 174). However, actors are rational in the sense that they use information and prior experiences to strategize and achieve their goals (Cairney, 2020, p. 175). The actors in an AC, as mentioned, are shaped by a set of belief systems, which are combinations of how actors believe the world should be and what means are necessary to achieve this world (Cairney, 2020, p. 175). There are three fundamental belief systems that every actor possesses, which influence the coalitions they form:

1. **Deep core beliefs:** These are an actor's fundamental worldview and philosophy of life. This belief system is not just related to policy change but influences all actions of an actor.
2. **Policy beliefs:** These are an actor's basic political worldview and value set, which greatly impact their behavior in policy change.

3. **Secondary aspects:** These are the means by which an actor seeks to realize its policy beliefs, such as how a policy should be implemented and financed. Secondary aspects do not have the same holistic nature as deep core and policy beliefs (Sabatier, 1998, p. 104; 111).

It is especially the deep core and policy beliefs that ensure coherence and stability in an AC. Christopher M. Weible and Hank C. Jenkins-Smith (2016, pp. 28-30) reevaluated the hypotheses proposed by Sabatier in 1993, developing 12 new hypotheses for ACF to operate on. They found that actors in ACs show greater consensus on policy beliefs than on secondary aspects. That is, despite shared policy beliefs on, for example, earmarked paternity leave, actors are not necessarily in agreement about the means required to achieve that goal (Weible and Jenkins-Smith, 2016, p. 28). However, Weible and Jenkins-Smith (2016) also found that actors in an AC are more likely to compromise on their secondary aspects than on their policy beliefs. According to Patrycja Rozbicka (2013, pp. 845-846), this may result from actors being more receptive to new information – and thus learning and development – within a coalition where they share certain core beliefs and policy beliefs.

When agents within an AC change their belief due to learning new information, it is called *policy-oriented learning*. The term has its origins in behavioral political science and fundamentally addresses how actors change their attitudes as a result of acquiring (and accepting) new information (Sabatier, 1998, p. 104). In an ideal-type policy process, advocacy coalitions and their members alter their positions when they receive new information about the issue they advocate for – even if this information contradicts their original stance. However, according to Sabatier (2011, p. 105), this is not the case in the real world. In reality, actors are more likely to resist learning if the new information does not align with their policy beliefs. While information sharing and learning within an AC are often successful, challenges arise when it comes to sharing information and learning across coalitions – that is, between competing parties on an issue (Weible and Jenkins-Smith, 2016, p. 29). Nevertheless, there are certain conditions that can counteract these challenges. These include:

1. If the conflict has not "escalated", and good communication remains between the competing coalitions.

2. If the issue is prestigious enough for many professional actors (such as high-profile politicians) to participate in the debate, and the forum for the debate is characterized by institutional and professional norms.

3. If the information promoting learning primarily consists of quantitative data and research from recognized scholars.

4. If this learning takes place between ACs operating within natural subsystems (Weible and Jenkins-Smith, 2016, p. 29).

According to ACF, all policy processes and all ACs occur within subsystems, which are case-specific systems within a larger political system where ACs compete to have their policies adopted and implemented (Cairney, 2020, p. 174). The ACs emerge within policy subsystems, where the aforementioned belief systems and policy-oriented learning contribute to coalition formation, the process of policy change, and the conflicts that arise during policy negotiations between coalitions. A policy process takes place in subsystems, and thus, the subsystem and the development of policy within it are the primary focus of ACF-analysis (Weible and Jenkins-Smith, 2016, p. 17). Policy change and the opportunities for AC formation are also influenced by several other factors, including parameters, events, short- and long-term opportunities for coalition structures, and, finally, the nature and structure of the subsystem itself (Weible and Jenkins-Smith, 2016, p. 18). The relationship between these factors, belief systems, and learning opportunities is explained in the following sections.

The subsystem is not the entire political system, such as the nation state of Denmark or the EU as a whole, but rather a part of it. For instance, it could be the EP or a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or even a policy field such as earmarked paternity leave (Weible and Jenkins-Smith, 2016, p. 20). A subsystem is not necessarily independent from either the state or other subsystems, and subsystems may merge or split depending on whether actors accept policy-oriented learning and experience changes in their policy beliefs (Cairney, 2020, p. 174). However, other factors can also alter the structure of subsystems (and their ACs). These include the following parameters:

Relatively stable parameters

These are institutions and norms that form the framework for policy negotiations and AC formation. They are the factors least likely to change over time (Cairney, 2020, p. 174). An example of a relatively stable parameter might be the EU's institutional structure, such as the separation of powers and rules for majority decisions in different bodies (EP, European Commission, the Council, etc.). Relatively stable parameters create the opportunity for long-term AC collaborations by maintaining the framework within which coalitions arise (Cairney, 2020, p. 174). However, relatively stable parameters can also change due to external events and shocks.

External events

These are events that occur outside the subsystem and can lead to changes within the subsystem and in the structure of ACs within it (Sabatier, 1998, p. 118; Weible and Jenkins-Smith, 2016, p. 24). Such events may include changes in socioeconomic conditions, shifts in public opinion, or the consequences of policies from other subsystems (Sabatier, 1998, p. 119). These are not sudden

changes but rather transient and less stable than the relatively stable parameters, which change less frequently.

Shocks

Shocks are sudden changes either within or external to ACs. A shock particularly influences the reactions of the opposing coalition and how they use it against the other AC (Cairney, 2002, p. 171). Examples might include the retirement or death of key individuals, a catastrophe (whether natural or economic), or a sudden change in the institutional structure of a public system (Sabatier, 1998, p. 105).

Compromise

Long-term coalitions often gain significant expertise and recognition in the relevant policy area. When several powerful and equally strong ACs face each other, a deadlock may occur where no coalition can gain the upper hand in negotiations, causing the process to stall (Sabatier, 1998, p. 119). This can be resolved by seeking compromise, which can be achieved in two ways: 1) through a mediator, an external actor who intervenes to mediate between the parties until a compromise is reached, or 2) in a multiparty parliamentary system, where broad consensus across parties is often necessary to develop and implement policies (Cairney, 2020, p. 171).

Policy-oriented learning

As described in the previous section, an AC can change as a result of policy-oriented learning. This can also affect the structure of a subsystem, as it may lead to changes in coalition structures or even the dissolution of coalitions (Weible and Jenkins-Smith, 2016, p. 24).

1.1. ACF in the European Union

It is only in the most recent years, that ACF has been scarcely used to analyze coalitions within EU institutions, for example in Fredrik Von Malmborg (2021) and Maren Kreutler (2015). The authors do, like in this paper, apply a combination of ACF and process tracing to examine the adoption of policies in the EU. However, there have been few studies that examine the formation of, and influence from, coalitions that emerge within EU institutions, whereas aforementioned Kreutler (2015) is amongst them. However, Sabatier (2011) encourages further exploration of ACs within EU

institutions, arguing that this has significant implications for which directives are adopted in the EU. Changes in policies within the EU can lead to significant shifts in core beliefs among member states:

> *[…] the ACF should apply well to the increasingly complex set of relationships evolving within the European Union, as European institutions—most notably the European Commission, the Court of Justice, the Council of Ministers, and also the European Parliament—are increasingly displacing national institutions as the principal locations of policy change (Sabatier, 1998, p. 121).*

Building on an analysis of the process leading to the adoption of the directive on earmarked parental leave in the EU, this project seeks to revise several ACF hypotheses and contribute to the development of a branch of the theory focused on international EU policy. Sabatier (2011) encourages researchers studying the EU from an ACF perspective to attempt to expand the theory to encompass precisely this: "The real task of European researchers is to develop falsifiable hypotheses based upon the ACF or other theories […] and then to test them on a variety of cases" (Sabatier, 1998: 121).

This paper will test ACF on a case – the earmarked parental leave directive in the EU – and its development within the EP, inspired by Malmborg's (2021) study of the adoption of climate policies in the EU. In doing so, the application of ACF to EU policy will be extended to more cases, as Sabatier (2011, p. 121) suggested. Furthermore, the project will attempt to expand ACF to make the theory more suitable for analyzing transnational politics by incorporating the cultural and/or normative background that shapes the development of coalitions and actors' actions within the EP. The aim is to add this aspect to Weible and Jenkins-Smith's revised hypotheses on policy change:

Hypothesis 1
Significant perturbations external to the subsystem, a significant perturbation internal to the subsystem, policy-oriented learning, negotiated agreement, or some combinations thereof are a necessary, but not sufficient, source of change in the policy core attributes of a governmental program.

Hypothesis 2
The policy core attributes of a government program in a specific jurisdiction will not be significantly revised as long as the subsystem advocacy coalition that instated the program remains in power within that jurisdiction – except when the change is imposed by a hierarchically superior jurisdiction (Weible and Jenkins-Smith, 2016, p. 29).

2. Process tracing

While ACF can make assumptions about which coalitions are responsible for a government's shift in position, process tracing provides an empirical justification for this hypothesis. This combination of theory and methodology allows for a detailed examination of the development of attitudes towards earmarked parental leave in the EU. The following section outlines the different types of process tracing, the type this project will employ, and how these choices contribute to answering the paper's research question.

In brief, process tracing is a method used to identify the activities (causal links) in a presumed causal relationship between the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y), where the latter refers to the EP's adoption of the earmarked parental leave directive (Beach, 2014, p. 27). A significant difference between process tracing and other causal analyses is that process tracing can follow the development of ideas, rather than only focusing on a "black-and-white" progression, such as changes in the structural development of an organization. Process tracing allows for the tracking of an idea (e.g., a policy) over time and describes how both structural and normative contexts may have influenced its development (Jacobs, 2015, p. 41).

A key element of this approach is that each causal link is not only identified but also described, so that the effect of changes in the causal chain is incorporated (Beach, 2014, p. 32-35). Some of the fathers of process tracing, Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, define the method as follows:

> *...the use of histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesizes or implies in a case is in fact evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables in that case"* *(Bennett and Checkel, 2015, p. 6).*

Process tracing can provide empirical justification for assumptions made by other theories, which may lack a well-defined methodology to substantiate those assumptions (Beach, 2014, p. 24). The method investigates case-specific causal mechanisms (M) that connect a presumed X-Y relationship and identifies "fingerprints" that explain developments in, and relationships between X and Y offering "a very strong inference that X is causally related to Y, because we gain detailed knowledge of the empirical process that binds the two together in a mechanism" (Beach, 2014, p. 24-25).

Causal mechanisms need not provide a complete explanation for the connection between X and Y, but they must demonstrate that the mechanism contributes to explaining how X leads to Y (Beach, 2014). Additionally, it is important to delineate why a hypothesis about a particular X leading to Y is being tested, as there may often be multiple X variables that can lead to Y (Bennett and Checkel, 2015, p. 10).

There are three primary types of process tracing: case-centric, hypothesis-testing, and theory-building as well as a newer perspective: ideational process tracing. All examine the development of a policy, but with different aims and approaches. This paper utilizes ideational and case-centric process tracing in conjunction. The following section will briefly explain all four types of process tracing in order to clarify their differences and illustrate why the ideational case-centric process tracing is ideal for addressing the research question.

Case-centric process tracing is an abductive approach, which focus on a specific case without including other cases for comparison (Beach, 2011, p. 18). Since the selected case contains many complicated facets and is not generalizable, the focus is solely on one case (Kay and Baker, 2015, p. 6). The aim is to identify the mechanisms within a defined part of the case that may have contributed to a particular outcome (Y) (Beach, 2011, p. 11). While other types of process tracing can also involve normative and cultural developments, this type is more closely tied to concrete historical events, and it examines a longer time period (Kay and Baker, 2015, p. 7).

Derek Beach (2011, p. 20) explains two ways to investigate causal relationships within case-centric process tracing. The first is a deductive approach, similar to hypothesis-testing process tracing, where X and Y are identified first, followed by evidence of the relationship between them. The second approach is inductive, like theory-building process tracing, where causal links are identified first, followed by the identification of X and Y.

Hypothesis-testing process tracing deductively tests existing theories of inference between X and Y. In this approach, the study must question whether the causal mechanisms (still) exist in the causal relationship and whether the theory posited about this relationship has sufficient explanatory power (Kay and Baker, 2015, p. 6). This type typically involves multiple cases that are compared or used to strengthen generalizations about the investigated type of causal relationship (Beach, 2011, p. 11).

Theory-building process tracing is used inductively and aims to develop a theory about the causal relationship between X and Y. The difference between this and case-centric process tracing is that a causal relationship is already evident – perhaps even mapped out – but there is a lack of explanation for why causality exists (Kay and Baker, 2015, p. 6). Theory-building process tracing takes an inductive approach, where empirical data is gathered before theorizing about causal mechanisms (Beach, 2011, p. 17).

The final type of process tracing, *ideational process tracing,* was first introduced in "Process Tracing - From Metaphor to Analytic Tool" (Bennet and Checkel, 2014). Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel present an extension of process tracing, which increasingly, compared to the previously mentioned types, follows the development of ideas and the causal mechanisms leading to the tangible consequences of an idea – such as the path to the adoption of a policy (Jacobs, 2014, p. 42). Ideational process tracing closely resembles case-centric process tracing, with the primary difference that it allows for a closer examination of ideas and normative changes based on institutional developments (Jacobs, 2014, p. 59). Like case-centric process tracing, ideational process tracing examines development within a specific case over an extended time period (Jacobs, 2014, p. 57). Both approaches employ an abductive strategy. Jacobs himself highlights that ideational process tracing is particularly vulnerable to spuriousness, as an idea can be difficult to delimit, often "living in the shadows." It is, therefore, essential to identify causal mechanisms that reflect both the institutional changes resulting from the idea and the moments when the idea is articulated (Jacobs, 2014, p. 72).

3. Methodology and analytical strategy

The analysis will be structured in two parts: First, a thorough review of the process leading to the adoption of the parental leave directive in the EP, based on both plenary minutes from the EP and adopted texts. The objective is to identify causal mechanisms that can be considered key turning points in the process toward earmarked parental leave. Second, ACF will be employed to analyze these key moments and identify the coalitions involved, as well as what may have led to these moments based on the parameters of the policy process described above in ACF.

The analysis will draw on ideational case-centric process tracing to allow for theorization (in this case, using ACF) of possible normative and cultural trends at the time of a key event based on the statements of members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in the EP. Therefore, this project introduces the parameter of *internal normative change* in addition to the aforementioned ACF-parameters. The purpose of adding this parameter is to incorporate ideological and/or normative developments within the political groups of the EP, for example, in the liberal ALDE or the social democratic S&D. By doing so, ACF as a theory is expanded with a parameter that describes a more gradual and less drastic development in a coalition than the influence of shocks. This parameter also differs from policy-oriented learning, as it is not dependent on – though it may be influenced by – whether actors in an AC change their policy beliefs as a result of learning. Rather, it demonstrates that actors can change policy beliefs and/or secondary aspects as a result of cultural developments

outside the policy subsystem. In this analysis, the EP is delimited as the policy subsystem within which the policy process leading to the adoption of earmarked parental leave unfolds.

Ultimately, the theory and methodology will be combined so that process tracing forms a historical and institutional foundation for the analysis, thereby enabling the use of ACF to provide a normative or ideational explanation of why the ACs in the selected causal mechanisms acted as they did. Both theories are rooted in the actors' ideas and how they attempt to realize them. Both the methodology and the theory of the project account for actors' beliefs, how they act upon them, and how they may change within a given policy subsystem and in policy processes (Jacobs, 2015, p. 44).

3.1. Strategy of analysis

The analysis is based on 38 documents from the EP which will be coded to map the process leading to the adoption of the directive on earmarked paternity leave for men in the EU. Only four particularly influential documents are included in this article, although the same method of analysis was performed on all 38 documents. The focus of the process tracing will be on documents from the EP, as these documents express the political groups' positions on earmarked paternity leave. This allows for the analysis of coalitions between political groups in the EP and how these coalitions contributed to the adoption of earmarked paternity leave. The discussion on earmarked paternity leave began in the EU during the 1999-2004 parliamentary term and continued until 2019 when the directive was adopted by the EP. As discussions on earmarked paternity leave only began in the EP in 2000, the analysis will be based on a selection of meeting minutes, adopted texts, plenary debates and submitted documents from 2000 to 2019. As described in the previous section, the analysis will aim to identify causal mechanisms that function as key points in the policy process leading to the adoption of earmarked paternity leave.

The empirical selection and analysis will be conducted in three stages. First, empirical data will be selected using search terms related to earmarked paternity leave from the EP's website, through data-driven coding (Jakobsen, 2012, p. 178). Second, these texts will be reviewed to identify the causal mechanisms in the process leading to earmarked paternity leave. Finally, the most influential causal mechanisms will be selected for in-depth analysis using the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), inspired by concept-driven coding (Jakobsen, 2012, p. 183). These stages are elaborated below.

The first stage involves selecting which texts from the EP are suitable for investigating the research question. These are selected from debate records and adopted texts on the EP's website. The search begins with the term "parental leave". From the search results, texts containing the terms

"equality", "birth", and "parental leave" are selected, as they are all related to earmarked paternity leave. This results in the selection of 38 debate records and adopted texts for analysis.

In the second stage, process tracing is used to identify the causal mechanisms present in the data that indicate developments in the policy process toward the adoption of earmarked paternity leave. This is achieved using several variables:

1. Which actors are involved? This includes both advocacy coalitions (ACs) and individual actors, where internal disagreement exists within a political group.
2. Whether the coalition is for or against earmarked paternity leave.
3. The specified position of the coalition or actor. Why is the AC for or against earmarked paternity leave?
4. The effect of the identified causal mechanism on the policy process.

Finally, the most influential causal mechanisms will be selected for further analysis using the ACF based on the categorization of the documents, their actors, and their influence on the policy process. These mechanisms will be evaluated based on the degree to which progress was made toward earmarked paternity leave in either the debate or the adopted text, the greater the institutional change, the more influential the mechanism.
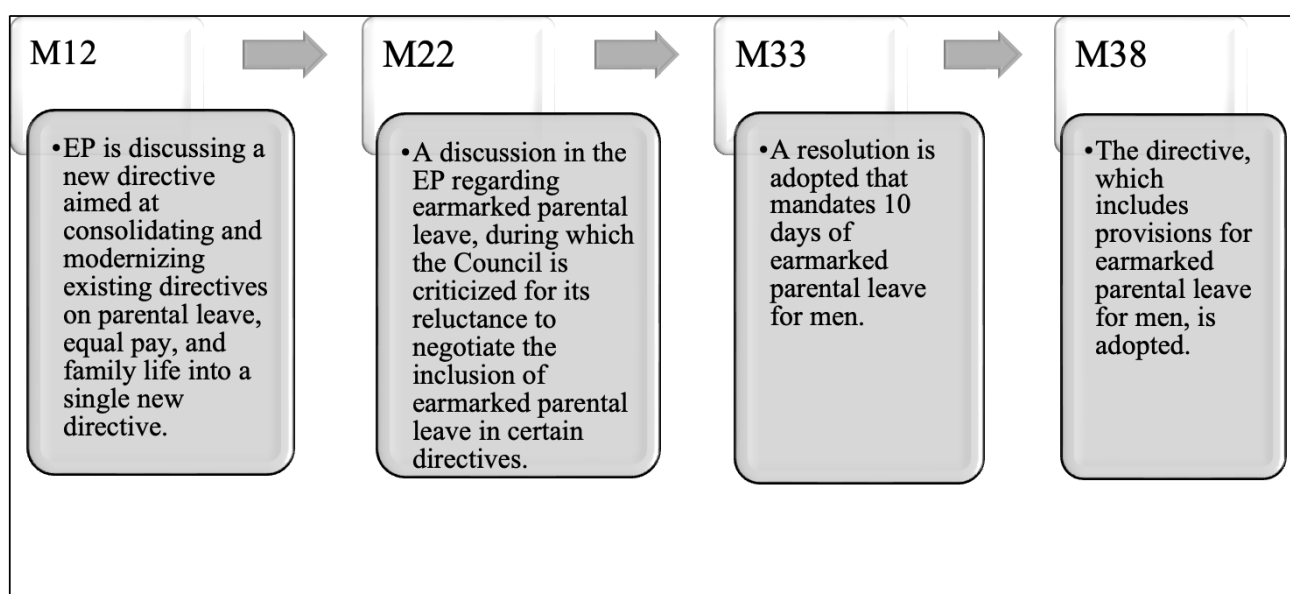
4. Analysis

For an in-depth analyses, a four causal mechanisms were chosen as they represent key points in the development toward the adoption of the earmarked parental leave directive in 2019. Each selected causal mechanism is analyzed by identifying the analytical parameters described above from the ACF. If a particular parameter is not addressed in the analysis, it is because it is not present in that causal link. For purposes of brevity in this paper, the selected causal mechanisms for in-depth analysis are located in appendix 2 and the entire coding of causal mechanisms is located in appendix 3.

Through the analysis using process tracing, it is evident that there has been limited evolution in the political groups' stance on earmarked parental leave. There have been changes in the group constellations, where, for instance, ALDE and S&D emerged from earlier liberal and social-democratic groups, respectively. Regardless if development within the coalitions in the EP stems from shifts in actors (new political groups) or the transformation of political groupings, the new actors hold the same position as they did when they were part of a previous coalition of political groups.

A majority in the EP quickly formed in favor of earmarked paternity leave for men – the EP adopted a resolution in 2010, advocating for 10 days of earmarked paternity leave for men, though

this encountered resistance in the Council. It was not until 2015 that the EC took a stance on earmarked paternity leave, recommending that the Council adopt a directive on the matter. While the EC recommended a new directive in 2015, as opposed to the 2010 directive on maternity leave for women, it was expanded in 2019 to include earmarked non-transferable paternity leave for men, with the Council's support (EU, 2019: 2019/1158). All in all, the analysis of the developments regarding earmarked parental leave can be summarized in the following causal chain, which includes developments from documents containing causal mechanisms indicating significant change:

Figure 2. Selected significant causal mechanisms of the directive on parental leave

M12	M22	M33	M38
• EP is discussing a new directive aimed at consolidating and modernizing existing directives on parental leave, equal pay, and family life into a single new directive.	• A discussion in the EP regarding earmarked parental leave, during which the Council is criticized for its reluctance to negotiate the inclusion of earmarked parental leave in certain directives.	• A resolution is adopted that mandates 10 days of earmarked parental leave for men.	• The directive, which includes provisions for earmarked parental leave for men, is adopted.

Source: Own illustration, causal links to be found in appendix 2.

Using process tracing we find the developments were clear throughout the policy process of the parental leave directive, but this leaves the question of *why* these developments took place. For this, we turn to ACF in the following sections and how the parameters of analysis might aid in shedding light on the developments.

Policy beliefs and secondary aspects

Although there has been a long-standing majority in the EP in favor of earmarked paternity leave for men, a development was identified within the Christian-Democratic group, the European People's Party (EPP). This group evolved from being generally opposed to earmarked paternity leave to having most of its female members supporting it, and ultimately, the entire group endorsed earmarked paternity leave for men. This is particularly evident in the statements made by female

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) during the debates in the EP: "Mr President, the time has come to talk about shared parental leave, not maternity leave. To support working mothers, we have to involve fathers in taking responsibility for their babies, not oblige women to stay at home" (Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, EPP, European Parliament, 2015).

Among all coalitions, it was clear that although many within the coalitions held different core beliefs, they shared common policy beliefs concerning earmarked paternity leave for men. However, there was often internal disagreements within coalitions on the secondary aspects, more specifically, regarding the duration of earmarked leave and whether it should be a directive, act, or resolution.

A clear evolution can be observed within ALDE. When the group was formed in 2004 through the merger of the ELDR and EDP, its' policy belief shifted from having no clear position on earmarked paternity leave for men to being in favor. Despite this, ALDE voted against a resolution in 2010, as they opposed directives on earmarked paternity leave, only to criticize the Council in 2019 for not making the directive sufficiently comprehensive. This reflects a shift in both policy beliefs and secondary aspects.

The shift in positions within ALDE and EPP regarding secondary aspects confirms Weible and Jenkins-Smith's (2016) hypothesis that coalitions exhibit greater consensus on policy beliefs than on secondary aspects. Furthermore, coalitions are more likely to compromise on secondary aspects rather than on core policy beliefs.

Relatively stable parameters

In all key moments, the relatively stable parameters remained unchanged. These parameters form the framework for the subsystem and, therefore, the policy process, consisting of the formal rules governing the EU's institutional structure. In this context, the relatively stable parameters refer to the process of developing resolutions, rounds of amendments, and ultimately voting on these. The relatively stable parameters for the EP also include its institutional relationship with the EC and the Council, whereby the EC must propose directives to both the EP and the Council, and both institutions must adopt them for a directive to be official EU-legislation (Union, 2021, §1.3.1 – 1.3.8).

Mediator

In the process leading to the directive on earmarked paternity leave, the EC has functioned as a mediator between the Council and the EP since 2012 and was a key player in the negotiations between the Council and the EP. As the body able to propose legislation to both the EP and the Council, it makes sense that the EC has tried to foster consensus between the two:

Mr President, as you know, and some of you said it also in the debate, the negotiation process has not been easy. We have come a long way to reach this result and we all had to show flexibility and compromise on certain points. But I am convinced that the agreement on the table is well balanced and preserves the main objectives of our original proposal (Thyssen, EC, European Parliament, 2019).

EU institutions have existed for many years, and when established coalitions must negotiate a policy, there is often a need for a mediator, as coalitions may have strong policy beliefs and secondary aspects. This was also the case in the deadlock between the EP and the Council, where the EC stepped in and contributed to brokering an agreement. Due to the relatively stable parameters, it is institutionally natural for the EC to assume this role.

Policy-oriented learning

A recurring feature is that all resolutions and statements adopted by the EP are based on extensive reports and studies, with MEPs requesting this data to gain better insight into the subject matter. Apart from IND/DEM and ENF (Krupa, IND/DEM, European Parliament, 2005), the actors within the coalitions are open to receiving new knowledge and revising their stance accordingly. This is unique to the policy process and helps explain how such a high degree of consensus was achieved in the EP on earmarked paternity leave for men.

Internal normative changes

In addition to policy-oriented learning and the mediation by the EC, there have also been normative and/or cultural changes within the EP that may have influenced the policy process.
The most significant indicator of a normative change in the EP is the increase in the number of female MEPs between the election periods 1999 – 2019, rising by 12.9 percentage points from 27.5% to 40.4% (Women in the European Parliament, 2021). The gender distribution within political groups may have influenced how they voted on the issue of earmarked paternity leave, as well as on other equality issues. This is particularly visible in the evolving positions of the EPP and ALDE on earmarked paternity leave over time. Both groups have seen a marked increase not only in female members but also in women occupying prominent positions within the EU, including EC Vice-President Margrethe Vestager (ALDE) and EC President Ursula von der Leyen (EPP) (EPP, 2021 §Who We Are).

5. Discussion

The following section discusses the results of process tracing and how they contribute to answering the research question posed in this assignment, as well as how they may contribute to the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) as a theory applicable to the analysis of European Union politics. Additionally, alternative approaches for addressing the research question will be considered.

Given that my prior knowledge of the subject matter (earmarked parental leave) was limited, the approach taken in this assignment was relatively strict and inductive. This approach entails certain risks, and in this project, it became apparent through the process tracing that the scope of the subject matter was too narrow. As highlighted in the analysis in section 4.0, there has not been much development in the political coalitions within the EP since 2000, and a majority in the EP quickly supported earmarked parental leave for men. Tensions, on the other hand, emerged between the EC, the Council, and the EP. Had the analysis incorporated the Council and EC, it would have been possible to explore the development of earmarked parental leave for men from an ACF perspective in a more comprehensive manner.

Despite the fact that the subject matter could have been broader, the analysis still reveals certain trends within the EP. The most prominent trend is that the greater the number of women in the EP, the stronger the support for earmarked parental leave. This development falls outside the scope of what ACF can typically explain through its parameters of shocks and policy-oriented learning. It underscores the need for an additional parameter within ACF: *Internal normative changes*. Should a future study choose to include the EC and the Council in the analysis, internal normative changes could also be applied to understand how shifts in constellations of Commissioners can influence the agenda within the EC (and by extension, the EP and Council) due to their deep core beliefs and policy beliefs.

The research behind this paper was constructed as exploratory, which, in itself, may not answer a hypothesis that revolutionizes the study of international politics. Instead, it lays the foundation for further investigation – an outcome that is typical of exploratory studies (Klemmensen, Andersen, and Hansen, 2012, p. 27). Based on my observations through process tracing, I discovered, among other things, that there were unusually large disagreements between the EP and the Council regarding the issue of an EU directive on earmarked parental leave for men. Therefore, it became clear that the disagreements concerning earmarked parental leave were more prominent between the EP, EC, and the Council. A future study should include all three actors and treat the EP as a unified coalition against the EC as a mediator and the Council as another coalition. The EP can be considered a coalition based on its tendencies towards policy-oriented learning, as it is usually extremely difficult

for coalitions to learn across coalitions but relatively easy within (Rozbicka, 2013, p. 845-846). This is evident in the EP, where MEPs directly call for more information on the issue.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

Although the scope of this analysis could have been expanded to include the Council and EC, it still highlights a gap in the explanatory power of ACF when applied to the analysis of international politics. This is evident in the development of gender distribution in the coalitions within the EP and its influence on the policy beliefs of the coalitions. While policy-oriented learning can explain developments through the reports discussed in the EP, and shocks may influence how pressing equality issues are perceived by the coalitions, none of the existing ACF parameters explain how or why gender could influence the EP's stance on earmarked parental leave. This is where the new parameter of internal normative changes can be beneficial.

There is a missing hypothesis in ACF that accounts for normative and cultural factors influencing the behavior of actors and/or coalitions in international politics. These could include the number of female candidates in EP elections, the percentage of women in national governments (which affects the gender composition of the Council), or the influence of social movements on MEPs' attention to equality issues such as the social #MeToo-movement.

Since ACF was originally a theory designed to analyze national policy processes, there is a need to expand ACF with a parameter such as internal normative changes. EU politics are transnational, and coalitions therefore consist of actors with different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, which may affect their attitudes toward issues like earmarked parental leave. Although the influence of national cultural and normative developments may be challenging to identify within the EP, there are examples of the impact of normative internal changes on coalition behavior in the EP, most notably when the EPP excluded the Hungarian ruling party 'Fidesz' in 2021. Fidesz was excluded because its values no longer aligned with those of the EPP (EPP, EPP Statement on Fidesz, 2021). The justification for the exclusion was that Fidesz no longer met the EU's values concerning human rights, including gender equality. This internal change may have enabled the EPP to act more freely in advocating for gender equality, given that Fidesz members no longer had voting rights within the EPP. However, it is too early to draw firm conclusions via ACF, as the development is recent, and ACF typically analyzes changes over a longer period of time.

Furthermore, the parameter of internal normative changes could help explain the actions of the Council's members, as they are more responsive than MEPs to the national policies in place at the time of the policy process under analysis, due to their position within national governments.

Thus, ACF could be expanded with an additional parameter that indicates which cultural and normative developments are influencing the actions of coalitions. This leads to the need for a third hypothesis to be added to Weible and Jenkins-Smith's (2016, p. 29) two revised hypotheses on policy change, which were mentioned previously in the article. The new hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 3 on policy change

A policy-process may be influenced by cultural or normative changes in an agents or advocacy coalitions' deep core beliefs and policy core, which will inevitably affect the secondary aspects and final policy. This normative or cultural shift *cannot be solely a result of policy-oriented learning or shocks* but a result of social changes in – or around the agent or advocacy coalition.

Since the original two hypotheses merely describe changes for the entire subsystem or within a national policy process, a new hypothesis is added to allow for the inclusion of changes within individual coalitions. This could be applied both nationally, to describe changes in government or parliamentary constituencies, and in transnational organizations, to describe the influence of national factors on MEPs, as mentioned above.

Conclusions

Finally, we turn to the research question posed in this paper: *What characterizes the process leading to the adoption of the EU directive on earmarked parental leave in the European Parliament, and can this contribute to making the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) more suitable for the study of the European Union?*

As the research question suggests, this paper has attempted to answer two key inquiries:

1. How did the policy process regarding earmarked parental leave for men in the EP unfold?
2. How can the experiences from applying process tracing and ACF to the analysis of the first sections of the research question contribute to expanding ACF, so that the theory is better suited to analyzing the EU?

Thus, the conclusion is twofold. As for the first part of the research question, it can be concluded that the policy process concerning earmarked parental leave was primarily characterized by consensus within the EP. As early as 2010, the EP passed a resolution urging member states to implement 10 days of earmarked parental leave for men. In the same resolution, the EP also requested that the EC propose a directive regarding earmarked parental leave. It took five years, until 2015, before the EC acted, and even then, the proposal faced resistance from the Council, after which the EC intervened

as a mediator between the EP and the Council. It thus became clear that the lengthy process towards earmarked parental leave was not due to disagreements within the EP, but rather resistance from other EU institutions. There were, however, some disagreements in the EP early in the policy process, primarily concerning the secondary aspects – whether earmarked parental leave for men should be a directive or a mere recommendation to member states, and the length of the earmarked leave. After several reports and discussions on earmarked parental leave, a near-unanimous consensus emerged in the EP, reflecting policy-oriented learning. In addition to policy-oriented learning, there were also internal normative changes within the coalitions in the EP. This may be a result of an increase in the number of female MEPs, particularly influencing the EPP and ALDE, which saw a rise in female members as their stance on a directive for earmarked parental leave for men became more favorable.

As for the second part of the research question, it can be concluded that the hypotheses and parameters typically employed within ACF, as outlined by Weible and Jenkins-Smith, are so far insufficient for analyzing policy processes within the EU. This paper introduces the parameter of *internal normative changes*, which aims to explain the normative and cultural factors that influence the actions of actors and/or coalitions in international politics – such as national and international social movements or shifts in gender distributions within coalitions. This parameter occupies a middle ground between policy-oriented learning, which explains what can explicitly change the policy beliefs of coalitions through reports, and shocks, which explains how sudden changes can influence the actions of coalitions. The application of this new parameter led to an addition to Weible and Jenkins-Smith's hypotheses from 2016, which aims to make ACF more suitable for the analysis of international politics.

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Appendix 1. Abbreviations

- AC: Advocacy Coalition.
- ACF: Advocacy Coalition Framework.
- EC: The European Commission.
- EP: The European Parliament.
- EU: The European Union.
- MEP: Member of the European Parliament.
- The Council: The Council of the European Union.

Political Groups in the European Parliament included in the research

- ALDE: Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (2004 – 2019).
- ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists (2009 – Today).
- EDD: Europe of Democracies and Diversities (1999 – 2004).
- EFD: Europe of Freedom and Democracy (2009 – 2014).
- EFDD: Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (2014 – 2019).
- ELDR: European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party Group (1994 – 2004).
- ENF: Europe of Nations and Freedom (2015 – 2019).
- EPP: Europeans People's Party / European Democrats (1999 – today)
- GUE/NGL: European United Left / Nordic Green Left (1995 – today).
- IND/DEM: Independence / Democracy (2004 – 2009).
- NI: Non-Inscrits (MEPs outside a political group).
- PES: Party of European Socialists (1953 – 2009).
- S&D: Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (2009 – today)
- UEN: Union for Europe of Nations (1999 – 2009).
- Verts/ALE: The Greens / European free Alliance (1999 – today).

Appendix 2. In-depth analysis of selected significant causal mechanisms

M12: CRE-6-2005-07-05-ITM-029_EN: Equal opportunities in employment and work

The EP discusses a new directive aimed at consolidating and modernizing previous directives on maternity leave, equal pay, and family life into a single directive.

Coalitions

For: EPP (women) + PES + GUE/NGL.

Against: EPP (men).

No position on earmarked paternity leave: ALDE + Verts/ALE + IND/DEM.

Compromise

Several MEPs express their desire to include earmarked paternity leave in the reevaluation and consolidation of EU directives on gender equality in the labor market. The entire EPP group votes in favor of the directive but, following discussions with the EC, withdraws its amendments. The highest votes come from the PES group and the female MEPs of the EPP. Despite amendments, both groups vote together in favor of the directive. Overall, the EPP and PES call for a new directive addressing gender equality in the labor market, including earmarked paternity leave. The Commission responds that earmarked paternity leave is unacceptable for the EU to dictate and does not fit within the revision of the directive (Kovács, EC, European Parliament, 2005).

Policy-oriented learning

The EC's proposal for the new equality directive is based on a series of studies showing significant gender disparities in the labor market, particularly in terms of pay and parental leave. This forms the basis for the proposal of a new directive aimed at improving equality. Only IND/DEM opposes the proposal, arguing that women lack the same physical and psychological capacity as men (Krupa, IND/DEM, European Parliament, 2005).

This policy-oriented learning is evident as the EP's position on paternity leave is for the first time split within the EPP; the women support supra-national measures to improve parental leave conditions, while the men oppose them. Information about gender inequality appears to have shifted the views of female EPP members on parental leave.

M22: CRE-7-2010-02-08-ITM-016_EN: Equality between Women and Men in the European Union — 2009 (Debate)

'COM(2009) 77 final' presents studies indicating that many member states fail to meet the EU's goals for gender equality in the labor market. This led to a discussion in the EP regarding earmarked

paternity leave, where the Council was criticized for its reluctance to negotiate the inclusion of earmarked paternity leave in any directives.

Coalitions

For: EPP + S&D + GUE/NGL + Verts/ALE + NI.

Against: ALDE + NI.

Does not address earmarked paternity leave: ECR + EFD.

Shocks

The report (COM(2009) 77 final), discussed in the EP, concludes that the 2008 economic crisis had a significant negative impact on the labor market, with women being disproportionately affected (§Gender gaps).

Compromise

S&D, GUE/NGL, and Verts/ALE urged the EC to propose earmarked paternity leave, and for the EP to include it as an amendment in 'COM(2009) 77 final' (European Parliament, 2010). Furthermore, these groups encouraged the Commission to act as a policy broker between the EP and the Council so that earmarked paternity leave could be adopted in a directive.

Policy-oriented learning

The report shows that women earn approximately 30% less if they have children, whereas men's wages increase when they become fathers (COM(2009) 77 final, 2009: §2.1). This statistic, along with others between this and the preceding causal chain, contributed to the shift in position within the EPP, with male members also supporting earmarked paternity leave. The EPP made a collective statement regarding the issue, highlighting how paternity leave adversely impacts gender pay equality.

M33: CRE 19/05/2015 - 15: Maternity Leave (Debate)

Another resolution on 10 days of earmarked paternity leave for men is adopted, and both the EC and the Council are criticized for not acting on earmarked paternity leave for men.

Coalitions

For: S&D + ALDE + EPP + GUE/NGL + Verts/ALE + EFDD + EPP.

Against: ECR + EPP.

Does not address earmarked paternity leave: NI.

Shocks

The Council has not responded to or addressed the EP's 2010 resolution on improved conditions for maternity leave. The EP strongly reacts, especially since the EC itself began advocating for earmarked paternity leave in 2012 (Jourová, EC, European Parliament, 2015).

Compromise

The EC wants to propose earmarked paternity leave, but this is blocked by the Council. Therefore, the EC attempts to act as a policy broker between the EP and the Council. Both the Commission and the EP are now discussing the replacement of the directive on earmarked maternity leave for women with a new one addressing earmarked paternity leave for both genders (Jourová, EC, European Parliament, 2015).

Policy-oriented learning

There is a discussion about whether EU directives on maternity leave should be revised. Here, the Council's president indicates that the Council has a significantly different stance from the EP (Kalniņa-Lukaševica, Council, European Parliament, 2015).

M38: CRE 04/04/2019 – 3: Work-Life Balance for Parents and Carers (Debate)

The directive on, among other things, earmarked paternity leave for men is adopted. ALDE (and GUE/NGL) vote in favour, but express dissatisfaction with the fact that the directive is not more ambitious regarding earmarked paternity leave for men. Council representatives are satisfied with the proposal. The EC would have preferred a directive with broader provisions on parental leave.

Coalitions

For: EPP + S&D + ECR + ALDE + GUE/NGL + EFDD + NI + Verts/ALE.

Against: ENF.

Compromise

With the EC acting as mediator and the EP's (almost) unified "a little is better than nothing" stance, a policy (directive) on earmarked paternity leave was negotiated (European Parliament, 2019). ALDE (and GUE/NGL) vote in favour but express dissatisfaction that the directive is not more ambitious concerning earmarked paternity leave for men (Weber, ALDE, European Parliament, 2019). The Council reached a compromise with the EP by negotiating a directive on earmarked paternity leave.

Policy-oriented learning

The directive on earmarked paternity leave for men is adopted after many years of reports showing that women continue to take the majority of parental leave, and there are insufficient incentives for men to take leave. ALDE and the EC, among others, shifted from the position that earmarked paternity leave should not be dictated by directives to a desire for more far-reaching legislative requirements.

Appendix 3. Coding of all causal mechanisms

M	Document number Type	Title	Date	Agent Unique coalitions N₁= For N₂= Against	Effect
1	CRE-5-2000-03-02-ITM-004_EN *Debate*	Resolution on women in decision making	02/03/2000	N₁= Verts/ALE N₂= EPP + UEN	PES abstained from voting on the discussed document, as they do not believe it is comprehensive enough and argue that it should include specific provisions on, among other things, parental leave. The proposal was adopted without the incorporation of improved parental leave provisions.
2	CRE-5-2001-02-13-ITM-015_EN *Debate*	SITTING OF TUESDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2001	13/02/2001	N₁= PES + NI N₂= EPP + UEN	The EPP supported the proposal from the EC, which is under discussion with amendments to place greater emphasis on the elderly but does not mention gender equality or earmarked parental leave. However, PES called for more focus on gender equality, as well as the inclusion of labor market stakeholders.
3	CRE-5-2001-05-31_EN *Debate*	SITTING OF THURSDAY, 31 MAY 2001	31/05/2001	N₁= Verts/ALE+ PES + ELDR + GUE/NGL + (EPP) N₂= TDI + NI + (EPP)	GUE/NGL proposed that measures should also be implemented to upskill both men and women following a break (parental leave) from the labor market.
4	CRE-5-2001-09-19-ITM-010_EN *Debate*	Equal pay for work of equal value	19/09/2001	N₁= PES + (female) EPP + GUE/NGL N₂= EDD (not against national laws, but EU-law)	The document discussed deals with equal conditions in the labor market, with a primary focus on women in leadership roles. Several from the pro-group argue that increasing the number of women in top-positions and ensuring pay and working condition equality would resolve the issue of gender equality in parental leave. There are calls for quotas and greater emphasis on this issue.
5	CRE-5-2001-10-23_EN *Debate*	Employment guidelines for 2002/Joint employment report 2001	23/10/2001	N₁= PES + Verts/ALE + GUE/NGL + UEN N₂= ELDR+ EPP (except Astrid Lulling)	Verts/ALE and ELDR proposed amendments to introduce greater flexibility for women and men in the labor market after childbirth, but these were rejected.
6	A5-0067/2002 *Adopted text – Resolution*	Annual Report on equal opportunities for women and men in the European Union 2000	25/04/2002	N₁ = EP	Member states are urged to improve parental leave conditions for men.
7	CRE-5-2002-06-11-ITM-013_EN	Equal treatment for men and women (continued)	11/06/2002	N₁= PES + Verts/ALE + ELDR	Earmarked parental leave is not included in the adopted text as a directive. Instead, it is agreed that

				+ GUE/NGL + UEN N_2= EPP (except Astrid Lulling)	parents have the right to return to an equivalent position after parental leave, provided this is also adopted in national legislation.
Debate					
8	CRE-5-2002-06-12-ITM-005_EN *Debate*	Enlargement of the Union	12/06/2002		Although earmarked parental leave is not specifically mentioned by anyone other than Karamanou from PES, points are identified where prospective member states must improve their gender equality.
9	CRE-5-2002-09-24-ITM-012_EN *Debate*	European guidelines on employment	24/09/2002	N_1= ELDR N_2=	Only ELDR mentions gender equality in the context of parental leave.
10	2002/2025(INI) *Adopted text - Resolution*	European Parliament resolution on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament	13/03/2003	N_1 = EP	Member states are encouraged to ensure parents return to the same or similar positions after parental leave.
11	P5_TA(2004)0152 *Adopted text - Resolution*	Work, the family and private life	09/03/2004	N_1 = EP	Member states are urged to extend parental leave, introduce earmarked parental leave, and ensure that parents return to the same or a similar position after leave. This is the first resolution where earmarked parental leave is specifically mentioned.
12	CRE-6-2005-07-05-ITM-029_EN *Debate*	Equal opportunities in employment and work	05/07/2005	N_1= EPP (female) + PES + GUE/NGL N_2= EPP (male)	EPP women would like earmarked parental leave to be included in the reevaluation of the EU-directive on gender equality in the labor market. The EPP as a whole supports the introduction of an entirely new directive addressing social gender equality, which goes beyond simply equal pay and unemployment for women. PES supports this and insists on the inclusion of earmarked parental leave. The Commission responds by stating that earmarked parental leave is an unacceptable issue for the EU to dictate and does not fit within the revision of the directive.
13	CRE-6-2005-07-06-ITM-023_EN *Debate*	Debates – Explanations of vote	06/07/2005	N_1= GUE/NGL N_2= EPP + IND/DEM	EPP supports steps toward gender equality but is opposed to earmarked parental leave.

14	P6_TA(2005)0283 *Adopted text – Directive*	European Parliament legislative resolution on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation	06/07/2005		Member states are encouraged to introduce earmarked parental leave for men, but it is emphasized that this will not be made into a directive. Gender discrimination in parental leave is defined.
15	P6_TA(2006)0029 *Adopted text – Resolution*	European Parliament resolution on the future of the Lisbon Strategy from the point of view of the gender perspective	19/01/2006		Member states are urged to raise awareness of parental leave for fathers and make it more attractive.
16	CRE-6-2006-06-01-ITM-003_EN *Debate*	Equal opportunities and equal treatment in employment and occupation (debate)	01/06/2006	N_1= PES + GUE/NGL N_2= EPP + IND/DEM	The Commission opens up the possibility of beginning studies that could lead to a proposal for a directive on earmarked parental leave. This is merely a statement, but earmarked parental leave is formally suggested as an encouragement to member states.
17	P6_TA(2007)0423 *Adopted text – Resolution*	European Parliament resolution of 27 September 2007 on equality between women and men in the European Union – 2007	27/09/2007	N_1 = EP	The EC is urged to investigate paternal leave and ways to improve gender equality in the area of parental leave. Member states are encouraged to provide equal compensation for parental leave for both men and women, so that women are not perceived as a greater financial burden for an employer.
18	CRE-6-2008-09-02-ITM-004_EN *Debate*	Social Package (First part) (debate)	02/09/2008	N_1= PES + EPP N_2= EFD	The British delegation will not take part in the directive on gender equality in parental leave. The EPP would like to extend the mother's earmarked parental leave but prefers that a directive for earmarked parental leave for both parents be created instead.
19	CRE-6-2008-09-02-ITM-014_EN *Debate*	Equality between women and men (debate)	02/09/2008	N_1= EPP + PES N_2= IND/DEM	The Commission states that, despite labor market stakeholders being positively inclined toward earmarked parental leave, it is not working on a proposal for this. IND/DEM does not see inequality as a result of gender, but rather as a matter of moral failing.

20	P6_TA(2008)0399 *Adopted text – Resolution*	European Parliament resolution of 3 September 2008 on Equality between women and men - 2008	03/09/2008	N_1 = EP	It is emphasized that fathers' parental leave is also essential for achieving gender equality in the labor market.
21	P6_TA(2009)0019 *Adopted text – Resolution*	European Parliament resolution of 14 January 2009 on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union 2004-2008	14/01/2009	N_1 = EP	Member states are urged to provide equal compensation for parental leave for both men and women, so that women are not considered a greater expense for the employer.
22	CRE-7-2010-02-08-ITM-016_EN *Debate*	Equality between women and men in the European Union — 2009 (debate)	08/02/2010	N_1= EPP + S&D + GUE/NGL + Verts/ALE N_2= ALDE + NI + EFD +	gender equality – they also emphasize men's rights and the equal distribution of domestic labor. ALDE supports gender equality but does not want directives in this area.
23	P7_TA(2010)0021 *Adopted text – Resolution*	European Parliament resolution of 10 February 2010 on equality between women and men in the European Union – 2009	10/02/2010	N_1 = EP	Criticism is directed at the Council for not having adopted any directives on earmarked parental leave for men.
24	P7_TA(2010)0231 *Adopted text – Resolution*	European Parliament resolution of 17 June 2010 on gender aspects of the economic downturn and financial crisis	17/06/2010	N_1 = EP	The EC is urged to submit a proposal for earmarked parental leave for men to the Council and EP.
25	P7_TA(2011)0085 *Adopted text – Resolution*	European Parliament resolution of 8 March 2011 on equality between women and men in the European Union – 2010	08/03/2011	N_1 = EP	The Council is urged to address the EP's proposal for a directive on gender equality and parental leave from 2010.
26	CRE-7-2011-10-25-ITM-015_EN *Debate*	State of the play of the Maternity Leave Directive (debate)	25/10/2011	N_1= EPP + S&D + GUE/NGL + Verts/ALE + ALDE N_2= EFD + ECR	The President of the EU Council emphasizes that they still do not intend to work on a directive for earmarked parental leave. The EP seeks to introduce earmarked parental leave for each parent. This is strongly criticized by the EFD. The Maternity Leave Directive has not yet been adopted, as it is being blocked by the Council.

						ECR calls earmarked parental leave economically unrealistic.
27	CRE-7-2012-03-12-ITM-017_EN *Debate*	Equality between women and men in the European Union - 2011 - Women in political decision-making (debate)	12/03/2012		N_1= ALDE + S&D + EPP + Verts/ALE + GUE/NGL N_2= ECR + EFD	ALDE proposed measures, including earmarked parental leave. S&D urges the Council to proceed with earmarked parental leave. The Commission begins to realize that earmarked parental leave is linked to inequality in the labor market.
28	P7_TA(2012)0069 *Adopted text – Resolution*	European Parliament resolution of 13 March 2012 on equality between women and men in the European Union - 2011	13/03/2012		N_1 = EP	Member states are once again urged to consider introducing earmarked parental leave for men.
29	CRE-7-2012-05-24-ITM-005_EN *Debate*	Equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value (debate)	24/05/2012		N_1= GUE/NGL + S&D + EPP N_2= None opposed to non-transferable parental leave.	The EPP now strongly advocates for gender equality in the area of parental leave, alongside S&D and GUE/NGL.
30	CRE-7-2012-09-10-ITM-027_EN *Debate*	Women's working conditions in the service sector (short presentation)	10/09/2012		N_1= EPP + Verts/ALE + S&D N_2= ALDE + ECR + NI	Iosif Matula (EPP): "We need more effective policies promoting the balance between work and family life, especially as the overwhelming majority of parents who apply for parental leave are women, an inequality which is also being felt by children"
31	CRE-8-2015-03-10-ITM-012-10_EN *Debate*	Progress on equality between women and men in the EU in 2013	10/03/2015		N_1= S&D + NI + GUE/NGL + ALDE + Verts/ALE N_2= ECR + EPP + NI + EFDD	The EPP was divided in their voting. The EC is again urged to propose 10 days of earmarked parental leave for men.
32	CRE-8-2015-05-19-ITM-015_EN *Debate*	Maternity Leave (Debate)	19/05/2015		N_1= S&D + ALDE + EPP + GUE/NGL + Verts/ALE + EFDD + EPP N_2= ECR + NI + EPP	The revision of the EU directives on parental leave is discussed. Here, the Council's president states that the Council holds a significantly different position from the EP. The EC would like to propose earmarked parental leave, but this is blocked by the Council. Therefore, the EC tries to act as a mediator between the EP and the Council.
33	CRE 19/05/2015 - 15 *Debate*	Maternity leave (debate)	20/05/2015		N_1= EPP + S&D + GUE/NGL + Verts/ALE + NI N_2= EPP + EFDD	Another resolution is adopted regarding 10 days of earmarked parental leave for men.
34	P8_TA(2015)0218 *Adopted text – Resolution*	European Parliament resolution of 9 June 2015 on the EU	09/06/2015		N_1 = EP	The EC is asked to step in as a mediator between the EP and the Council in negotiations on earmarked parental leave.

		Strategy for equality between women and men post 2015			
35	2015/2097(INI) *Adopted text – Resolution*	European Parliament resolution of 12 May 2016 on the application of Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC	12/05/2016	N_1 = EP	Member states are criticized for not taking adequate measures to achieve gender equality in the area of parental leave. It is stated that the EC should propose earmarked parental leave for men, ensuring at least two weeks of leave for fathers.
36	CRE-8-2016-05-12-ITM-010-06_EN *Debate*	Framework Agreement on parental leave	12/05/2016	N_1= NI + S&D + ALDE + EPP + EFDD + GUE/NGL N_2= ENF	A plan for cooperation with the EC in developing a proposal for a directive on earmarked parental leave for men is presented.
37	CRE-8-2016-05-12-ITM-006_EN *Debate*	Framework Agreement on parental leave (debate)	12/05/2016	N_1= EPP + S&D + ALDE + GUE/NGL + Verts/ALE + EFDD + NI + ECR N_2= ENF	Part 2 of the above debate (M36). The same effect.
38	CRE 04/04/2019 – 3 *Adopted text – Directive*	Work-life balance for parents and carers (debate) (debate)	04/04/2019	N_1= EPP + S&D + ECR + ALDE + GUE/NGL + EFDD + NI + Verts/ALE N_2= ENF	The directive, including earmarked parental leave for men, is adopted. ALDE (and GUE/NGL) votes in favor, but is dissatisfied with the directive not being more ambitious regarding earmarked parental leave for men. Council representatives are satisfied with the proposal. The EC would have preferred a more far-reaching directive in the area of parental leave.