



Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche



ISTITUTO di RICERCA sulla CRESCITA ECONOMICA SOSTENIBILE
RESEARCH INSTITUTE on SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Measures for gender rebalancing in local elective assemblies. An impact assessment on Italian reforms

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Sessione organizzata 07
Effectiveness evaluation of
policies for the society and for
local communities



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Aim

All over the world, and in Italy in particular (Sartori, L., Tuorto, D., Ghigi, R. (2017), women are still underrepresented in political decision-making. This presentation discusses the effectiveness of policies aimed at improving gender balance in politics, concentrating on **electoral rules for gender equality in elective assemblies**.

The opportunity and effectiveness of this type of policies are debated: ***To what extent is it right to force the voters' will to change the weight of women and men in politics?***
How do voters and parties respond if the electoral law is changed?
Which electoral mechanisms work better?

The first question (**opportunity**) opens to a series of cultural, social and political topics that fall outside the mandate received as researchers. But evaluation may give hints to answer to the other questions (**effectiveness**).

In the presentation we will obtain

- some evidence by descriptive statistics on the relative performance of different mechanisms
- An estimate of the impact of the Italian voting regulation for municipalities.

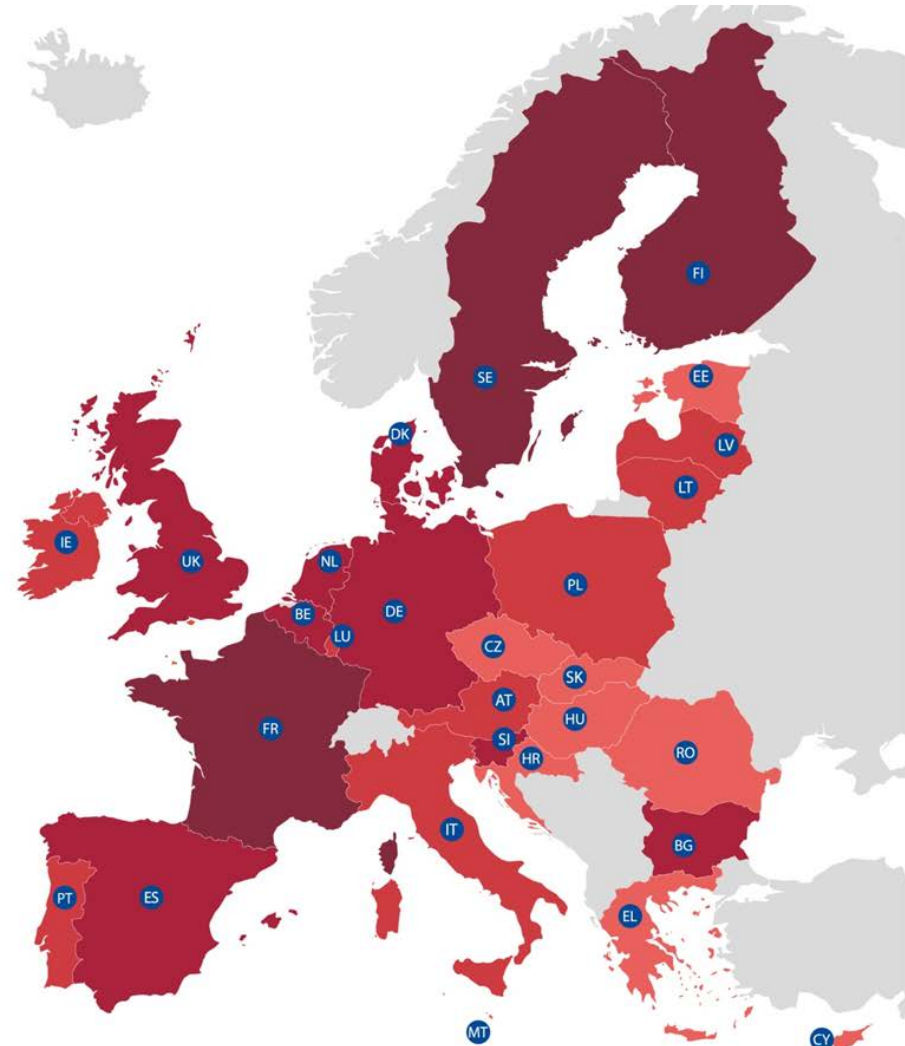
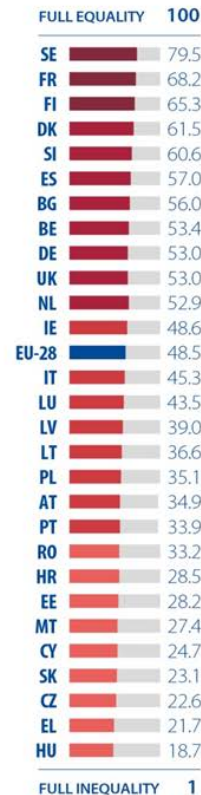


Gender equality index

Gender
equality
index for
power.

Italy just
below
EU28
average

Gender Equality Index 2017 Power Overview



A long process towards gender equality in politics

The process towards gender equality is long and must occur at different levels.

1. The first step implies to open the doors of electoral competition to women, as minority gender: **enhance the share of women among candidates** (direct output of electoral gender policies)



But opening doors is useless, if they lead to powerless positions. The process must continue by:

- 2. Help the success of female candidates.**
- 3. Ensure equilibrium in political offices**
- 4. Avoid sectoral segregation** (eg: leave women to family, school, welfare, or equal opportunities)

(outcomes)

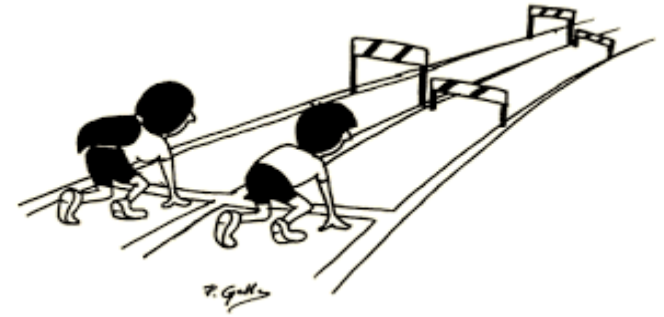


Instruments to enhance parity

Gender shares in political lists are the most known instrument for gender rebalancing in politics. But it is also well known that participation to electoral competition is not a sufficient condition.

Many countries introduced also other norms to enhance the role of women in politics:

- **Electoral mechanisms** to help the success of women in political competition
 - Double gender preference
 - Alternate list
- Compulsory gender equilibrium in the **composition of assemblies and executives**
- **Funding to political parties** conditional to the role given to the minority gender
- Impose gender equilibrium in **political communication** and/or in electoral propaganda
- Accompany with less specific actions such as **gender-mainstreaming** and work(politics)-life conciliation initiatives.



Our evaluation exercise

Policy:



**ELECTORAL
MECHANISMS**

Output:



% FEMALE CANDIDATES

Outcome:



**% FEMALE ELECTED
REPRESENTATIVES**

Our source: the «Svegli» project

The project *Studio e Valutazione dell'impatto delle misure di riequilibrio di Genere previste dalla Legislazione vigente In materia di cariche Elettive e di governo* (study and evaluation of the impact of measures of gender re-equilibrium in present regulation concerning elective and executive positions) derives from a joint effort of the **Department for the Institutional Reforms** of the Prime Ministry and the Italian National Research Council, with the contribution of two Institutes: **CNR-IRPPS** (management and 3.) and **CNR-Ircres** (1. and 2.).

The project evaluated the effects of regulations and procedures introduced in recent years in Italy for different levels of public government (local and national); it integrated different approaches to carry-on three research lines

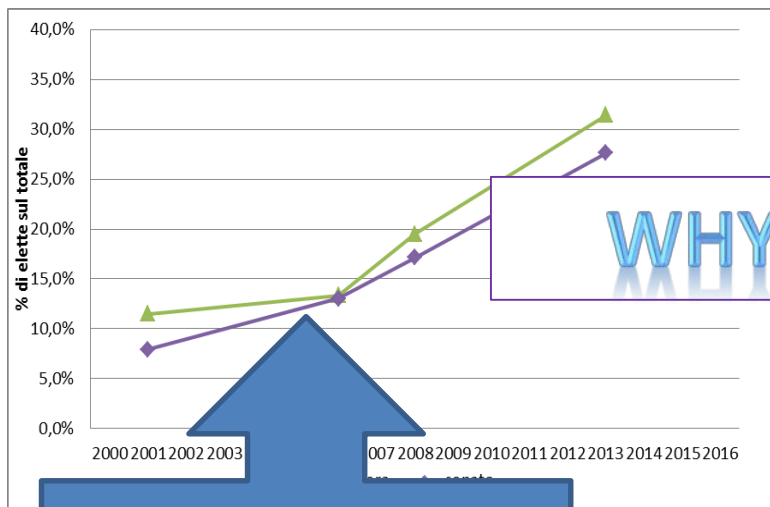
1. “Gender equilibrium among candidates”,
2. “The role of women among elected representatives”,
3. “The role of women in political decision-making and in government”.

First alternative: no electoral mechanism

The first possible option is to avoid any gender mechanism in electoral rules. What happens in this case? Do we observe anyway an increase in women shares?

Without electoral mechanisms and other actions the share of women doesn't grow

Italian parliament example



Laws on funding to political parties with gender limitations

Regions example

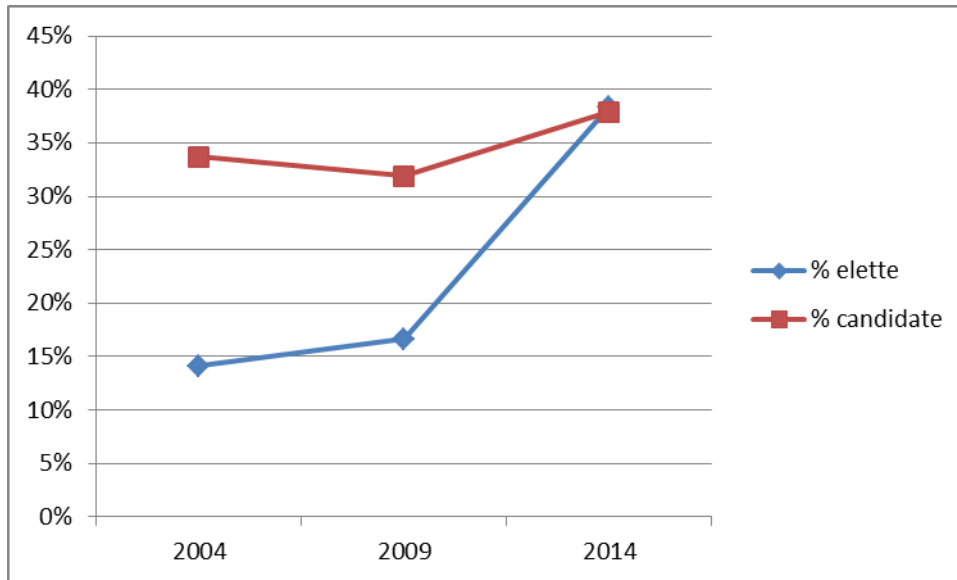
Deltas pre and after the reform

WHY THIS DIFFERENCE?

	Delta
No mechanism	-1,4
Only gender share	1,4
Only alternate list	10,0
Gender share+double preference	9,2

Option 2: gender quotas on lists of candidates

European Parliament example



Without other mechanisms, gender quotas allow participation but not success

Deltas pre and after the reform

Mechanism	Delta
No mechanism	-1,4
Only gender quota	1,4
Alternate list	10,0
Gender quota+double preference	9,2

Regions example

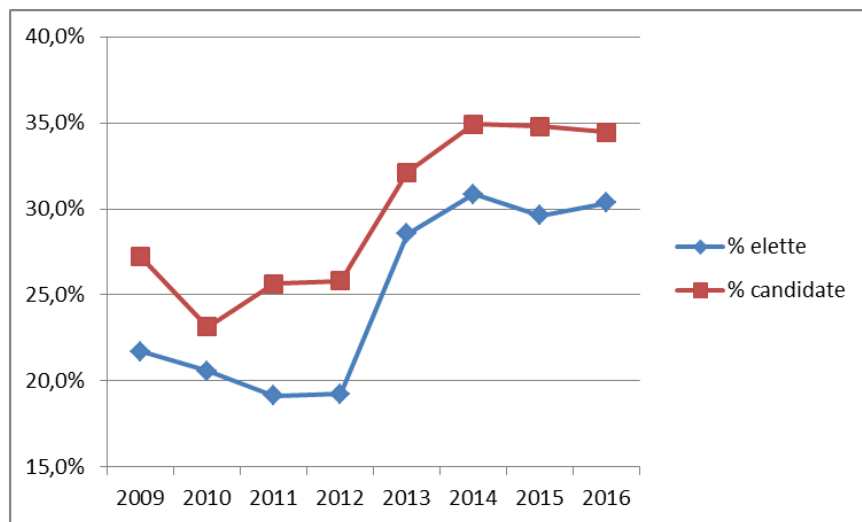
Mechanisms enhancing electoral success

Doble preference and alternate list

When voting with preferences

When there is a close list

Show an increase in the share of women



The example of municipalities

Approach to equality index

Mechanism	Index
No mechanism	-2,8%
Only gender quota	2,8%
Alternate list	24,3%
Quota+double preference	27,1%

The regions example

Voting regulation for municipalities

0-5.000



- Candidates of different genders in the lists
 - **No sanction**

5.000-
15.000



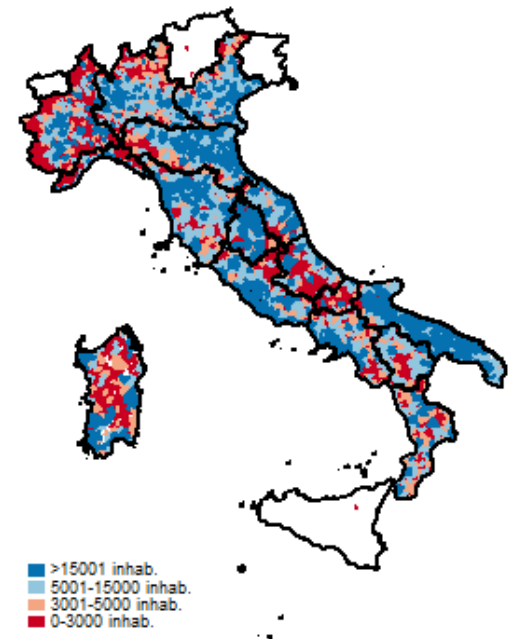
- 40% gender share
- Double preference
 - **Cancellation of exceeding candidates**

Over
15.000



- 40% gender share
- Double preference
- **Cancellation of the list**

7.964 municipalities
with different electoral
deadlines





Counterfactual impact evaluation

The voting regulation for the municipal elections is a perfect context where to evaluate the effectiveness of gender rebalancing mechanisms, because

- The outcome in terms of elected representatives is not a mechanical output of the voting rule (such is the gender share observed in candidates when a gender share limitation is fixed), but is mediated by a change in the parties' and voters' mentality.
- The features of the gender regulation for the elections of municipalities (time enforcement, threshold) offer the chance for counterfactual impact evaluation
- The number of municipalities allows statistical assessment of the impact

3 approaches:

- Natural experiment
- Regression discontinuity design
- Panel

Natural experiment

A condition of natural experiment arose in the years close to the introduction of the reform (23/11/2012), thanks to the different voting deadlines of municipalities, which is independent from the outcome variable.

We compare the share of women in the assemblies elected in 2012 (no gender rules) and those elected in 2013.

Treated



**municipalities that went to election in
immediately after the reform (2013)**

Counterfactual



**municipalities that went to election in
immediately before the reform (2012)**

Natural experiment results

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	%Women_elect.	%Women_elected			
	Total	0-3.000 res.	3.001-5.000 res.	5.001-15.000 res.	15.001+ res.
Gb_norm	0,0886***	0,0285*	0,0859***	0,169***	0,113***
Female_share	0,806***	0,749**	-0,926	0,632	1,348
List_num	-0,00113**	0,0119*	0,0110	0,00273	-0,00113
Family_dim	0,0360**	0,0235	-0,0549	-4,96e-05	-0,000836
Natural_bal	1,158*	0,128	3,060	3,685*	0,0549
Migrant_bal	-0,410*	-0,977***	-0,256	-0,684	0,870*
Dummies, regional	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	-0,283*	-0,179	0,737	-0,0836	-0,595
Observations	1,327	574	179	353	221
R-squared	0,195	0,127	0,307	0,419	0,550

Standard error in parentheses, *** p<0,01, ** p<0,05, * p<0,

Columns: (1) total observations; from (2) to (5) OLS estimates by dimensional classes of population (Residents: 0-3000; 3001-5000; 5001-15000; 15001+).

Natural experiment results

- Significant average increase of female election in municipal councils by about 9%
- Sharp differences by demographic dimension.
- The impacts in municipalities subjected to the norm is stronger. 17% in the class 5.000-15.000.
- Apparently no effect of the stronger sanctions for the class 15.000-over, with a lower impact (11%).
- We observe also an unespected “cultural” impact in municipalities not subject to the norm (9% and 3%)
- Impact size varies by geographical area (not shown), and is stronger in regions starting from a lower share of women

Regression discontinuity design

The RDD approach lies on the discontinuity threshold fixed by the norm at 5000 residents. This threshold identifies the causal effect of the norm, which does not affect smaller municipalities.

This removes most of the heterogeneity due to demographic dimensionality, which affected the natural experiment. However, the estimated impact is valid just around the threshold, since previous results show important differences by demographic classes. On the other hand estimates are based on all elections occurred after the introduction of the norm, and so refer to a wider time span.

Treated



municipalities with 5.000-5.500
residents

Counterfactual



municipalities with 4.500-5.000
residents

RDD results

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	%Women_elected	%Women_elected			
	Total	North-West	North-East	Center	South & Insulae
Threshold	0,120***	0,0866***	0,0637*	0,148***	0,198***
Female_share	-0,356	0,546	-0,146	-3,399	1,476
List_num	-0,00261	0,0111	-0,00628	-0,0243	-0,0298*
Family_dim	0,0318	0,170	0,0874	0,0145	-0,0133
Natural_bal	1,844	0,150	1,128	7,702	3,143
Migrant_bal	-0,446	0,495	-1,409	-0,398	-0,238
Dummies, regional	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0,411	-0,379	0,169	2,089	-0,387
Observations	332	136	58	49	89
R-squared	0,272	0,174	0,174	0,410	0,549
Standard error in parentheses, *** p<0,01, ** p<0,05, * p<0,					
Columns: (1) total municipalities in the range 4500-5500 residents; from (2) to (5) OLS estimates by geographical area.					

RDD results

- Around the threshold, the estimated impact of the rebalancing rule is 12%.
- It is higher than the average NE value, but lower than the NE one for the class 5.000-15.000
- However, in interpreting this difference, one has to remember that the NE approach detected a “cultural” impact of the reform even in municipalities not affected by the norm. The RDD approach, comparing shares of elected women over and under the threshold, but always after the enforcement of the reform, automatically elides this impact.
- Geographical macroareas show here too important differences (apart from regional effects).
- In particular, the largest impacts are observed in areas previously affected by low female participation rates, so helping to reduce spatial heterogeneity



Panel models

- Panel model can highlight the causal effect of the reform even if they are not properly a counterfactual approach.
- But the panel approach allows managing the endogeneity typical of quantitative gender studies by controlling for individual fixed-effects.
- All municipal data in the time span 2008-16 are used.
- This very preliminary model does not accurately account for socio-economic and demographic determinants. Since comprehensive municipal-level statistics are available for the census year (2011) only, they act as time-invariant characteristics and are ruled-out by fixed-effect panel estimation.
- Further analysis by correlated random effect models could help estimating both between and within components and their determinants.
- There is a positive significant average effect of the norm of 11 percentage points
- Effects are always higher respect the other approaches.

Panel results

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	%Women_elected	%Women_elected			
	Total	0-3.000 res.	3.001-5.000 res.	5.001-15.000 res.	15.001+ res.
Gb_norm	0,112***	0,0291***	0,0647***	0,245***	0,144***
Female_share	0,513**	0,218	-1,557	-5,062***	-1,187
List_num	0,00537***	0,00180	0,000504	-0,00335	0,00431***
Family_dim	-0,0712***	-0,0365	0,0129	-0,129***	-0,0333
Natural_bal	0,462	0,228	0,702	2,677	7,232*
Migrant_bal	0,113	0,129	0,569	0,273	-0,165
Time dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual fixed eff.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0,0721	0,219*	1,017*	3,091***	0,800
Observations	12.827	7.325	1.882	2.555	1.065
R-squared	0,276	0,104	0,286	0,732	0,680
N. of municipalities	7.036	4.044	1.152	1.513	634

Standard error in parentheses, *** $p < 0,01$, ** $p < 0,05$, * $p < 0,1$,

Columns: (1) total observations; from (2) to (5) OLS estimates by dimensional classes of population (Residents: 0-3000; 3001-5000; 5001-15000; 15001+).

Some conclusive remarks

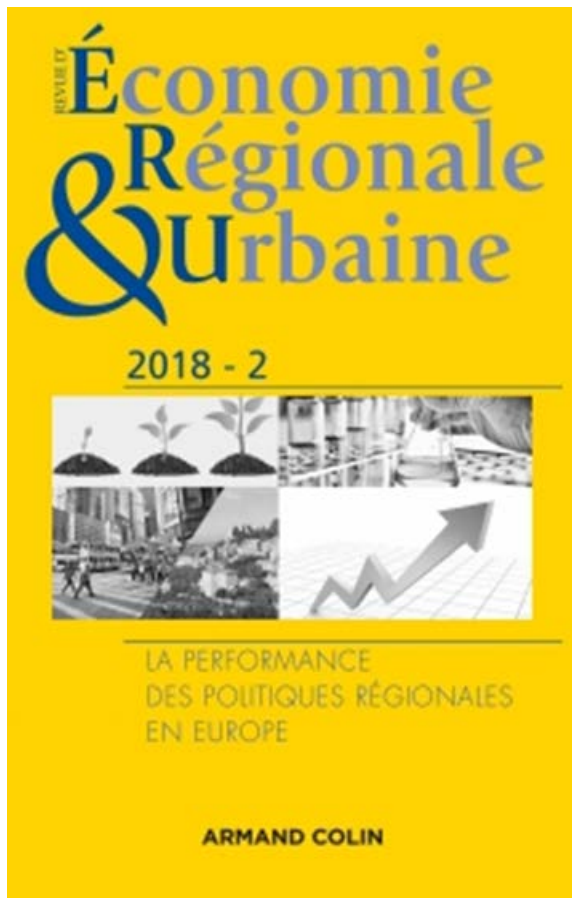
- Impact evaluation confirms results of descriptive statistics: pairing gender shares with double preference is an effective tool to enhance the presence of women in elective assemblies.
- The significance of the impact is confirmed in all approaches.
- The sizes of the impact varies in the different approaches in a way that is coherent with the specific features of each one.
- A positive “cultural” impact is detected even municipalities not compelled to comply to the rules.

To conclude: gender equilibrium in politics is a complex problem; a rich toolkit is available, but no mechanistic solution.

Our opinion is that the best way is to act on multiple frontiers at the same time, with patience, because time plays an important role too.

Special issue on the RERU

Devoted to the performance of regional policies in Europe
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Thanks for your attention

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