

How women shape negativity in parliamentary speeches - A sentiment analysis of debates in the Austrian parliament

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Abstract

Though negativity in political debates influences citizens' attitudes towards legislative institutions, research on MPs' use of negative language remains scant. This study shows how the gender of speakers and the context of debates influence the level of negativity in parliamentary speeches. We argue that female MPs use less negative language than male colleagues due to gender differences in socialization and stereotypical expectations. Applying sentiment analysis with word embeddings to 20 years of plenary speeches in the Austrian parliament, we find that speeches by women MPs are less negative on average compared to those of their male colleagues. A more balanced gender distribution within a party group decreases differences in tone by lowering the negativity of male speakers. A growing share of women in parliament can thus change the tone of debates, which might enhance the legitimacy of political institutions and the quality of democracy.

Keywords: Gender, legislative speech, negativity, parliament, parties, sentiment analysis

Introduction

The behaviour of political elites and the way they communicate impacts public attitudes towards democratic institutions (e.g. Mutz and Reeves 2005). A highly visible form of interaction between representatives of government and opposition are plenary debates in legislatures. Negative or uncivil plenary speeches can erode perceptions of fairness, undermine efficacy in opposition and government relations and polarize voters who may ultimately turn away from democratic politics (Mutz and Reeves 2005). Parliamentary debates consist of a sequence of MPs taking their turn at the speaker's podium. As a result, giving a speech does not happen in isolation, speakers are not oblivious to what happens during speech-giving and they may refer to previous contributions or react to applause or heckling. The atmosphere in a debate can heat up quickly. For example, in the Austrian Nationalrat in 2012, the discussion of the Euro became increasingly disputed, with MPs using negative phrases referring to previous speeches by MPs from other parties as 'impertinence' or 'obscene', culminating in a 'Call to Order' (Parlamentsdirektion 2012). At other times, speeches on controversial topics remain fact oriented and the tone of the debate at a rather neutral level even when criticism of ministers' or other parties' policy proposals is involved. The wide range in debate tone – ranging from constructive criticism of other parties or the status quo to verbal incivility – is obvious to political observers and has different effects on perceptions of politics (e.g. Lipsitz and Geer 2017; Haselmayer et al. 2020). Yet, thus far, we know little about how individual attributes of speakers and the setting affect the negativity in plenary speeches. To fill this gap, in this article we answer the research question of how MPs' gender and contextual characteristics of parliamentary debates influence the level of negativity in plenary speeches.

Previous studies find a number of gendered differences in rhetorical interaction in parliament. Female MPs discuss policies in more precise ways (Bochel et al. 2000), connect their arguments more often to personal experience (Childs 2004), and tend to behave in a less adversarial

manner than male MPs (see e.g. Hargrave et al. 2020). To explain such gender differences in communication styles, research has drawn on the concept of gender stereotypes – stylized expectations about traditional roles of men and women in society. According to this idea, men are believed to exhibit traits such as strength, competitiveness, assertiveness, agency, and aggression whereas women are thought to be warm, sensitive and compromise oriented (e.g. Huddy et al. 1993). Socialisation along these expectations systematically shapes behaviour and its perceived appropriateness (Eagly et al. 2002). Translating this rationale to communication styles in the legislative context, we argue that gender stereotypical expectations about women’s collaborative nature lead to a lower likelihood for female politicians to use negative language than for male ones. As a result, female MPs should use less negative language in speeches than their male colleagues. Furthermore, we postulate that the party context, the sequence of previous speakers and their gender influences this gap in the level of negativity in parliamentary speeches in two ways: First, speaking after female politicians should lower the level of negativity in the subsequent speech. Second, at the aggregate level, a greater gender balance in parliamentary parties should reduce the negativity gap in rhetorical acts by male politicians.

Our analyses draw on 52,000 speeches from plenary debates in the Austrian National Council held by more than 500 different MPs over the course of two decades (1996-2013). This approach allows to directly measure gender differences in behaviour and adds to existing research which relies on interviews with MPs to shed light on personal role understandings (with notable exception of Hargrave and Langengen 2020). Austria provides an interesting case for studying negativity in parliamentary debates for two reasons. First, plenary debates are an important arena of competition between government and opposition parties. Second, in contrast to many other European countries, populist right-wing political parties such as the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) have been in parliament for a long time. Previous research has repeatedly linked an increase of populist right rhetoric with political polarization (Bischof and Wagner

2019) and negative political communication (Widmann 2021). Thus, Austrian plenary debates constitute an interesting case for studying the use of negative speech.

We rely on a graded conceptualization of negative sentiment strength as different degrees of negativity have distinct effects on voter perceptions (Haselmayer et al. 2020; (Lipsitz and Geer 2017). Our analyses demonstrate that female MPs' speeches are indeed less negative on average than those of male MPs. The effect is conditioned by the number of previous female speakers and the share of female MPs in the parliamentary party groups. A more balanced gender distribution in a parliamentary party group decreases differences in negativity because male MPs adapt their communication behaviour and become more positive as the presence of women increases.

The results have implications for the debate on the importance of women's presence in legislatures for the quality of democracy. They shed further light on how descriptive representation might enhance the evaluation of political institutions, trust and legitimacy, which are critical to democratic stability (Gay 2002). Beyond bringing new perspectives to the floor, serving as role models and providing a feeling of inclusion (e.g. Wängnerud 2009), female MPs and their speeches could contribute to a reduction of negativity in parliament, which can at least to some extent explain the level of public trust, efficacy, and participation (Mutz and Reeves 2005). The study further adds to the understanding of gender differences in negative political communication. Our results suggest that ambiguous evidence from previous analyses could relate to variation in the representation of men and women in parties. Research on gender differences in political communication therefore benefits from taking into account steady factors such as parties and party groups, but also flexible ones like the sequence of male and female speakers in parliamentary debates.

Gender and political negativity

A large body of literature investigates how women's presence in political arenas transforms political culture by articulating women's interests, perspectives and priorities. Employing a wide range of theoretical and empirical approaches, these studies predict that female and male MPs differ in their interests, legislative voting and in their policy priorities (Dahlerup 1988; see e.g. Wängnerud 2009 for an overview). In addition to the claim that men and women differ with regard to issue positions and substantive focus, political communication is another dimension in which male and female politicians are thought to take different approaches. Analysing electoral campaigns, a number of studies provide mixed evidence about differences in rhetoric: Some indicate that women use negative campaign strategies as often or even more frequently than their male counterparts (e.g. Walter 2013), others find that female candidates use attacks less often than male candidates (e.g. Ennser-Jedenastik et al. 2017 for an overview). Beyond providing mixed results, most research focuses on political campaigns and studies measuring style in parliaments is limited and focuses on a small set of specific policy areas (Hargrave and Langengen 2020) or certain types of debates (e.g floor appointments in U.S. state legislative committee hearings Kathlene 1994). In particular, we know little about gendered communication patterns during parliamentary debates even though they constitute an important arena for confrontation between government and opposition and are thus crucial for legitimation (Jenny et al. 2021).

To fill this gap, we analyse the use of negative speech in parliamentary debates in order to shed light on whether women and men communicate differently in the same political settings. Negative speech can take various forms, including constructive criticism of opponents or the status quo to strongly negative or verbally uncivil forms of communication (Haselmayer 2019; Jenny et al. 2021). Role congruency theory (Eagly and Karau 2002) provides two explanations for why female MPs should be less negative than male MPs during debates in parliaments.

First of all, socialization along the lines of gender stereotypes can account for gender-based differences in the use of negative language. Stylized expectations about men and women originate in belief systems, which ascribe men and women different roles in society based on their sex (see Huddy and Terkildsen 1993 for an overview). Women are associated with a role as caretaker of the private, fulfilling obligations such as supervising children, taking care of the elderly, and organizing the household. In line with the abilities important to succeed in these tasks, women are expected to exhibit personal traits such as warmth, sensitivity, passion, and orientation towards compromise in conflictual situations. Men, by contrast, are predicted to provide resources for the family and engage in the organization of political life. As a result of these obligations in the public sphere, the logic of stereotyping foresees men to exhibit traits such as strength, competitiveness, assertiveness, agency, and aggression (see Eagly and Karau 2002). Even though the societal role of men and women have changed overtime, this form of categorization continues to inform beliefs about the qualities and behavioural patterns desired for each sex even today. Stereotypical expectations about women's communion (e.g. honesty, politeness, ability to handle people well) have even increased within the last years (Eagly 2020).

Through socialization, behavioural expectations are internalized and are thought to result in gendered patterns of communication. Consequently, men's style of speaking tends to be more agentic and assertive. Women communicate in more communal and passive ways employing affiliative or democratic language while acknowledging and agreeing with their conversational counterparts (e.g. Banducci et al. 2012). Previous research indicates that even in political contexts that typically call for agentic behaviour, socialization along the lines of gender stereotypes shapes differences in the behaviour of men and women. In parliamentary debates, for instance, women behave less dominantly than men (Koppensteiner et al. 2016). Also, female politicians do less standing up and shouting and are less combative and aggressive (Tolleson-Rinehart 2001) and tend to make fewer personal attacks (e.g. Kathlene 1994). Likewise, in the

UK, a study of five debates in the House of Commons provides evidence that male MPs interrupt more often (Shaw 2000) and Hargrave and Langengen (2020) demonstrate that female MPs speaking about education, immigration and welfare employ adversarial language less often than their male colleagues.

Second, in addition to internalization of a certain type of behaviour, for women it is more at stake once they use negative styles of communication. When men and women act in ways that are incompatible with gender stereotypical roles, women face prejudices about their competence according to the role incongruity hypothesis (Eagly and Karau 2002). All behaviour that deviates from role prescriptions is perceived as inappropriate for women (e.g. Rudman et al. 2012). As a result, female MPs might fear to face disadvantages if their speeches are perceived as too negative than what is generally expected from women. Substantiating this line of argumentation, research indicates that women are penalized when they employ agentic rather than communal styles (Carli 2013). Furthermore, nonverbal forms of communication that are assertive, forceful, or domineering are depicted as inappropriate for women but acceptable for men. Women who express anger are viewed as less competent and more out of control than both angry men and women not showing emotion (Brescoll et al. 2008). Also, studies provide evidence that women are punished more (e.g. through lower levels of likability) than men when they display clear expressions of dominance such as finger-pointing (Williams et al. 2016).

As a result, we expect female politicians in parliament to behave largely in congruence with gender stereotypes because of socialization and as deviation from this expectation is a risky strategy for them. As a consequence, female MPs should use less negative language than male MPs.

Hypothesis 1: In parliamentary debates, female MPs use less negative language than male MPs.

As women tend to be calmer in their style of communication, we expect that they also influence the overall dynamics of the debate. Consequently, we argue that the likelihood to use forms of negative communication decreases with an increasing number of women immediately preceding a speech in a debate. This line of argumentation follows from the rationale, that if female speakers indeed use a less negative tone, unfair or disproportionate rhetoric can lead to a ‘boomerang’ or ‘backlash’ effect and harm its sponsor (e.g. Fridkin et al. 2011). Both male and female MPs should thus be more reluctant to make use of negative speech if they immediately follow-up on a larger share of women MPs. On the one hand, in line with stereotypical predictions, men are expected to act politely towards women. Societal norms perceive men as disrespectful and rude when they are verbally or nonverbally aggressive against women (Vogel et al. 2003) and male politicians are expected to show a different behavior towards female candidates (Fox 1997). Hence, some studies on campaigning show that there is a significantly lower likelihood for male candidates to attack a female opponent than to attack a male one (e.g. Kahn and Kenney 2004). On the other hand, it seems risky for female MPs to react in a negative manner against a female colleague as it clashes with stereotypical expectations about appropriate behaviour (Rojahn et al. 1994). In a nutshell, we expect that female MPs positively influence the overall atmosphere of the debate and that subsequent speakers irrespective of their gender adapt their communication to this overall less negative tone during a discussion. In turn, the speech of both a male or a female MP should be less negative if the share of women amongst the preceding speakers increases. By contrast, the more speeches given by men within a debate, the more negative the subsequent speech. First evidence for this argument about the influence of the overall atmosphere provides a study on Germany which demonstrates that mixed-gender TV debates are more civil than all male discussions (Maier et al. 2018).

Hypothesis 2: The higher the share of female politicians preceding a speech, the less negative the speech of the subsequent MP. .

In addition, the contextual setting of parliamentary parties should shape the use of negative language in debates since the exposure to women in politics leads to a change in the behaviour of the majority. Critical mass theory suggests that a transformation of political culture can be triggered if women grow from a few token individuals into a considerable minority of all legislators (Dahlerup 1988). As their numbers rise, the theory predicts, women become increasingly effective in promoting changes in parliaments and politics that include social conventions such as a softening in tone, shorter speech-making, less formality and more precision in speeches (Dahlerup 1988). Consequently, we expect that male MPs use less negative communication and adapt their behaviour in line with those of their female counterparts if women in politics are naturally a more common occurrence.

Previous research provides evidence for the argument that gender diversity affects the style of collaboration. Communication in small groups is enhanced by gender diversity (e.g. Bear et al. 2011) and firm performance is improved by greater female representation on corporate boards (see Post et al. 2015 for an overview). Closer to our field of study is the finding of Ennsner-Jedenastik et al (2017) who report that a larger share of women in the party group does not decrease the probability of using negative campaigning. Yet, the study focuses on election campaigns and includes a more diverse group of politicians, such as new candidates, which might dilute socialization effects of parliamentary party groups. Based on these considerations, we hypothesize that politicians from party groups with a high share of women behave more alike and that the gender gap in negativity decreases.

Hypothesis 3: The more equal the gender distribution is in a parliamentary party group, the smaller is the gender gap in negative communication.

Data and methods

To test these propositions, we study plenary debates in the National Council, the first chamber of the Austrian parliament, from five legislative terms (1996-2013). Austria has a parliamentary system where governments depend on majority support in the National Council. Plenary debates are public, frequently televised and internet streaming service is provided by the parliamentary administration. In addition, media regularly report on these sessions, which makes them highly visible to the general public. Plenary debates are regulated with regard to total speaking time allotment for the parliamentary party groups, individual speakers, and the speaking order. The latter is set by a combination of two criteria: alternation of speakers' party group affiliation, and of pro and contra speakers. Parliamentary party groups nominate speakers and their planned speaking time before the debate. Hence, MPs prepare their speeches to some extent but they spontaneously react to the previous speeches, feedback from the audience or heckling from other MPs (Jenny and Müller 2021).

Plenary debates are structured along the government-opposition divide. During the period under investigation, two government coalition formats were in office, first a SPÖ-ÖVP coalition (1996-1999), then a ÖVP-FPÖ/BZÖ coalition during two terms (2000-2006), followed by a renewed SPÖ-ÖVP coalition (2006-2013). Bound by a coalition treaty, government MPs uphold strict party discipline as do opposition MPs most of the time.

The dataset contains 52,132 speeches given by MPs from 7 parties (SPÖ, ÖVP, FPÖ, Greens, BZÖ, Liberals (LiF), Team Stronach) and a small number of non-affiliated MPs, who left or were excluded from their party group. While ministers do the initial presentation of a

government bill, they rarely participate in the subsequent debate and are technically no members of parliament, thus, we exclude speeches from cabinet members (n=3,934).¹ We also omit very short speeches with less than five sentences (n=515) as these are particularly challenging for automated classifiers.

Table 1 provides a descriptive overview of the remaining speeches by party and gender. As the Standing Orders accord speaking time in proportion to party group size (Jenny and Müller 2021), the number of speeches indicates the parties' relative size for the total period studied.

[Table 1 about here]

Women gave about 30 per cent of the speeches. The gender distribution of the speeches varies in line with the respective party group's share of women (see Appendix A) and its stance on gender equality. The Greens have an almost equal gender balance (48.6% female MPs), followed by the Social Democrats with one in three speeches given by female politicians. For the Christian Democratic People's Party (ÖVP), the Liberals (LiF) and the short-lived right-wing populist party Team Stronach, women contributed about one in four speeches. Among the right-wing populist parties, less than one in five speeches of the Freedom Party (FPÖ) and its splinter, the BZÖ were given by female speakers.

Measuring negativity in plenary debates

Studies on negative political communication typically use a dichotomous conceptualization of negativity. This approach cannot account for variation in how political actors talk more or less

¹ In the Appendix, we present analyses including cabinet members, which corroborate the results presented below.

negatively (Haselmayer 2019) even though a person speaking can determine whether and how strongly to criticize a policy or opponent. Moreover, a binary measure is unable to match public perceptions of negative political communication (Lipsitz and Geer 2017), which may depend on the degree or sentiment strength of negative communication (Haselmayer et al. 2020; Haselmayer et al. 2018). Therefore, this analysis builds on a graded understanding of negative communication. Our measure of negativity captures a broad variety of negativity ranging from weakly to strongly negative speeches, including incivility. Following previous research, we are only interested in the differences between non-negative (neutral and positive) to negative part of sentiment as psychological research highlights that negative information and evaluations contribute more strongly to human cognition, impression formation and decision making (e.g. Baumeister et al. 2001).

Our approach to computing negative parliamentary speeches relies on machine learning based on a crowd-coded training set (Rudkowsky et al. 2018; Jenny et al. 2021). The classifier uses these data and word embeddings from the *fastText*² library (Grave et al. 2018; Mikolov et al. 2018), which contains roughly two million items for the German language³. Using subwords and the *Gensim* library⁴ allows calculating meaningful word vectors even for words that are not contained in the corpus. Each sentence is represented as a sequence of word vectors. This method preserves information on word order and captures short- and long-term dependencies between words. To deal with a sequential data input, we use a special recurrent neural network: The Gated Recurrent Unit (GRU) processes the sequence of vectors and creates a single vector summary that is then passed on to a three-layered Multilayer Perceptron (MLP) performing the

² <https://fasttext.cc/>.

³ Subwords allow obtaining information for unknown compound words. As compounds are very common in the German language, and particularly relevant in the context of political speeches, this improves the coverage substantially.

⁴ <https://radimrehurek.com/gensim/>

actual sentiment classification for each sentence as neutral, negative or very negative category.⁵

The MLP obtains sentence vectors by averaging its word vectors, which are then used to classify the strength of negative sentiment of a sentence.

During pre-processing of texts, stop words and punctuation were included. The procedure was trained with 20,580 sentences containing a continuous negativity score per sentence ranging from 0 (“neutral/positive”) to 4 (“very negative”). These initial scores were split into three equal sized classes (“neutral/positive”, “negative”, “very negative”) to facilitate the prediction task and improve the classification accuracy of the algorithm. The model was trained 60 times with a dropout of 40 per cent over the entire network. Thus, at each iteration, the model randomly drops out nodes during training. The main objective of this approach is to avoid overfitting and improve generalization error (Srivastava et al. 2014). The average accuracy of this approach is 63 per cent, which outperforms similar applications by 5 percentage points and bag-of-words approaches without word embeddings by eight percentage points (Rudkowsky et al. 2018).

Whereas this attests of the validity of our approach to predict negative sentiment at the sentence-level, we further test its validity at the level of plenary speeches. To do so, we aggregate sentence scores for each speech using the mean negativity score of all sentences (see below). An empirical validation shows the ability of this approach to detect negative speech in Austrian plenary debates. Examining the prediction of rule-based sanctions of (very) negative speeches (Calls to Order) in the Austrian National Council, Jenny et al. (2021) find that the mean negativity scores of these speeches correctly identified the sanctioned speeches in 75.3 per cent of the cases. That prediction rate mirrors accuracy scores for similarly complex tasks in the German-language, such as hate speech detection (e.g. Bai et al. 2018 report accuracy

⁵ The GRU units’ dimension is 128 and uses a Rectified Linear Unit Activation function. The MLP transforms the output vector in three layers (with dimensions of 128, 128 and 64 using a Rectified Linear Unit Activation function). The final output layer (with a Softmax activation function) produces a single score per sentence from a three-valued negative sentiment scale.

scores at about 75% respectively; Roß et al. 2016). Finally, we validate crowd-coded negativity scores of a quota random sample of plenary speeches (n=48)⁶. Comparing aggregated crowdscores (from a four-point incivility score) with automated scores yields a Pearson's correlation of 0.75 (Appendix A3 provides additional information). Based on these validation tests, we are confident that our approach measures negativity in parliamentary debates adequately.

Operationalization

Our dependent variable is the negativity score of a speech. It ranges from 0 (neutral or positive) to 2 (strongly negative) with a mean value of 0.50. The score reflects the mean negativity of all sentences contained in a speech. It is a 'conservative' measure of negativity, as longer speech segments with a neutral or only weakly negative tone dilute a single strongly worded statement in the overall sentiment score of a speech. Even though this approach reduces the range of variation of our dependent variable and thus the magnitude of effects, we consider it a trade-off to obtain valid results. Nevertheless, we are confident that the results reported below are substantively meaningful as they are robust to a number of additional tests (see Appendix B).

We have three explanatory variables: the speaker's gender (1 = female), the share of women in a PPG in a legislative term (total mean of 0.31) and the share of female speakers among the previous five speakers (total mean of 0.30). We also include a series of control variables. Government party MPs are expected to be less negative than opposition party MPs, thus we control for party status. We further include an indicator variable for party group leaders. They are frequent speakers in debates deemed very important to the party and tend to be more negative than ordinary MPs (Rudkowsky et al. 2018). Other individual factors we account for

⁶ We use a quota sample to represent speeches across the empirical range of predicted negativity scores. Therefore, we draw speeches based on a quartile split of the negativity scores.

are age (mean: 49.1) and academic degree (mean: 0.40). At the level of plenary sessions, we measure if a motion of no confidence was introduced in a debate (mean: 0.15) and account for Urgent Questions (mean: 0.08) – topical debates that are typically initiated by opposition parties in order to criticize the government. To control for a dynamic change in negativity, we include the tone of the previous speaker in our models (mean: 0.49). We also add a set of contextual controls. We account for the order of speaking in a plenary session (mean: 22.02) and include a measure of speech duration using the number of sentences (mean: 36.3) to control for a possible correlation with negativity (and a potential source of measurement error for the automated measurement of our dependent variable). Year fixed effects account for a potential increase in negativity over time. The appendix provides information on the distribution of these variables (Appendix A).

Results

The descriptives show that female politicians use less negative language in the parliamentary arena than men. Mean negativity scores of speeches by men are slightly more negative (mean=0.51, s.d.=0.23) than speeches by women (mean= 0.47, s.d.=0.23). Across parties, female MPs exhibit a more moderate tone compared to their male counterparts, as illustrated by Figure 1. We expected party ideology or a parliamentary party's gender balance to influence the size of the negativity gender gap. Yet, it is similar for left and libertarian parties – Greens, Liberals and Social Democrats (SPÖ) – and the two larger parties on the right⁷, the christian-

⁷ The share of women's representation in PPGs correlates strongly with party placement on the libertarian- authoritarian (GALTAN) dimensions based on data from the Chape Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al. 2020). More libertarian parties have higher shares of women MPs ($r=-0.88$) The strength of the relationship makes it difficult to separate the effects of party ideology and gender composition. Yet, in line with prior research, we argue that the direction of the causal path should run from party ideology to share of female MPs in the party group (e.g. Ennser-Jedenastik et al. 2017).

democratic People's Party (ÖVP) and the Freedom Party (FPÖ). Two party groups stand out with larger gender gaps in negativity: the FPÖ-splinter BZÖ, and Team Stronach. Variation among male and female speakers is low for non-affiliated MPs (a group mostly composed of former members of FPÖ or BZÖ).

[Figure 1 about here]

We argue that gender patterns in the sequence of speakers make a difference and that speeches following after a female speaker will be less negative than those preceding a male MP. Mean negativity scores across immediate follow-up speakers are indeed lower when the previous speech was given by a woman (mean: 0.48) compared to a man (0.51). This difference is regardless of the gender of the next MP stepping up to the speaker's desk (mean negativity of 0.48 vs. 0.46 for women, 0.52 vs. 0.49 for men). We also check whether the sequencing effect gets stronger the more female MPs participated in the debate before. Figure 2 shows a weak 'dampening' effect for the share of women among the last five speakers: the mean negativity score decreases from 0.53 for speakers following after a male MP to 0.45 for speakers following after five female MPs.

[Figure 2 about here]

Furthermore, we have presented an argument on gender balance and stereotypical rhetorical behaviour of MPs. We hypothesize that MPs from a PPG with a high share of women behave in less stereotypical ways than MPs in predominantly male party groups. Accordingly, the gender gap in negativity should decrease in PPGs with a more even gender balance. The

variation in PPGs' gender distribution has a slightly positive correlation with the negativity of male ($r=0.21$) and female MPs' speeches ($r=0.27$).⁸ As the share of women in the PPG increases both, male and female MPs become more negative.

While univariate and bivariate statistics suggest confirming evidence for some propositions, more factors such as government composition, individual attributes of speakers or contextual effects are likely to interfere. For a more robust test of our hypotheses, we run multiple OLS regression models and control for government membership, political roles and individual attributes. We account for a potential increase in negativity over time by including yearly fixed effects. To capture dynamics within debates, the model controls for the sequence of speakers and the tone of the previous speech. Context factors, such as time and number of speakers also enter the models. Similarly, we include dummy variables for more controversial debates, such as Urgent Questions or Motions of no confidence. Finally, as longer speeches are more likely to contain negative information, we take the length of speeches into account. We provide descriptive statistics on the variables in Appendix A.

As most of the observed variation in speech negativity is at the level of individual MPs and plenary sessions, we use clustered standard errors at this level. Additional regression models with random intercepts at the level of party-session clusters, and regression models excluding parties that were only a single term in parliament corroborate the findings presented below. Additional checks based on repeated random draws of 1,000 observations from the dataset are presented in Appendix B. This analysis shows that the results are not driven by the large number of observations.

Table 2 presents the results of two OLS regression models testing our theoretical expectations. The second model adds an interaction term for female speakers and the share of female MPs in

⁸ The appendix presents a graphical representation of this relationship (cf. Appendix A).

a parliamentary party group. With regard to our first expectation, the analyses confirm that female MPs are on average 0.03 less negative than male ones.

[Table 2 about here]

The second hypothesis predicts that MPs should tone down their speeches if they follow up on (larger shares of) female speakers. Our analyses corroborate this expectation. The left panel of Figure 3 plots the mean predicted values, which indicates a linear, albeit small, effect. Whereas the average negativity value is of 0.51 in speeches immediately following after a male MP, this value goes down to 0.48 if all five previous speakers were women.

[Figure 3 about here]

Our third hypothesis states that gender effects are contingent on the representation of women in parliamentary party groups. We argue that the rhetorical behaviour of men should come closer to their female colleagues in PPGs with an (almost) equal gender balance. To test this, we interact the gender of MPs with the gender balance of PPGs and provide a graphical presentation of the effect in the right panel of figure 3. Results from Table 2 comfort our argument that gender differences in negativity should decrease when men and women are equally represented in their PPGs. The right panel of figure 3 provides evidence for our theorized rationale. According to the predicted probabilities, speeches of male MPs are less negative as the gender balance of PPGs gets more even (0.52 to 0.48) while there is no difference in the rhetoric of female MPs (0.47). These findings support the expectation that the rhetorical behaviour of men and women converges in PPGs with an equal representation of male and female MPs. The reason for the observed convergence results from changes in the

behaviour of men rather than women MPs. Again, the magnitude of these effects is very small, yet, it suggests that parliamentary speeches get (slightly) less negative in PPGs with a more even gender balance. On a general note, this suggests that women transform the political culture in parliaments as predicted by the critical mass theory (Dahlerup 1988).

Turning to our control variables, we find that MPs from opposition parties are more negative than government MPs. Likewise, PPG-leaders use a more negative tone than the average MP. At the individual level, younger MPs and graduated ones are more negative. We also find a negative effect for the share of female MPs in a PPG, which corroborates the rationale outlined above, namely, that a greater share of female MPs reduces the overall negativity in a parliamentary party group. Finally, we also observe contextual effects: negativity tends to go up if the previous speaker was more negative, as sessions proceed and if plenary sessions are more controversial (interpellations and motions of no confidence). Moreover, longer speeches are more negative than shorter ones. The number of speakers has no effect on the sentiment of debates, yet, we find evidence that parliamentary debates get increasingly negative at a late hour.

Conclusions

This study sheds light on how the gender of speakers and gender balance in parliamentary parties influence the tone of plenary debates. Adding to previous findings of gender differences in political communication (Ennsner-Jedenastik, Dolezal et al. 2017; Maier and Renner 2018; Walter 2013) our sentiment analysis of 52,000 plenary speeches by more than 500 MPs in the Austrian National Council reveals that speeches of female MPs are less negative than those of male MPs.

We also find a contextual effect: a more balanced gender distribution in PPGs decreases gender differences in negativity. This pattern supports the argument that when women enter the parliamentary arena, political culture transforms since male MPs alter their behaviour and thus the level of negativity converges. By contrast, female MPs tend to keep their own style even in a setting with predominantly male speakers and do not adapt to the more rhetorically aggressive style of male colleagues. Thus, a growing presence of women in parliaments seems to positively influence social conventions including the tone of parliamentary debates. Bringing in traits of women's culture leads to a change in communication in political parties and institutions and alters the 'way of doing politics' (Dahlerup 1988).

Gender in the sequence of speakers also plays a role in setting the tone of parliamentary debates. Female and male MPs are less negative when preceded by one or more female speakers. Female MPs less often provoke strong negative reactions, which keeps the course of a debate on a more civil path. Such a finding has wider implications as the behaviour of political elites impacts public perceptions of democratic institutions. High levels of negativity can increase political polarization, erode trust in political institutions and decrease voter turnout (Mutz and Reeves 2005). However, this study points at a countervailing factor. Active women in legislatures keep parliamentary debates more positive and, as a consequence, can promote citizens' confidence in political institutions. Overall, our findings enhance our understanding about how the descriptive representation of women might strengthen relations between citizens and governments, might improve trust in the workings of democracy and might reduce political polarization.

Future research should move beyond single country case studies to provide insight into how system-level factors, such as strength of populist parties or variation in electoral systems affect the relationship between gender and tone of parliamentary debates. Comparative studies are needed to address whether our results – based on MPs elected in a multi-party system with

proportional representation – transfers to a setting with MPs elected in single member districts under plurality rule. Future research could explore the tone of debates across policy areas and whether female MPs, who speak with greater emotional intensity on ‘women’s issues’ tend to be more negative on these topics. Shedding light on these gendered dynamics will allow to understand whether the general political tone in plenary sessions as well as in parties affects citizens’ ambition to run for office and to become engaged in parties in general and women’s involvement in political processes in particular.

Table 1: Parliamentary speeches in the National Council by party and gender (1996-2013)

Party	Male	Female	% Female	Total
SPÖ	9,848	5,002	33.7	14,850
ÖVP	9,585	3,451	26.5	13,036
FPÖ	8,474	1,702	16.7	10,176
Greens	4,207	3,982	48.6	8,189
BZÖ	3,376	613	15.4	3,989
LiF	1,041	415	28.5	1,456
Team Stronach	220	70	24.1	290
Independent	141	5	3.4	146
Total	36,892	15,240	29.2	52,132

Table 2: Ordinal least squares regression of negativity

	Model 1		Model 2	
Female MP	-0.03***	(0.00)	-0.05***	(0.01)
% share of preceding female speakers	-0.03***	(0.00)	-0.03***	(0.00)
% of female MPs in PPG	-0.06***	(0.01)	-0.09***	(0.01)
Female MP # % of female MPs in PPG			0.07***	(0.02)
Government party	-0.18***	(0.00)	-0.18***	(0.00)
PPG leader	0.09***	(0.01)	0.09***	(0.01)
Age	-0.00***	(0.00)	-0.00***	(0.00)
Academic degree	0.02***	(0.00)	0.02***	(0.00)
Tone of previous speech	0.18***	(0.00)	0.18***	(0.00)
Motion of no confidence	0.01***	(0.00)	0.01***	(0.00)
Urgent Questions	0.07***	(0.00)	0.07***	(0.00)
Time	-0.00***	(0.00)	-0.00***	(0.00)
Number of speakers	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)
Sequence of speakers	0.00***	(0.00)	0.00***	(0.00)
Speech length	0.00***	(0.00)	0.00***	(0.00)
Constant	0.45***	(0.01)	0.45***	(0.01)
<i>Year fixed effects</i>		<i>Yes</i>		<i>Yes</i>
BIC		-26,553.35		-26,563.24
N		49,433		49,433
Adjusted R ²		0.35		0.35

Note: Standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the level of MP-sessions *** p < 0.001. Changes in the number of observations compared to Table 1 are due to the lagged share of women MPs preceding a speech (n=2,223) and the exclusion of speeches by non-affiliated MPs (n=146).

Figure 1: Negativity of plenary speeches by party and gender

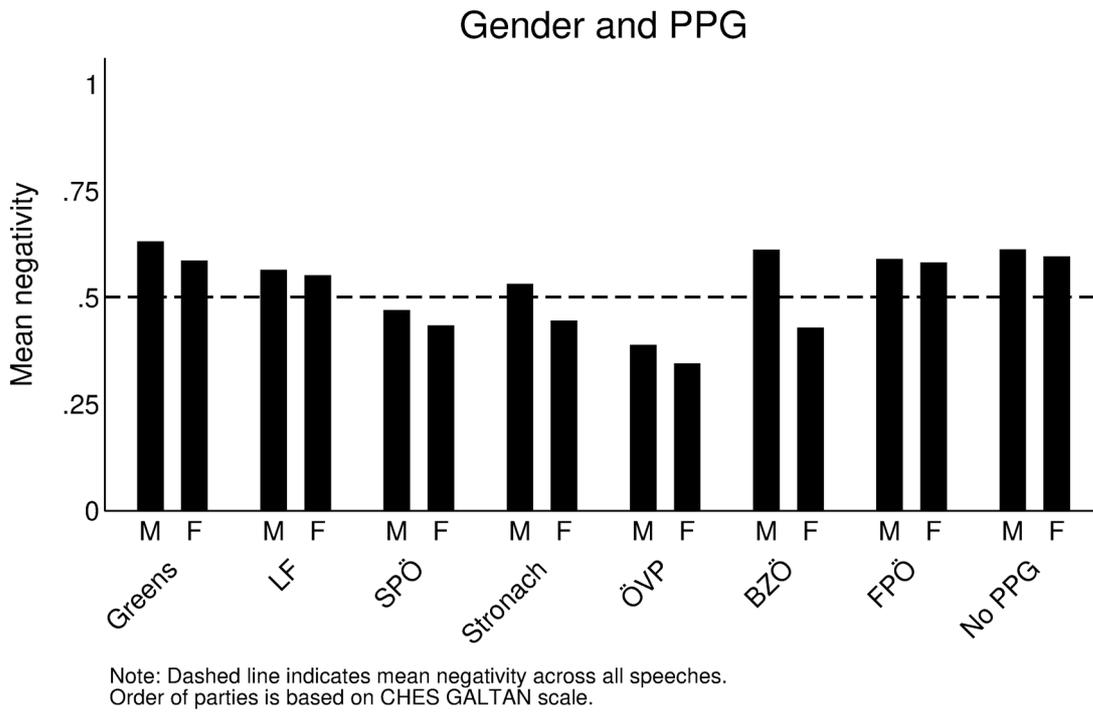


Figure 2: Negativity and share of female speakers among previous five speakers

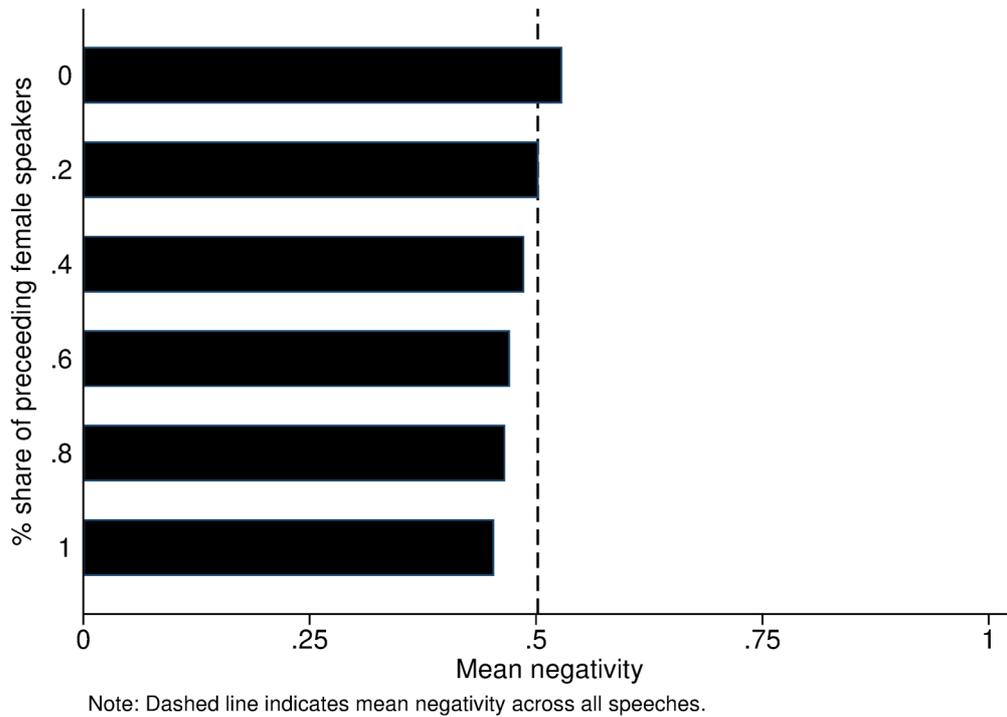
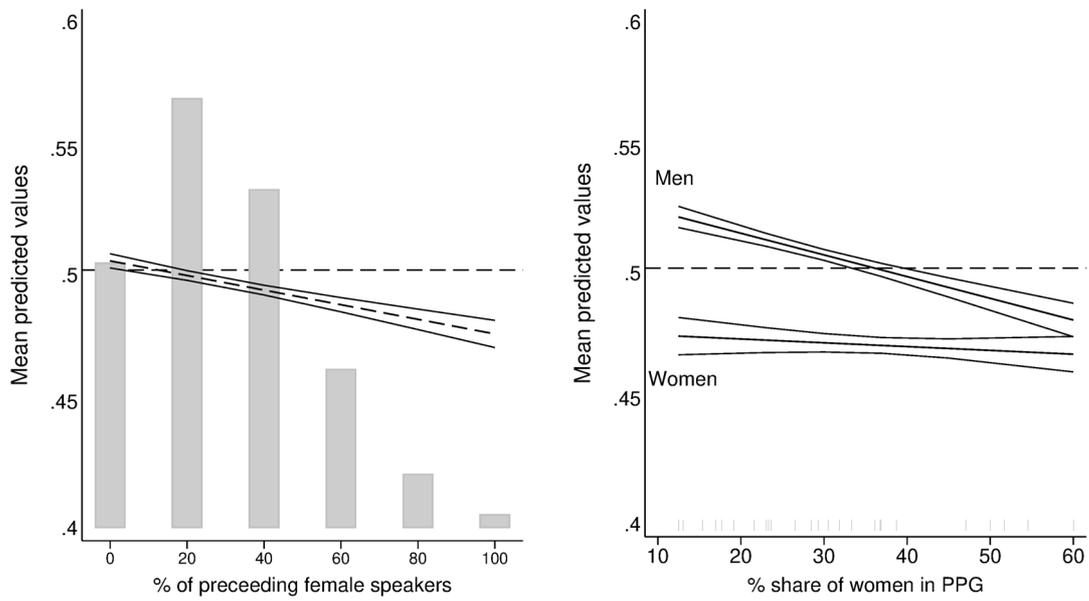


Figure 3: Mean predicted values



Notes: Y-axes show the predicted values along with 95% confidence intervals. The x-axes show the gender distribution among previous speakers (left panel) and of PPGs (right panel). The bar chart (left panel) and the pipes (right panel) indicate the distribution of both variables. Estimates based on Models 1 and 2 in Table 2. All remaining variables are held constant at their observed values.

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Supplemental material for: How women shape negativity in parliamentary speeches - A sentiment analysis of debates in the Austrian parliament

Appendix A

Figure A1: Share of female MPs by parliamentary party group at start of legislative term

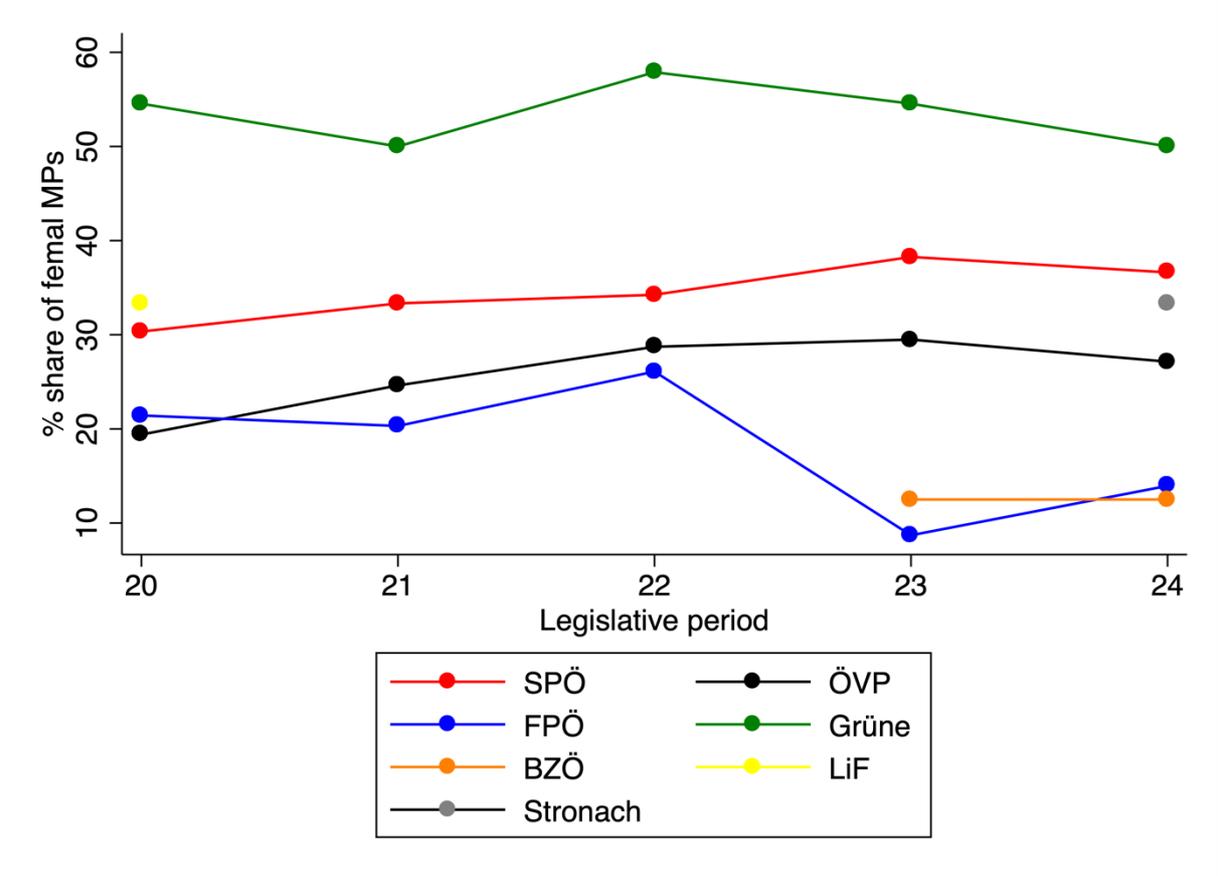


Figure A2: Mean negativity by gender and gender distribution in PPG

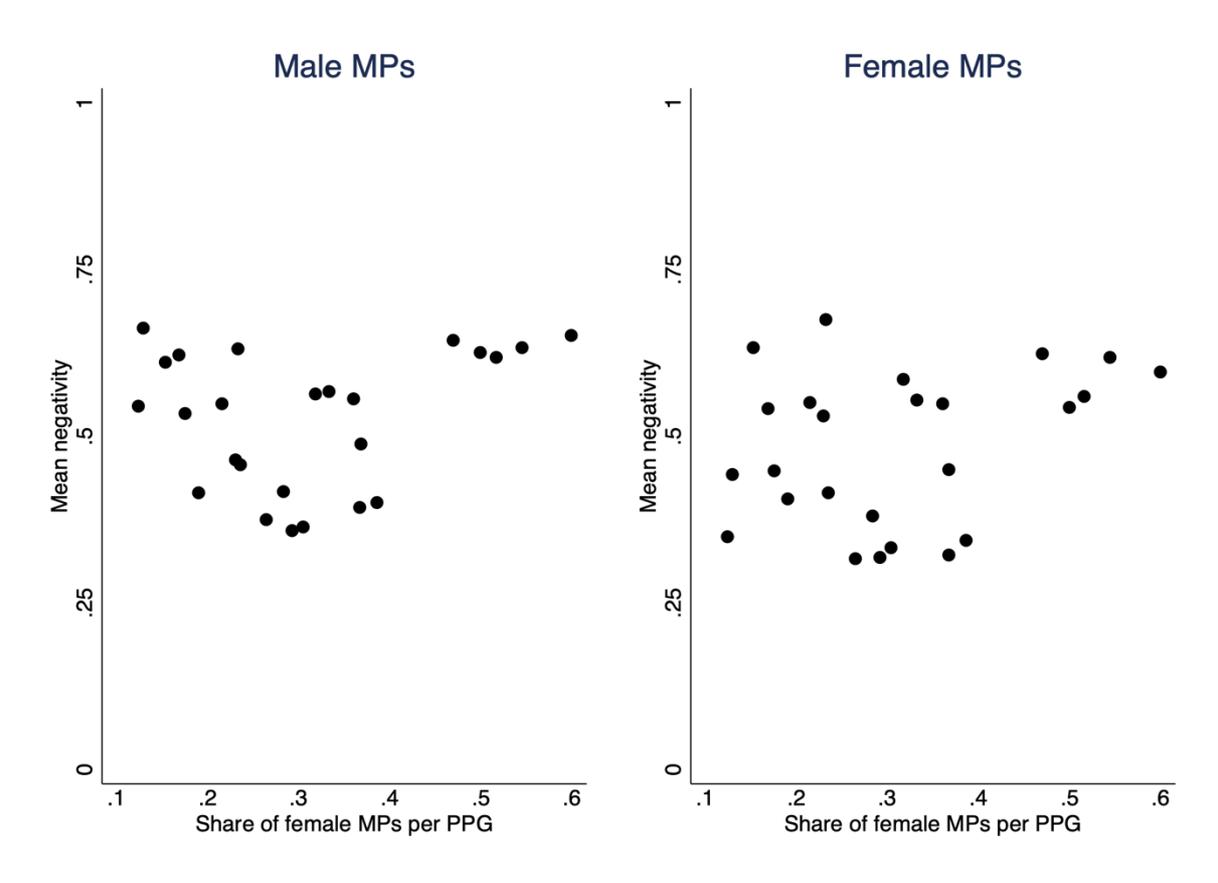


Figure A3: Kernel density plot of mean negativity

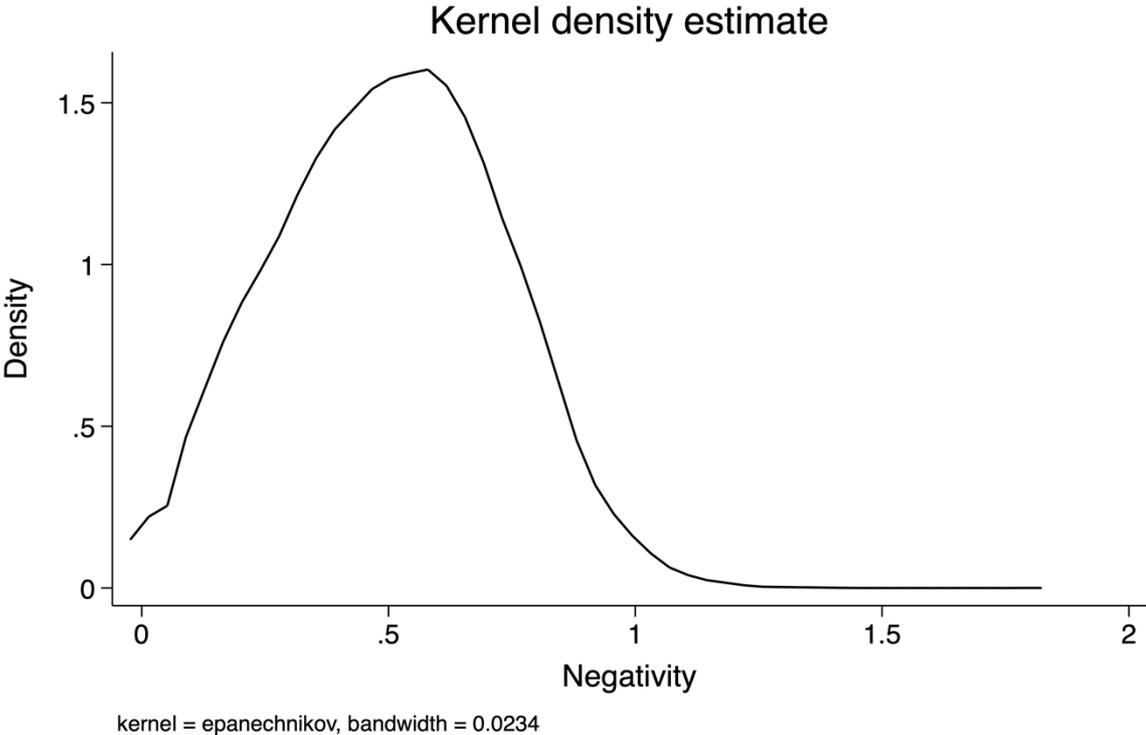


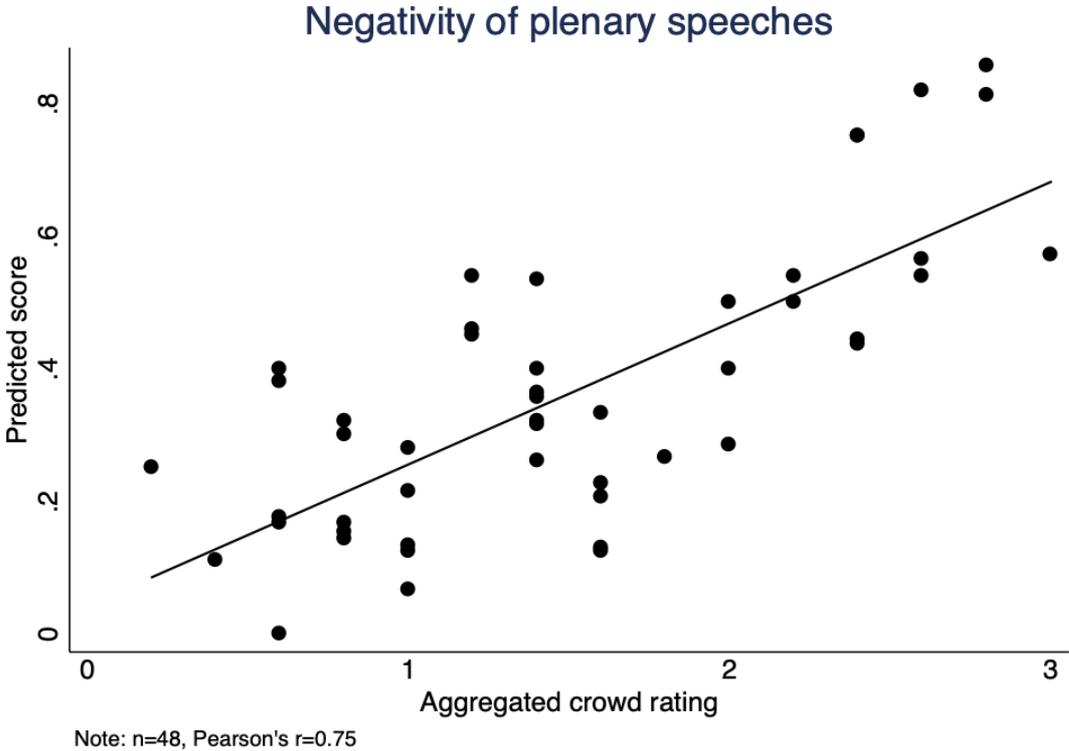
Table A1: Descriptives

	Min	Max	Mean	Standard deviation
Negativity score	0	1.8	0.50	0.23
Gender	0	1	0.29	0.46
% share of female politicians per PPG and term	0	0.60	0.29	0.16
% share of female speakers preceding a speech (calculated from five speeches)	0	1	0.30	0.23
Government party	0	1	0.49	0.5
PPG leader	0	1	0.03	0.18
Age	22	71	49.13	8.27
Graduate	0	1	0.40	0.49
Tone of previous speech	0	1.67	0.49	0.22
Motion of no confidence (day of session)	0	1	0.15	0.36
Interpellation	0	1	0.08	0.27
Time (hours since midnight)	0	23.98	16.07	4.29
Number of speakers	1	143	22.03	19.68
Number of sentences per speech	5	499	36.34	24.50
Year	1996	2013	2004.64	5.18

Appendix A2: Validating automated negativity scores against human coding

In an additional test, we took a quota random sample of plenary speeches representing the empirical range of negativity (n=48). We then asked online coders on a crowdsourcing platform (figureeight, now Appen) to code the sentiment of these speeches based on a four-point scale (ranging from 0 ‘Clearly civil’, 1 ‘Rather civil’, 2 ‘Rather uncivil’ to 3 ‘Clearly uncivil’). We collected multiple codings per speech and aggregated individual ratings using the mean value following prior research (Haselmayer and Jenny 2017) and compared these aggregated crowdscores with the automated scores. Figure A3 shows a strong relationship between the aggregate human ratings and automated scoring of negativity (Pearson’s correlation of 0.75).

Figure A3: Comparing aggregated human coding with automated negativity scores



Reference

Haselmayer, M., and Jenny, M. (2017) 'Sentiment analysis of political communication: combining a dictionary approach with crowdcoding', *Quality & Quantity*, 51 (6): 2623-2646.

Appendix B: Robustness checks

Table B1: Multilevel mixed-effects (ME) regression

	Model 1		Model 2	
Female MP	-0.02*	(0.01)	0.01	(0.02)
% share of preceding female speakers	-0.02***	(0.00)	-0.02***	(0.00)
% of female MPs in PPG	-0.07*	(0.03)	-0.03	(0.03)
Female MP # % of female MPs in PPG			-0.11*	(0.05)
Constant	0.37***	(0.02)	0.37***	(0.02)
<i>Controls included</i>	<i>Yes</i>		<i>Yes</i>	
Sigma based on on MP-session clusters	-1.83***	(0.00)	-1.83***	(0.00)
BIC	-35,330.30		-35,324.08	
N	49,433		49,433	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses, * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table B2: Ordinal least squares regression of negativity (reduced set of parties)

	Model 1		Model 2	
Female MP	-	(0.00)	-0.04***	(0.01)
	0.03***			
% share of preceding female speakers	-	(0.00)	-0.03***	(0.00)
	0.03***			
% of female MPs in PPG	-	(0.01)	-0.08***	(0.01)
	0.07***			
Female MP # % of female MPs in PPG			0.05**	(0.02)
Constant	0.45***	(0.01)	0.45***	(0.01)
<i>Controls included</i>	<i>Yes</i>		<i>Yes</i>	
BIC	-25,523.39		-25,524.41	
N	47,797		47,797	

Note: Standard errors clustered at the level of MP-sessions in parentheses, *** $p < 0.001$. Only parties with parliamentary representation in more than one legislative terms included (SPÖ, ÖVP, FPÖ, Greens, BZÖ).

To control for spurious results due to a relatively large sample size, we re-run the analyses using repeated random draws (n=500) of a reduced set of observations (n=5,000) from the full dataset (n=49,433). To provide a thorough test of Hypothesis 2, we further divide the dataset in two sets based on the distribution of the variable indicating the share of female speakers preceding a speech. We want to account more strongly for cases from the small group of observations having a larger value on the variable of interest. Therefore, we generate a dummy indicator where about eighty percent of our observations make up one group (values < 0.6; n=40,956), the remaining ones enter the second group (values >=0.6, n=8,953). We then draw an equal number of observations from both groups, which oversamples cases with larger shares of female speakers preceding a given speech. The results from these analyses are presented in Table B3.

Table B3: Bootstrapped ordinal least squares regression of negativity

	Model 1	
Female MP	-0.03***	(0.00)
% share of preceding female speakers	-0.03***	(0.01)
% of female MPs in PPG	-0.06***	(0.02)
Constant	0.45***	(0.02)
<i>Controls included</i>	<i>Yes</i>	
BIC	-26,563.24	
N (sample size)	5,000	
N (replications)	500	
N (full dataset)	49,433	

Note: Standard errors clustered at the level of MP-sessions in parentheses, *** p < 0.001.

Table B4: Ordinal least squares regression of negativity (including cabinet members)

	Model 1	Model 2
Female MP	-0.03*** (0.00)	-0.05*** (0.01)
% share of preceding female speakers	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.07*** (0.01)
% of female MPs in PPG	-0.03*** (0.00)	-0.03*** (0.00)
Female MP # % of female MPs in PPG		0.08*** (0.02)
MP	0.09*** (0.00)	0.09*** (0.00)
Constant	0.33*** (0.01)	0.33*** (0.01)
<i>Controls included</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>
BIC	-27,359.0	-27,371.6
N	53,559	53,559

Note: Standard errors clustered at the level of MP-sessions in parentheses, *** $p < 0.001$

Table B5: Ordinal least squares regression of negativity (populist parties and party dummies)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
	(populist parties)	(populist parties)	(party FE)	(party FE)
Female MP	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.03*** (0.01)
% share of preceding female speakers	-0.03*** (0.00)	-0.03*** (0.00)	-0.03*** (0.00)	-0.03*** (0.00)
% of female MPs in PPG	0.17*** (0.01)	0.16*** (0.01)	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Female MP # % of female MPs in PPG		0.02* (0.01)		0.02# (0.01)
Populist party	0.09*** (0.00)	0.09*** (0.00)		
SPÖ			0.02*** (0.00)	0.02*** (0.00)
FPÖ			0.09*** (0.00)	0.09*** (0.00)
Greens			0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
BZÖ			0.07*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)
LF			-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Stronach			-0.02# (0.01)	-0.02# (0.01)
Constant	0.33*** (0.01)	0.29*** (0.01)	0.36*** (0.01)	0.32*** (0.01)
<i>Controls included</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>
BIC	-27,558.2	-27,365.4	-27668.4	-27,483.5
N	49,433	49,561	49433	49,561

Note: Standard errors clustered at the level of MP-sessions in parentheses, # $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Appendix C: Negativity of plenary speeches: Examples of speeches and their automated negativity scores

Speaker, party	Score	Original text	Translated text ⁹
Peter Westenthaler, (BZÖ)	1.8	<p>Man muss da schon eine besondere <u>Frechheit</u> und eine besondere <u>Entgleisung</u> eines sozialistischen Mandatars zurechtrücken, weil ja auch einige Zuschauer aus Kärnten vor den Fernsehschirmen sitzen, aber von dort auch einige Abgeordnete in diesem Haus sind.</p> <p>Herr Abgeordneter Matznetter, Sie haben hier vom Rednerpult aus ein ganzes Bundesland, nämlich das Bundesland Kärnten, als – ich zitiere – den <u>schlampigen Süden</u> bezeichnet und das Bundesland Kärnten gleichgesetzt mit den Zuständen in Griechenland. <u>Ich weise das im Sinne der Kärntner Bevölkerung auf das Entschiedenste zurück!</u> <i>(Beifall bei BZÖ und FPÖ.)</i></p> <p>Das ist eine <u>Frechheit</u>, Herr Abgeordneter Matznetter, eine <u>Frechheit</u>, eine <u>Sauerei</u>, eine <u>Gemeinheit</u> gegenüber den Kärntnern! Entschuldigen Sie sich endlich! <i>(Beifall bei BZÖ und FPÖ.)</i></p>	<p>It is necessary to correct a particular <u>insolence</u> and a particular <u>derailment</u> of a socialist mandatary, because some viewers from Carinthia are sitting in front of the TV screens, but there are also some deputies from there in this House.</p> <p>Mr. Matznetter, from the lectern you have described an entire federal state, namely Carinthia, as - and I quote - the <u>sloppy</u> south and equated Carinthia with the conditions in Greece. I <u>reject</u> this in the sense of the Carinthian population <u>in the most resolute way!</u> <i>(Applause from BZÖ and FPÖ.)</i></p> <p>That is an <u>insolence</u>, Mr. Matznetter, an <u>insolence</u>, a <u>filthiness</u>, a <u>meanness</u> towards the Carinthians! Apologize at last! <i>(Applause from BZÖ and FPÖ.)</i></p>

⁹ Due to the volume of texts, we use automated translation using DeepL: <https://www.deepl.com/translator>

Link: https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXIV/NRSITZ/NRSITZ_00159/fnameorig_272548.html#Seite_0171.html

<p>Erwin Spindelberger, (SPÖ)</p>	<p>1.4</p>	<p>Wenn das Thema nicht <u>so traurig</u> wäre, müsste ich jetzt lachen über die Ausführungen des Herrn Ing. Westenthaler. Jetzt, wo das BZÖ nach den Wahlen eine <u>kaum mehr wahrnehmbare Größe</u> hier herinnen angenommen hat, die soziale Ader zu entdecken, das ist für mich schon ein bisserl witzig. Es ist sehr <u>zynisch</u>, wenn Sie jetzt einfach die Sozialpolitik der vergangenen Jahre hochjubeln.</p> <p>Ich denke, Sie sollten sich einmal mit der Vergangenheit befassen, was in der Sozialpolitik in den letzten sechs Jahren alles <u>verpfuscht</u> wurde, <u>verhindert</u> wurde und <u>verbockt</u> wurde – dank BZÖ- beziehungsweise vormals FPÖ-Sozialministern! Ihre Politik hat bewirkt, dass wir heute diese <u>Reparaturen</u> durchführen müssen, weil 1 Million Menschen an der <u>Armutsgrenze</u> leben. Ihre Politik hat bewirkt, dass künftig die Pensionen um 20 Prozent niedriger sind. Und gleich <u>dilettantisch</u>, wie Sie in den letzten sechs Jahren eben gearbeitet haben, ist auch Ihr Antrag betreffend Heizkostenausgleichsfonds. <u>Dilettantismus</u> pur, weil ja kein Rechtsanspruch auf den Heizkostenzuschuss besteht!</p>	<p>If the subject were not <u>so sad</u>, I would have to laugh at Mr. Westenthaler's comments. Now that the BZÖ has assumed a <u>barely perceptible size</u> here after the elections, to discover the social vein, that is a bit funny to me. It is very <u>cynical</u> when you simply hype the social policy of the past years.</p> <p>I think you should take a look at the past and see what has been <u>botched</u>, <u>prevented</u> and <u>screwed up</u> in social policy over the past six years - thanks to the BZÖ or former FPÖ ministers for social affairs! Their policies have meant that today we have to carry out these <u>repairs</u> because 1 million people are living on the <u>poverty line</u>. Their policies have caused pensions to be 20 percent lower in the future. And your application for a heating cost equalization fund is just as <u>amateurish</u> as the work you have done over the past six years. Pure <u>dilettantism</u>, because there is no legal entitlement to the heating cost allowance!</p> <p>You have explained it yourself, Mr. Westenthaler - now he is leaving <u>because he can't hear it anymore</u> (<i>Mr.</i></p>
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Sie haben es selbst ausgeführt, Herr Ing. Westenthaler – jetzt geht er hinaus, weil er es nicht mehr hören kann (Abg. Ing. *Westenthaler: Ich bin hier!*) –: Sie zahlen den Ländern nur dann einen Bundeszuschuss, wenn es auch einen Landesheizkostenzuschuss gibt, und dort, wo es höhere Beiträge seitens des Landes gibt, gibt es auch einen höheren Bundeszuschuss, dort, wo es geringere Beiträge gibt, ist auch der Bundeszuschuss geringer. Das heißt, eben diese Personen, die mehr brauchen würden, bekommen auch durch diesen dilettantischen Antrag nichts. Deswegen werden wir diesen Antrag auch ablehnen. (*Beifall bei der SPÖ.*)

Ich sage, unsere größte Herausforderung als SPÖ wird es sein, all das, was Sie in den letzten sechs Jahren im Sozialbereich verbockt haben, wieder zu reparieren. Jetzt ist leider keiner der ÖVP-Herren Maier, Stummvoll oder Molterer mehr da, die in diesem Zusammenhang heute gesagt haben: Man kann nicht das Geld ausgeben, das man nicht hat!

Westenthaler: I am here!) -: You only pay a federal subsidy to the provinces if there is also a provincial heating subsidy, and where there are higher contributions from the provinces, there is also a higher federal subsidy, where there are lower contributions, the federal subsidy is also lower. In other words, the very people who would need more also get nothing as a result of this amateurish proposal. That is why we will reject this proposal. (*Applause from the SPÖ.*)

I say that our greatest challenge as the SPÖ will be to repair everything you have screwed up in the social sector over the past six years. Unfortunately, none of the ÖVP members, Mr. Maier, Mr. Stummvoll or Mr. Molterer, who said in this context today: You can't spend money you don't have, are here anymore:

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<p>Susannte Winter (FPÖ)</p>	<p>0.88</p>	<p>Herr Präsident! Herr Minister! Hohes Haus! Darf ich, Herr Kollege Matznetter, gleich einmal auf das replizieren, was Sie zu meinem Kollegen Venier gesagt haben. Kollege Venier ist ein ganz junger Kollege, und er macht sich <u>Sorgen</u> darüber, ob er und seine jungen Leute, die er vertritt, auch später einmal eine Pension bekommen werden. <i>(Beifall bei der FPÖ.)</i> Er hat auch nicht die Pensionisten angegriffen, denn genau wir waren es, die sehr <u>kritisiert</u> haben, dass den Pensionisten statt 2,8 Prozent nur 1,8 Prozent als Erhöhung zuerkannt worden sind.</p> <p>Und: Wir sind nach wie vor überzeugt davon, dass der Blum-Bonus die weit bessere Lösung ist, und davon lassen wir uns auch nicht abhalten, weil es auch die entsprechenden Daten dazu gibt. <i>(Beifall bei der FPÖ.)</i></p> <p>Herr Minister, auch auf Ihre Ausführungen möchte ich noch replizieren. Sie haben gemeint, Sie seien sehr stolz darauf, dass Sie 25 Prozent, was das Genderziel betrifft, erreicht haben oder fast erreicht haben. Ihr Wirkungsziel Nummer fünf ist ja auch das Gendern. Ich möchte sagen, ich glaube, dass sich da sehr viele Männer <u>benachteiligt</u> fühlen, und</p>	<p>Mr. President, Mr. Minister Mr. President, Mr. Minister, ladies and gentlemen. May I, Mr. Matznetter, immediately respond to what you said to my colleague Mr. Venier. Mr. Venier is a very young colleague, and he is <u>worried</u> about whether he and the young people he represents will get a pension later on. <i>(Applause from the FPÖ.)</i> He also did not attack the pensioners, because it was precisely we who were very <u>critical</u> of the fact that pensioners were only awarded a 1.8 percent increase instead of 2.8 percent.</p> <p>And: We are still convinced that the Blum bonus is the far better solution, and we will not let ourselves be deterred from this, because there is also the corresponding data. <i>(Applause from the FPÖ.)</i></p> <p>Mr. Minister, I would also like to respond to your comments. You said that you are very proud of the fact that you have reached or almost reached 25 percent of the gender target. Your impact goal number five is, after all, gender. I would like to say that I think a lot of men feel <u>disadvantaged</u> here, and I also feel <u>disadvantaged</u>. In the past, a woman could not be well enough educated</p>
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	<p>auch ich fühle mich <u>benachteiligt</u>. Denn früher war es so, dass eine Frau gar nicht gut genug ausgebildet sein konnte und sie wurde trotzdem nicht gefördert, und heute ist es so: Je schlechter sie ausgebildet ist, desto besser wird sie gefördert. – Und dem <u>widersprechen</u> wir total. Das ist nicht das Prinzip, wonach wir Frauen in jene Positionen bringen wollen, in die sie gehören. <i>(Beifall bei der FPÖ.)</i></p> <p>In den vergangenen Wochen und in dieser Woche, muss ich sagen, ist ja sehr viel in diesen heiligen Hallen über das heute final zu beschließende Budget 2013 gesprochen worden. Es sind Millionen Wörter durch die Hallen hier gegangen, und wir haben einen ganz gewaltigen, tiefen CO₂-Fußabdruck hinterlassen.</p> <p>Ist dieser Fußabdruck aber auch nachhaltig? Wenn ich mir die Milliarden anschaue, die von Frau Ministerin Fekter fixiert und positioniert worden sind, so sage ich, es gibt <u>keine Nachhaltigkeit</u> unserer Redebeiträge. Und ich möchte wirklich hier einmal an all unsere Abgeordneten, an uns alle gemeinsam appellieren und fragen: Ist nicht doch irgendwo</p>	<p>and still not be promoted, and today the worse she is educated, the better she is promoted. - And we totally <u>disagree</u> with that. That is not the principle according to which we want to bring women into those positions where they belong. <i>(Applause from the FPÖ.)</i></p> <p>In recent weeks and this week, I must say, there has been a great deal of talk in these hallowed halls about the 2013 budget, which is to be finally adopted today. Millions of words have passed through the halls here, and we have left behind a huge, deep CO₂ footprint.</p> <p>But is this footprint sustainable? When I look at the billions that have been fixed and positioned by Minister Fekter, I say there is no sustainability in our speeches. And I would really like to appeal to all our members of parliament, to all of us together, and ask: Isn't there a reason somewhere in our behavior that <u>our status among the population is so low</u>?</p> <p>Since my time is <u>unfortunately</u> already very far advanced, I can only say one thing: We <u>criticize</u> this budget because it <u>lacks a concept</u> and is a sign of</p>
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	<p>in unserem Verhalten begründet, dass unser <u>Stellenwert in der Bevölkerung so gering ist?</u></p> <p>Da <u>leider</u> meine Zeit schon sehr weit vorgeschritten ist, kann ich nur noch eines sagen: Wir <u>kritisieren</u> dieses Budget, denn es ist <u>konzeptlos</u> und ein Zeichen von <u>Unerfahrenheit, Kraft- und Mutlosigkeit</u>. Wem <u>schaden</u> Sie damit? – Sie <u>schaden</u> damit der Zukunft, Sie <u>schaden</u> der Jugend; denn was produzieren Sie? – Sie produzieren eine sogenannte NINJA-Generation, eine Generation mit no income, no jobs und no assets. Und genau das wollen wir <u>verhindern</u>, meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren, und genau das ist etwas, wogegen wir uns vehement <u>wehren</u>.</p> <p>Einen kleinen Entschuldigungsgrund habe ich für Sie gesucht, da man immer wieder versucht, die Regierenden auch ein wenig in Schutz zu nehmen. Ich habe dazu ein Zitat von Sir William Pitt, House of Lords, gefunden. Er sagt – und das ist ein Zitat, das Ihrem Bundeskanzler Faymann wahrscheinlich sehr vertraut sein wird –: „Es ist etwas hinter dem Thron, das größer ist als der König selbst.“ (<i>Beifall bei der FPÖ.</i>)</p>	<p><u>inexperience, lack of strength and lack of courage</u>. Who are you <u>harming</u>? - You are <u>harming</u> the future, you are <u>harming</u> the youth, because what are you producing? - You are producing a so-called NINJA generation, a generation with <u>no income, no jobs and no assets</u>. And that is exactly what we want to <u>prevent</u>, ladies and gentlemen, and that is exactly what we are vehemently <u>opposed to</u>.</p> <p>I have looked for a small excuse for you, since people are always trying to give those in power a little bit of protection. I found a quote from Sir William Pitt, House of Lords, on this. He says - and this is a quote that will probably be very familiar to your Chancellor Faymann - "There is something behind the throne greater than the king himself." (<i>Applause from the FPÖ.</i>)</p>
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<p>Silvia Grünberger (then Fuhrmann)</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>Herr Präsident! Herr Bundesminister! Ich bin davon überzeugt, dass dieses Gesetz für Studierende in Österreich jedenfalls von Vorteil ist, nicht nur, weil es eine neue Ombudsstelle geben wird, an die man auch Anliegen oder Probleme herantragen kann, sondern vor allem deshalb, weil, wenn Studienabschnitte oder Studienteile im Ausland absolviert werden, nun endlich die Möglichkeit besteht, transparent zu vergleichen, welche Möglichkeiten der Anrechnung es gibt, wie das Bildungsangebot an anderen Universitätsstandorten aussieht und vor allem – das ist immer letztendlich relevant – was in Österreich angerechnet wird. Ich glaube, dass ist der tatsächliche Nutzen, auch für Studierende – und deshalb ist es so wichtig, dieses Gesetz zu unterstützen.</p> <p>Es wurde schon mehrfach gesagt, es geht auf der einen Seite um die bessere Vergleichbarkeit der Studien, es geht aber auch um die Transparentmachung von Qualität und von Leistung. Natürlich stehen die externen Qualitätsmerkmale im Vordergrund; Mitbestandteil des Gesetzes sind aber auch</p>	<p>Mr. President, Mr. Federal Minister! I am convinced that this law will be beneficial for students in Austria, not only because there will be a new ombudsman's office to which one can also bring concerns or problems, but above all because when students complete parts of their studies abroad, they will finally have the opportunity to compare transparently what possibilities there are for receiving credits, what the education offered at other university locations looks like, and above all - this is always relevant in the end - what is credited in Austria. I believe that this is the real benefit, also for students - and that is why it is so important to support this law.</p> <p>It has already been said several times that, on the one hand, it is about better comparability of studies, but it is also about making quality and performance transparent. Of course, the focus is on external quality criteria, but internal quality standards are also part of the law.</p>

	<p>interne Qualitätsstandards. Diese sollen im Endeffekt dazu beitragen, dass sich unser Hochschulniveau verbessert.</p> <p>Nicht unerwähnt lassen möchte ich, dass es im Wissenschaftsausschuss auch eine Ausschussfeststellung gab, nämlich was die Registrierung grenzüberschreitender Studien betrifft. Voraussetzung für diese Registrierungen ist auf der einen Seite die Anerkennung der postsekundären Bildungseinrichtungen im Ausland und auf der anderen Seite die Vergleichbarkeit dieser Studien mit österreichischen Studien. Der Ausschuss wollte auch ganz bewusst festhalten, dass es sich bei dieser Registrierung keinesfalls um die Prüfung der Studieninhalte handelt, sondern wir damit die Vergleichbarkeit der Zulassungsbedingungen, der Dauer der Studien, des Niveaus und der akademischen Wertigkeit sowie der Anerkennung im Herkunfts- und Sitzstaat gemeint haben.</p> <p>Ich denke, dass auch die Einrichtung der Stelle, die für Qualitätssicherung und Akkreditierung zuständig ist, nicht nur die Verwaltung vereinfacht und billiger ist, sondern das auch ein wichtiger und guter Schritt sein kann, damit sich</p>	<p>Ultimately, these should help to improve the standard of our universities.</p> <p>I would also like to mention that there was also a committee finding in the Science Committee concerning the registration of cross-border studies. The prerequisite for these registrations is, on the one hand, the recognition of the post-secondary educational institutions abroad and, on the other hand, the comparability of these studies with Austrian studies. The committee also wanted to state quite deliberately that this registration is in no way a matter of examining the content of the studies, but rather we meant the comparability of the admission requirements, the duration of the studies, the level and the academic value, as well as the recognition in the country of origin and the country of domicile.</p> <p>I think that the establishment of the body responsible for quality assurance and accreditation will not only simplify administration and make it cheaper, but can also be an important and good step so that our universities can continue to hold their own in European</p>
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		unsere Universitäten auch im europäischen und internationalen Vergleich weiter behaupten können. <i>(Beifall bei der ÖVP.)</i>	and international comparison. <i>(Applause from the ÖVP.)</i>
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Ruth Becher (SPÖ)	0	<p>Herr Präsident! Frau Ministerin! Meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren! Erfreulicherweise findet das Gesellschaftsrechts-Änderungsgesetz die Zustimmung aller Parteien. Bisher war die grenzüberschreitende Verschmelzung sehr aufwendig, manchmal sogar unmöglich. Der EuGH hat die sogenannte Hereinverschmelzung zugelassen und das mit der Niederlassungsfreiheit begründet. Die Hinausverschmelzung hat der EuGH aber offen gelassen. Die Umsetzung dieser EU-Richtlinie bringt nun Klarheit und ist auch rechtspolitisch ein sehr wichtiger Fortschritt.</p> <p>Gegenüber dem ausgesandten Ministerialentwurf hat es im Sinne der ArbeitnehmerInnen und Gläubiger bedeutende Änderungen gegeben. So ist zum Beispiel jetzt vorgesehen, dass im Verschmelzungsbericht Rücksicht zu nehmen ist</p>	<p>Mr. President, Madam Minister! Ladies and Gentlemen! Fortunately, the Company Law Amendment Act has the approval of all parties. Until now, cross-border mergers have been very costly, sometimes even impossible. The ECJ has permitted the so-called "inward merger" and justified this on the grounds of freedom of establishment. However, the ECJ left the outward merger open. The implementation of this EU directive now brings clarity and is also a very important step forward in terms of legal policy.</p> <p>Compared with the ministerial draft that was sent out, there have been significant changes in the interests of employees and creditors. For example, it is now stipulated that the merger report must take into account the employees in the companies involved, the employment situation and employment conditions. In</p>

	<p>auf die Beschäftigten in den beteiligten Unternehmen, auf die Beschäftigungslage und auf die Beschäftigungsbedingungen. Im Entwurf hingegen war nur von einer Rücksichtnahme auf die voraussichtlichen Auswirkungen der Verschmelzung auf die Beschäftigten die Rede.</p> <p>Für uns ist es auch sehr wichtig, dass es einen Verschmelzungsbericht gibt, denn dieser sieht vor, dass die Auswirkungen der Verschmelzung auf die Gläubiger und ArbeitnehmerInnen erläutert werden, dass er ein Monat vorher der Gesellschafterversammlung vorzulegen ist und dass die Stellungnahme der ArbeitnehmerInnenvertreter dem Bericht angefügt werden muss. Dieses Recht für die Beschäftigten, denke ich, ist nicht zu unterschätzen.</p> <p>Natürlich ist es weiterzudenken, wie mein Kollege Wittmann vorhin gesagt hat, in die Richtung, dass diese Arbeitnehmermitbestimmung auch für die zukünftigen Gesellschaften gesichert sein muss.</p> <p>Insgesamt können, glaube ich, alle mit diesem Gesetzentwurf zufrieden sein, denn es bietet einen sicheren</p>	<p>the draft, on the other hand, there was only talk of consideration of the probable effects of the merger on the employees.</p> <p>For us, it is also very important that there is a merger report, because it stipulates that the effects of the merger on creditors and employees must be explained, that it must be presented to the shareholders' meeting one month in advance, and that the opinion of the employee representatives must be attached to the report. This right for the employees, I think, should not be underestimated. Of course, as my colleague Mr. Wittmann said earlier, we need to think further in the direction of ensuring that this employee co-determination also applies to future companies.</p> <p>Overall, I think everyone can be satisfied with this draft legislation, because it provides a secure framework for cross-border mergers. - Thank you very much. (<i>Applause from the SPÖ</i>).</p>
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		Rahmen für grenzüberschreitende Verschmelzungen. – Vielen Dank. (<i>Beifall bei der SPÖ.</i>)	
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