

Women-Friendliness in European Asylum Policies: The Role of Women's Political Representation and Opposition to Non-EU Immigration

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Abstract

Based on the 1951 Refugee Convention, traditional conceptions of refugees typically referred to the politically active male persecuted for his obstructive acts against a communist regime. Yet, today's asylum seekers are increasingly female with very different experiences of persecution and different reasons to flee their countries of origin. Not all states have updated their asylum policies to reflect the specific situation of women—an issue the refugee crisis in 2015 brought to glaring light. We develop a Women-Friendliness in Asylum Index (WFA), which reveals clusters of states within the European Union (EU) with a solid implementation of women's rights in their asylum recognition and reception framework and others whom have yet to adapt their asylum policies to consider women's needs. In addition, we show that women's political representation is a key factor in explaining women-friendly asylum policies, whereas critical attitudes toward immigrants from non-EU countries retard the gendered revision of European asylum policies.

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Introduction

Asylum policies in Europe are a dynamic and rapidly changing landscape. Political arguments and economic interests are flanked by humanitarian concerns, and migration and resettlement issues have become central topics on the political agenda. The situation was brought to its peak in 2015, when conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Northern Africa created a surge in asylum seekers crossing the Mediterranean. In response, asylum policies have emerged as one of the most important political battlegrounds in recent years.

At the same time, and considerably less noticed in public debates, Europe experienced a shift in demographics among asylum seekers. Since 2008, the ratio of female to male applicants had remained fairly stable at about 30%, rising to 38% in 2015, and as of January 2016, soaring to 55% of those reaching Greece to seek asylum (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2016). Today, asylum seekers are just as likely to be women or girls as they are to be male.

Academic research has not kept up with the increasing feminization of asylum. Vast scholarly interest has generated a thorough coverage of migration patterns and determinants (e.g., Heitmueller, 2005; Neumayer, 2005; Piore, 1979; Stark & Taylor, 1991), issues related to reception and integration (e.g., Huddleston, Bilgili, Joki, & Vankova, 2015; Joppke, 2010), and the social and economic implications of asylum (e.g., Boswell, 2000, 2003; Hatton, 2005). However, although gender and intersectionality as analytical variables are increasingly present in the academic discussion, studies on asylum policies are still a surprisingly gender-neutral field. Yet, the situation and needs of female and male asylum seekers are far from identical, and the persecution suffered may be very different.

This lack of interest in the gender dimensions of asylum is surprising, given the gendered origins of European asylum policies. Based on the 1951 Refugee Convention, created in the aftermath of World War II, traditional conceptions of refugees prevalent in Europe typically referred to politically active males fleeing communist oppression (Edwards, 2010). Today's asylum seekers flee their countries of origin for very different reasons, yet the traditional refugee concept remains at the foundation of central European Union (EU) directives.¹ It is often transcribed word for word in contemporary national legislation, defining which asylum seekers qualify for international protection and establishing the responsibilities of receiving states.

Failing to recognize the specific situations and the different opportunities of men and women throughout the migration process may create policies that expose female asylum seekers to human rights abuse, discrimination, and health risks.

The traditional conception of refugees is severely outdated. Yet, although all European countries needed to update their asylum policies to reflect the new reality with increasing shares and exposedness of female applicants, they did not do so to the same extent. In fact, despite recent developments in the policy field, asylum policies are often displaying extensive shortcomings with regard to more complex gender-based asylum claims (Daoust & Folkelius, 1996; European Parliament, 2015). These insufficient policies are, as we show below, also reflected in great disparities between countries in recognizing and responding to women's rights in asylum. This article aims to map and analyze these variations, with the ambition to explain national determinants of women-friendly asylum policies.

Women's perspectives within the asylum framework are often an isolated discussion. However, although several scholars have contributed to highlighting the feminization of migration and asylum as research fields in their own right (e.g., Boyd, 2006; Crawley, 2001; Crawley & Lester, 2004; Freedman, 2015; Kofman, 1999; Sager, 2012; Schenk, 1994; Spijkerboer, 2000, 2018), many studies have been limited to case studies and comparative work on small clusters of states (Ali, Querton, & Soulard, 2012; Allwood & Wadia, 2010; Bonewit & Shreeves, 2016) or kept within a theoretical or legislative framework analyzing isolated initiatives or phenomena (Dauvergne & Millbank, 2010; Hoskyns, 1996). In addition, there is little literature that explores the gendered effects of contemporary asylum policies. Still, previous works provide a helpful fundament for our study, confirming the importance of properly constructing and contextualizing gender in the representation of women's experiences (Crawley, 2000). The complexity of context, permeating the entire asylum process, makes it difficult to pinpoint a certain source of gendered inequalities in asylum (Freedman, 2015). Hence, the mere adding of "women" to the analysis, or "gender" to the definition of persecution, is not sufficient for a women-friendly interpretation of legal instruments and may deny the specificity of women's claims (Cook, 1993; Crawley, 2010).

We add to this literature by presenting a Women-Friendliness in Asylum Index (WFA) for all member states of the EU for the year 2015. The WFA captures the extent to which European states have adapted their regulatory frameworks to consider the specific situation and needs of female asylum seekers, for instance, related to motherhood and reproductive rights. Reviewing national legal structures and guiding principles, the index targets policy outputs. We consider these the most tangible evidence of necessary

conditions for women-friendly asylum policies. Asylum policy outcomes, although a highly interesting area of research, are very difficult to evaluate as reception statistics and acceptance rates may conceal a determination process of gendered assumptions and discriminatory practices (Spijkerboer, 2000). The WFA reveals clusters of states across Europe with a solid recognition of women's rights in their regulatory frameworks, and others whom have yet to adapt their asylum policies to consider women's needs. We show that Sweden, perhaps unsurprisingly, is characterized by the most women-friendly asylum policies, while there is a clear gap between the asylum policies of Eastern and Western European countries.

Our new map of Europe also offers a fresh point of departure for an analysis of cross-national differences. Based on theories frequently used in the literature on gender gaps and comparative public policies, we identify a set of conditions likely to promote women-friendly asylum policies. To preview our main results, we find that asylum policies are on average more women-friendly in countries characterized by a large share of female members of parliament and positive attitudes toward immigrants from non-EU countries (rather than immigrants in general). These findings suggest that women's political representation and empowerment are key factors in explaining women-friendly asylum policies, whereas critical attitudes toward immigrants from non-EU countries (independent of their gender) retard the revision of European asylum policies to the needs of female refugees.

This article is structured as follows: The next section reviews the traditional conception of refugees. Subsequently, we provide a definition of what we consider women-friendly asylum policies before introducing our WFA. After a review of the literature on the determinants of women-friendly asylum policies, we present our statistical analysis of cross-national differences. A final section concludes.

The Evolution of Protection

Modern asylum laws of almost all Western states are founded upon the post-war agreement manifested in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. In response to the large migration flows in the aftermath of World War II, the ambition of the United Nations was to create an internationally agreed standard for the recognition of refugees, applying to any person who

. . . owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a

nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.²

As a reflection of its time, the 1951 Convention clearly refers to the kind of refugees believed to be most common after World War II, the politically active male, persecuted for his obstructive acts against a communist regime (Chimni, 1998). Due to its narrow focus on one particular kind of refugee, the Refugee Convention has been called a result of “complete blindness to women, gender, and issues of sexual inequality” (Edwards, 2010, p. 22). Yet despite this well-recognized bias, it remains the central codification of refugee rights at the international level.

A number of clarifying documents and guidelines³ linked to the international human rights regime have added scope and substance to the convention and its fundamental “obligation to protect,” harmonizing legal systems in the merging of human rights law and refugee law. As a result, the definition of persecution has changed over time, creating new categories of gender-based claims including sexual violence, honor crimes, forced marriage, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, and other forms of persecution primarily subjecting women (Anker & Lufkin, 2003; European Institute for Gender Equality [EIGE], 2016).

However, in spite of increasing recognition in a legal context as well as in the extensive framework of nondiscrimination within and between states, the international community has been slow in addressing the specific needs of female refugees and asylum seekers. Issues of protection related to abuse, exploitation, and discrimination facing displaced women and girls were not brought to the international agenda until the 1990s (e.g., the 1991 UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women). Central tools⁴ with the ambition of harmonizing the asylum process and ensuring similar standards of procedure throughout Europe reflect a decade of development in the policy field, but efforts are often clouded by a discussion on “vulnerability” or hidden behind generalizations such as “particular social group”.

In addition, although the international guidelines have been continuously adapted to reflect the contemporary situation of asylum seekers, the same is not necessarily true for the national legal frameworks regulating asylum. States enjoy considerable leeway in interpreting and implementing these updated mechanisms of protection, and the basic definition from 1951 is still prevalent in many national legislations. Whether states adapt their laws in response to the new reality of female asylum seekers and the revised international guidelines is ultimately a function of domestic factors such as economic development, public opinion, or partisan politics. Several recent reports confirm that there are indeed “very significant shortcomings”

(European Parliament, 2015, p. 5) and that the disparities between European states in handling gender-related asylum claims are “vast and worrying” (Ali et al., 2012, p. 8).

What Are Women-Friendly Asylum Policies?

The conceptual understanding of “women-friendly” is often grounded in feminist theory and has generated a notion of “state feminism” or the “women-friendly state,” defined as a setting that enables women to pursue family, work, and public life without unjust treatment based on sex (Hernes, 1987). The EU has adopted equality between men and women as a central value, reflected in the idea of gender mainstreaming. Although some policy areas seem to have benefited from gender mainstreaming, the equality discourse is often applied late to an already advanced and well-defined policy-making process (Allwood, 2017).

As a horizontal policy-making area fraught with a wide range of cross-cutting issues, migration and asylum policies make for a very difficult field to mainstream. Freedman (2017) finds the connection to the international human rights framework and strong feminist mobilization concerning gender-specific persecution to have contributed to the improved integration of gender equality and values of women-friendliness into central European directives on asylum. Questioning the universal validity of these norms and values, however, the construction of persecution on account of gender and sexuality in terms of human rights may create a dichotomy between the European value system and a non-European context (Spijkerboer, 2018). This study departs from asylum as a fundamental right and an international obligation, granted to individuals fleeing persecution or serious harm in their home country (Article 18, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, defined according to the rules of the Convention and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees). Although referring to all individuals alike, the definitions at the core of asylum and refugee recognition harbor a clear gender dimension, both in terms of the persons in need of protection and the persecution that they are exposed to (UNHCR, 2002, A: 5-8). We therefore understand women-friendly asylum policy as

Striving for equal treatment throughout the asylum process, recognizing women-specific needs and accommodating individual contexts.

Based on this background concept of “women-friendly asylum policy,” we develop our systematized concept (Adcock & Collier, 2001). It is rooted in the three policy dimensions we deem most critical to female asylum

seekers: (a) the recognition of women-specific grounds for asylum through the application of admission to a receiving state, (b) the women-friendly procedures in the assessment of the asylum application, and (c) the gender-responsive reception conditions while awaiting admission or dismissal. The choice of dimensions is carefully considered to reflect the concrete policy foundation of receiving states. The analysis of individual states within the EU naturally reflects the overarching policy framework and central mainstreaming ambitions, binding all member states. The past decades have produced a set of instruments and institutions, that is, 2011/95/EU, 2016/0224,⁵ SWD(2015)182,⁶ with explicit mention of women's rights in European asylum, calling for a gender-sensitive approach in the interpretation and adoption of policies. These are vital for our understanding of women-friendly asylum policies. Although there is significant convergence in certain policy areas, for example, related to family reunification, variation between states remain when reviewing their overall performance in receiving and processing the applications of female asylum seekers.

Studying the impact of gender on other dimensions of asylum, for example channels of migration or the reasons for fleeing, requires an entirely different approach, conceptually as well as methodologically. Such dimensions are often part of an informal structure that is difficult to anchor to the existing policy framework. For the sake of validity and transparency, we therefore base our study on the three nationally regulated policy dimensions: the asylum application, the determination procedure, and the reception conditions.

The WFA

Academia and interest organizations have produced several prominent tools to measure gender gaps and target equality issues in general—for example, the Gender Inequality Index by Forsythe, Korzeniewicz, Majid, Weathers, and Durrant (2000), the Relative Status of Women Index by Dijkstra and Hanmer (2000), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP; n.d.) Gender Inequality Index, the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap (2015), the EU Gender Equality Index (2017)—and a continuous discussion on the conceptual and technical standardizations of measurement has been ensued (Domínguez-Serrano & Blancas, 2011; Hawken & Munck, 2013; Permanyer, 2010). Although for example Bericat's (2012) index on gender inequality encompassing all EU member states offers helpful guidance for our work, the academic discussion is still lacking an admitted methodological approach to the systematic measurement of women-friendliness. Available indices also do not refer to principles of women-friendliness in asylum.

Furthermore, common for most scholarly examples are their reference to relative values, measuring the situation of women in relation to men. This approach risks generalizing the experiences of both groups and may result in a narrative of women as victims and a watered-down definition of gender-related persecution focusing excessively on sexual violence. Our work strives to trace the conditions for female asylum seekers in an absolute sense as we believe that it allows for a more nuanced analysis of women's experiences and opens up for diversity within the group as well.

The WFA is structured to capture women-sensitive regulatory frameworks and guidelines in asylum. It targets three dimensions of operation within the asylum context (application, procedure, and reception), evaluating a number of indicators within each level for an extensive overview of the procedures and practices most critical to women. Numerous theoretical, analytical, and empirical considerations have preceded the construction of the WFA. The choice of dimensions, the definition of variables, and the selection of data sources have all been carried out with conceptual coherence in mind.

The dimensions of the WFA are informed by existing literature and international legal instruments and guidelines related to gender-specific persecution (see below). However, the index encompasses all female asylum applicants whether their claims are gender-specific or not, as we refer not to individual claims but to the process as a whole.⁷ The indicators have been selected for their specific impact on the situation and evaluation of women applicants, without revealing any contextual details of their claim.

The availability of data has also posed a challenge to the construction of the WFA. There is no shortage of documentation on the asylum situation in Europe, but very few compilations of data encompass all 28 EU member states. Our index therefore relies on several sources of similar character and equal quality; Asylum Information Database (AIDA) and European Database of Asylum Law (EDAL), reviews of national policy documentation, as well as correspondence with national migration authorities and local UNHCR offices (see the Online Appendix for a detailed documentation of the coding and all the sources).⁸ For the sake of data availability and coherence, scores are based on figures from December 2015.

The scores for each indicator (see Table 1 for an overview of all indicators) are standardized to range from 0 to 1 and added up within each dimension for each state. Subsequently, we standardize the three dimensions to range from 0 to 1. The WFA is finally calculated as the geometric mean as follows:

$$WFA_i = \sqrt[3]{A_i * P_i * R_i}$$

Table 1. Indicators used for the WFA.

-
1. Application
 - 1.1 Recognition of gender as a defined category in asylum eligibility
 - 1.2 Recognition of private as well as state actors as persecutors
 - 1.3 Presence of national guidelines
 - 1.4 Marriage-related harm/forced marriage (recognition gender-specific persecution)
 - 1.5 Violence within the family or community (recognition gender-specific persecution)
 - 1.6 Domestic slavery (recognition gender-specific persecution)
 - 1.7 Trafficking (recognition gender-specific persecution)
 - 1.8 Female genital mutilation (recognition gender-specific persecution)
 - 1.9 Sexual violence and abuse and rape (recognition gender-specific persecution)
 - 1.10 Terms for family unification (marriage status)
 - 1.11 Application of safe country of origin
 2. Procedure
 - 2.1 Training of caseworkers
 - 2.2 Access to legal advice
 - 2.3 Access to female interviewer
 - 2.4 Access to female interpreter
 3. Reception
 - 3.1 Access to health care
 - 3.2 Housing conditions (separate housing for women)
 - 3.3 Education/training initiatives
-

As the WFA focuses on women asylum seekers, gender identity is not investigated as a separate category for asylum eligibility. Although an intersectional understanding of gender implies a more inclusive definition (including transgender and sexual orientation), the WFA evaluates the concept as female/male to reduce complexity both in terms of categorization and analysis. WFA = Women-Friendliness in Asylum Index. Further information on the WFA is provided in the online supplemental materials.

where dimension A addresses gender-specific persecution and the legal context of refugee recognition (application), dimension P captures how procedures influence the position of female asylum seekers to claim their rights (procedure), and dimension R measures the conditions of a safe and gender-adequate environment upon arrival (reception). We use the geometric mean to maintain as much variation as possible.⁹

Application

Gender-specific persecution addresses forms of violation specific to, or most likely to affect, women. An asylum application claiming gender-specific

persecution rests upon the interpretation of the Refugee Convention to determine the extent of harm and the level of state protection. With no mention of gender in the original convention, a few recurring key concepts may instead determine the outcome of asylum applications for women, such as “well-founded fear” and “special group.” Most EU member states have incorporated the Qualifications Directive (2011/95/EU) into their national legislation and therefore display very similar wording with regard to the refugee definition, often a direct transposition of the 1951 Convention. There are however cases of states widening the concept to include “gender” as an explicit ground for persecution next to “religion,” “politics,” and “race.”

Failing to recognize private actors as persecutors is critical for gender-specific claims as violence and discrimination directed toward women may otherwise be viewed as cultural or incidental, and thus unfounded. The asylum grounds specified by UNHCR (marriage-related harm, violence within the family or community, domestic slavery, trafficking, female genital mutilation, sexual violence and abuse, and rape) are rated individually in the WFA and evaluated according to the ratification of the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence from 2011, the rating of the Trafficking in Persons report 2016, and the extensive mapping in EIGE’s report on Female Genital Mutilation (2013). The presence of national guidelines for caseworkers in addressing and handling gender-specific claims is also considered.

All EU member states are bound by the Directive on Family Reunification (2003/86/EC), and there is little variation in the basic framework of family-related migration. However, the inclusiveness of the “family” concept is interpreted very differently, and there are states that consider only legal spouses eligible, whereas others offer a full set of rights also to cohabiting/same-sex partners.

Finally, within this dimension, the index reviews the use of gender-mainstreamed country reports, measured through the application of the “safe country of origin” concept. The source of information on a country of origin is of vital importance for the outcome of an asylum application, and several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) conclude that the use of safe country lists to determine the eligibility of a claim may be particularly harmful to women.¹⁰ Such lists are often based on a male narrative and fail to recognize discriminatory practices specifically targeting women, or they may rely on obsolete data in times of rapidly escalating conflict.

Procedure

The recognition of gender-specific persecution matters little unless there are procedures in place to support the account of such experiences. The second

set of indicators therefore targets procedural and evidential barriers for female applicants.

Lacking access to legal advice may have a particularly marginalizing effect on female asylum seekers who are more likely to suffer from illiteracy or insufficient schooling than their male counterparts. Legal assistance thus becomes crucial to navigate the administrative process and present a viable claim before authorities and to understand the possibility of making a separate claim rather than applying as a dependent on accompanying family.

The index also reviews access to a caseworker of the same sex as gender-specific asylum grounds are often of sensitive character, and accounts of, for example, sexual violence may be difficult to present before male authorities, causing the applicant to withhold important information and make a less credible claim. Most states adhere to the gender-mainstreaming principles of the EU and the Qualifications Directive, but the possibility to have a same-sex caseworker and interpreter attend your case must often be actively requested by the applicant. Furthermore, there are states where border police or security guards are conducting the interviews at the national points of entry, creating a very unfavorable setting for female asylum seekers with a gender-specific claim. The index also evaluates the level of training received by caseworkers in handling such claims, referring to a national training scheme.

Reception

Health and security issues for asylum seekers upon arrival are often of particular concern to women applicants. The third set of indicators refers to reception conditions, tracing states' awareness and recognition of cultural and social prohibitions on women traveling or living alone, and the risk of harassment and violence subjecting women and girls in camps and reception centers. The availability of health care for female asylum seekers primarily addresses the issue of reproductive health but also deprivation related to sexual violence, trafficking, and psychological trauma. Housing conditions are strongly related to both health and security issues for female applicants, and the guarantee to be housed separately from male applicants is an important indication of female-friendly policies. International monitoring organizations voice continuous concerns about authorities' failure to provide adequate housing conditions, where lacking security, poor hygiene, and insufficient sanitation facilities may expose women to gender-based violence, deteriorating health, and restrained mobility. Finally, the WFA reviews access to various training initiatives offered upon arrival. Among others, Sansonetti (2016) states the importance of vocational training and language courses aimed at enhancing refugee women's skills and facilitate their integration into society.

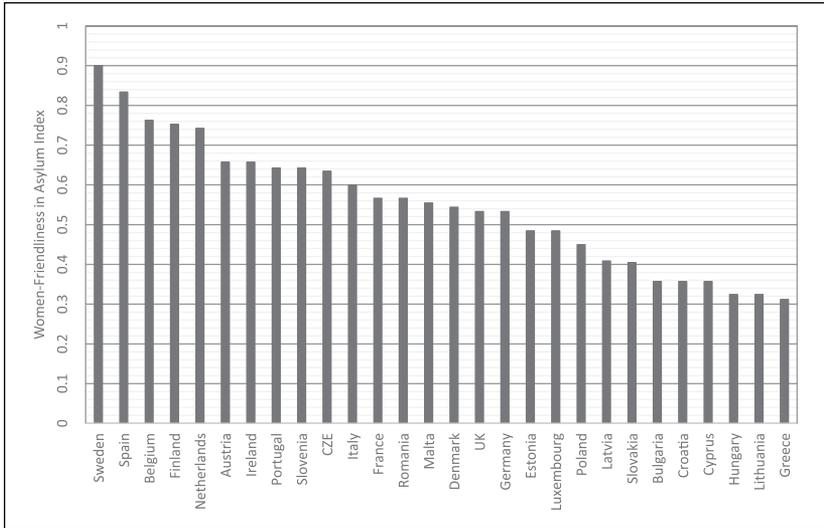


Figure 1. The Women-Friendliness in Asylum Index in 2015.

Such initiatives are also important to prevent the social isolation of female asylum seekers.

Results

Figure 1 shows the WFA in 2015 for all EU member states. The highest possible score on the WFA is 1, the lowest possible score is 0. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Sweden features the highest score (0.90), whereas Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania, and Greece feature the lowest scores (all below 0.40). Visual inspection of the data shows that there is a large division between Eastern and Western European countries. However, beyond this East/West divide, there are no discernible geographical patterns, and the expected clustering often used in comparative analytical work does not come through.

In addition, countries' scores on the WFA do not seem to correspond to the usual gender regimes identified in the literature (e.g., Lister, 2009; Pascall & Lewis, 2004). For instance, we would expect to see a largely coherent score among the Nordic countries corresponding to their gender-egalitarian welfare structure, but although Finland and Sweden perform very well, Denmark achieves a mere average score on the WFA due to poor procedures in terms of lacking legal advice and insufficient interview conditions. Mediterranean countries display even larger variation, with France and Italy receiving a score

of approximately 0.6 on the WFA, whereas Spain's score is surpassed only by that of Sweden, and Greece scores worse than any other country. Among all 28 countries, Greece displays the poorest reception conditions at the concern of the European Parliament and monitoring organizations alike.¹¹ Finally, there is also important variation within the group of Central and Eastern European countries. Most notably, Slovenia and the Czech Republic achieve above-average scores on the WFA, with the Czech Republic even including "gender" as a specific category in their refugee definition, whereas most of the Central and Eastern European countries score well below the WFA average.

The three dimensions of the WFA capture different aspects of women-friendly asylum policies. As a result, the bivariate correlations between the three dimensions are in fact quite low (between $r = .13$ and $r = .30$). In particular, the bivariate correlation between the procedure and reception dimensions is low. Although some countries perform very well (e.g., Spain and Sweden) or badly (e.g., Hungary and Lithuania) on all three dimensions, other countries display considerable variation. For instance, Denmark and Italy do well with regard to the application and reception dimensions but achieve very low scores on the procedure dimension. Luxembourg provides very good reception conditions but is among the worst performers regarding application. Similarly, the otherwise good scores of France and the United Kingdom are undermined by their very poor reception of female asylum seekers.

We have also compared the WFA to other, more general indices of gender equality to examine whether the women-friendliness of asylum policies diverges from other policy fields. In Figure 2, we use the EU's Gender Equality Index for the year 2015. As the figure shows, the bivariate correlation is substantial ($r = .72$), yet there are also important differences. For instance, Denmark performs very well on the Gender Equality Index but scores rather poorly on the WFA. In contrast, Spain achieves an average score on the Gender Equality Index but is among the best performers on the WFA. There is thus clear evidence that the WFA offers additional information on the women-friendliness of asylum policies, moving beyond more general indices of gender equality. In the next section, we develop hypotheses to account for this large variation on the WFA.

Theoretical Perspectives

How can we account for the large cross-national differences in recognizing and responding to women's rights in asylum? The specific literature on women-friendly asylum policies but also the more general literature on public policy offer a series of suggestions. In the following section, we forward five arguments.¹²

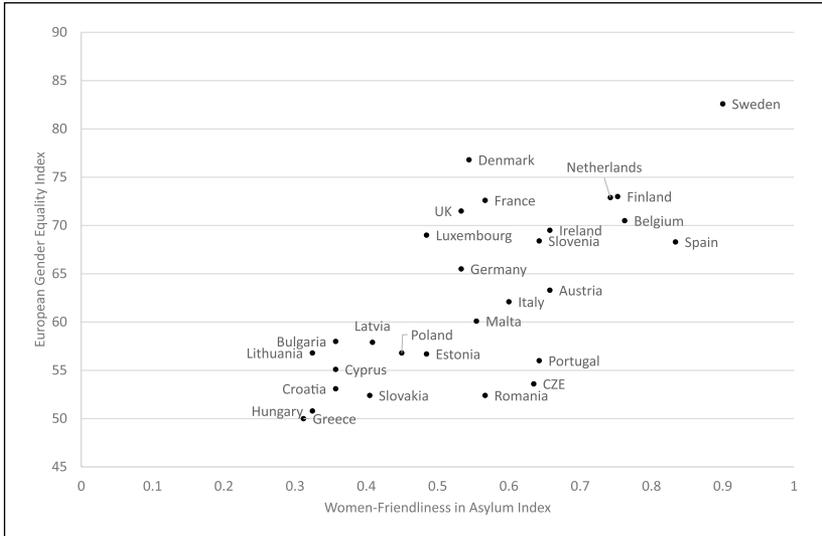


Figure 2. The European Union's Gender Equality Index and the Women-Friendliness in Asylum Index in 2015.

Women's Political Representation

There is a rich body of literature linking gender to social policy, sharing the conclusion that increased female political representation promotes a more gender-egalitarian society through the passing of women-friendly policies (Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers, 2007; Bolzendahl & Brooks, 2007; Fuszara, 2010; Reingold, 2006; Schumacher, 2011). Togeby (1994) connects the increasing presence of women in the political system to female integration in the labor market, and several studies confirm the correlation between women's political representation and higher levels of social expenditure, for example, related to child care. In addition, they emphasize the agenda of female politicians to prioritize social issues in general and women's issues in particular (Bolzendahl & Brooks, 2007; Huber & Stephens, 2000; Lovenduski & Karam, 2002). Avdeyeva (2010) also connects institutional reform with a strong women's movement and the commitment of female political representatives, whereas Anker (2002) links the construction of gendered asylum law to the international women's movement. Along the same lines, we expect that asylum policies are more women-friendly when women play a more central role in a country's political spheres:

Hypothesis 1: Asylum policies are more women-friendly when there is a large share of female Members of Parliament (MPs).

Politics Matter

Several studies investigate the links between the ideological preferences of political parties and social policy expenditure. They show that leftist parties are more likely to commit to gender-equality issues (Caul, 2001; Inglehart & Norris, 2000; Kenworthy & Malami, 1999; Mazur, 2002; Paxton, 1997). In her study on more recent EU member states, Lipsmeyer (2000) confirms the party-ideology hypothesis but also notes that maternity and family benefits do not seem to decrease with right-wing governments. Other studies highlight the impact of a left-oriented government to pave the way for women in political representation and promote a women's movement (Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers, 2007; Bolzendahl & Brooks, 2007; Reingold, 2006). Turning to right-wing populist parties, the literature emphasizes their antiimmigration stance (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Rydgren, 2008). In addition, right-wing populist parties are often profiled as socially conservative in regard to family values and gender roles (Bornschieer, 2010; Givens, 2004; Lienesch, 1982; Meret & Siim, 2013). We therefore expect asylum policies to be more women-friendly in the presence of a strong political left and less women-friendly when right-wing populists are electorally strong:

Hypothesis 2a: Asylum policies are more women-friendly when the political left is electorally strong.

Hypothesis 2b: Asylum policies are less women-friendly when the populist right is electorally strong.

Public Opinion

Much scholarly interest is paid analyzing public opinion toward immigration and the sociodemographic factors that influence such attitudes. Research on agenda setting shows a strong correlation between public preferences and public policies, particularly, regarding issues at the top of the political agenda (Mortensen, 2010), which would indicate that negative attitudes toward asylum seekers shape asylum policy outcomes. Opposition to immigration, especially, from outside the EU, is well documented in the literature (e.g., Emmenegger & Careja, 2012; Sides & Citrin, 2007). In addition, immigrants are often perceived to be less deserving of assistance (Appelbaum, 2002; van Oorschot, Arts, & Geliseen, 2006). Dustmann and Preston (2001) conclude

that attitudes are more negative the larger the share of immigrants in the population, whereas Hatton, Richter, and Faini (2004) extend the argument to differentiate between attitudes toward perceived legitimate and “bogus” asylum seekers. The literature also documents large cross-national variations in gender-egalitarian attitudes (e.g., Inglehart & Norris, 2003). For instance, Dolan (2010) shows how gender stereotypes shape public willingness to support female political representatives, whereas Sjöberg (2004) analyzes how gender role attitudes are related to family policy institutions. We therefore expect asylum policies to be more women-friendly, where the population expresses more gender-egalitarian views and/or is not particularly opposed to immigration from non-EU countries:

Hypothesis 3a: Asylum policies are more women-friendly where the population expresses more gender-egalitarian views.

Hypothesis 3b: Asylum policies are more women-friendly where the population is not particularly opposed to immigration from non-EU countries.

Problem Pressure

It is less costly for a country to have liberal asylum policies if it is not particularly exposed to migration. Geographic location has come to play a critical part in the European response and reception of asylum seekers. The volume but also the composition of migration flows varies greatly across the EU, with member states bordering the Mediterranean displaying much higher figures and a more homogeneous inflow. For instance, although more than half of the asylum seekers in 2015 were female or underage, only 9% of the asylum applicants arriving to Italy in 2015 were women.¹³ Hatton (2005) notices restrictive policy reforms and a toughened process of refugee recognition because of the increasing numbers and uneven distribution of asylum applications. Casella (1988) concludes that this defensive response to influx threatens to erode Europe’s historically generous attitude toward asylum. We therefore expect inflow of female asylum seekers to be negatively related to the women-friendliness of asylum policies. To deal with a possible reverse causality problem (women-friendly asylum policies attracting further female asylum seekers), we also look at the geographical distance to conflict zones:

Hypothesis 4a: Asylum policies are more women-friendly when the inflow of female asylum seekers is low.

Hypothesis 4b: Asylum policies are more women-friendly when the distance to conflict zones is large.

Economic and Political Development

It is frequently argued that economic advancement promotes gender equality and that women benefit to a greater extent than men from such economic development (e.g., Duflo, 2012; Inglehart & Norris, 2003). In addition, it can be reasoned that wealthy countries can “afford” more liberal asylum policies.¹⁴ We therefore expect asylum policies to be shaped by the country’s economic situation. In particular, we hypothesize that wealthy countries are better positioned to develop liberal and women-friendly asylum policies.¹⁵ Similarly, asylum policies might also be shaped by the level of political development. Most importantly, countries with long traditions of democracy are considered more likely to develop gender-sensitive asylum policies. Explanations for women’s agency and the emergence of women-friendly policies are often sought in a country’s political development or ascribed to the historical legacy and institutional design of a society (Alexander & Welzel, 2016). Several studies show that democracy is linked to more egalitarian policies (Boix & Stokes, 2003; Gerring, Thacker, & Alfaro, 2012). Similarly, established democracies put more emphasis on gender equality (Inglehart, Norris, & Welzel, 2002), whereas Beer (2009) argues that in particular “long-term democracy” (especially in combination with women’s suffrage) provides new opportunities for women to promote their interests through mobilization and elections. We thus expect political development (understood as long traditions of democracy) to be positively related to women-friendly asylum policies:

Hypothesis 5a: Asylum policies are more women-friendly in wealthy countries.

Hypothesis 5b: Asylum policies are more women-friendly in countries with long traditions of democracy.

Empirical Analysis

In this section, we provide a comparative analysis of the asylum policies of the 28 EU member states in 2015. This year marks a peak in asylum flows across the Mediterranean but also through the so-called Balkan route (stretching from Greece in the east to Germany in the west). The number of asylum seekers to the EU has been steadily increasing, rising from approximately 200,000 persons in 2010 to approximately 550,000 persons in 2014. In 2015, EU member states received over 1,200,000 asylum applicants.¹⁶ This massive inflow triggered a series of reforms aimed at restricting the right to claim asylum,¹⁷ yet these reforms were typically not implemented before 2016.

Hence, the 2015 cross section allows for an analysis of cross-national variation in asylum policies before the recent wave of restrictive reforms.

Based on our discussion in the previous section, we consider nine independent variables in our analysis. In the following section, we present their operationalization. Table A1 in the Appendix provides the descriptives.

Women's mobilization in the political sphere is measured as the percentage of parliamentary seats in a single or lower chamber held by women in the period 2011 to 2015. Data have been provided by the World Bank.¹⁸

The political strength of the left is captured by the relative power position of social democratic and other left parties in government, captured by their seat shares in parliament (percent of total parliamentary seat share of all governing parties) in the period 2000 to 2015. As right populist parties rarely participate in governments, we focus on their electoral strength rather than government participation. Hence, we measure the political strength of the populist right as the vote share of right populist parties in the period 2000 to 2015. Data are taken from Armingeon et al. (2017).

Our first indicator of public opinion is taken from Eurobarometer 82.4 (Fall 2014). Attitudes toward gender equality are the country-specific averages of four survey questions.¹⁹ Our second indicator of public opinion captures attitudes toward immigrants from non-EU countries. Respondents were asked whether immigrants from other EU member states and from non-EU members states evoke positive or negative feelings. The indicator measures the country-specific share of respondents expressing fairly and very negative feelings in the case of immigrants from outside the EU (qb4.2). Data are taken from Eurobarometer 84.3 (Fall 2015).

Exposure to asylum seekers is measured in two ways. First, we divide the inflow of female asylum applicants to a given country in 2015 by this country's population in 2015. The data are taken from Eurostat.²⁰ Yet, this indicator might suffer from endogeneity problems as women-friendly asylum policies might lead to a particularly large inflow of female asylum seekers. As an alternative indicator of exposure, we therefore use geographical information system data to measure the shortest geographical distance between a given EU member state and possible conflict zones in the Middle East and Northern Africa (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia).²¹

The level of economic development is measured as the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (in current US\$) in 2015. Data are taken from the World Bank.²² Finally, based on the recent literature on the relationship between democracy and human development/gender equality (Beer, 2009; Gerring et al., 2012), we capture the level of political development by the

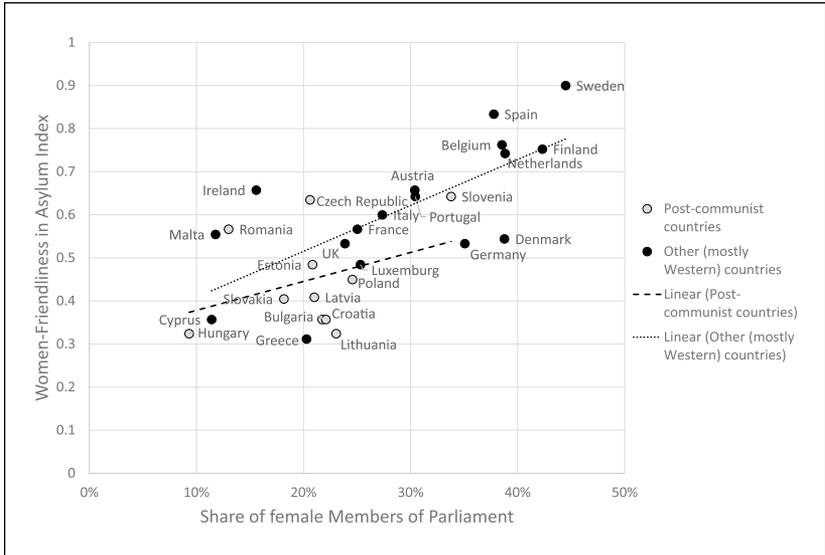


Figure 3. Share of female Members of Parliament and the Women-Friendliness in Asylum Index.

number of years a country has been a democracy (without any interruption). A country is considered democratic if it achieves at least a score of 6 on the Polity IV index.²³ As Malta is not covered by the Polity IV project, we code Malta as democratic since 1964 (the year it achieved independence from Great Britain).

Multivariate Analysis

We start our discussion of the determinants of women-friendly asylum policies by providing some descriptive illustrations. Figure 3 displays European countries' score on the WFA relative to the share of female MPs. We use the share of female MPs because it features the highest bivariate correlation with the WFA ($r = .71$, see Table A2 in the Appendix for the full correlation matrix). As Figure 3 shows, it is likely that women's political representation is a key factor in explaining women-friendly asylum policies. Yet similar positive bivariate relationships can also be found between the WFA and attitudes toward non-EU immigrants ($r = -.60$), the level of political development ($r = .53$), and perceptions on gender equality ($r = .48$).

In addition, visual inspection of the data shows that there is a large divide between the postcommunist countries in Central and Eastern Europe (gray dots in Figure 3) and the other, mostly Western European countries (black dots). Postcommunist countries score on average 0.45 on the index compared with 0.61 for the remaining 17 EU member states. The corresponding t test is significant at the 1% level (t value = 3.0). Yet, the relationship is far from perfect with several postcommunist countries reaching a high score on the WFA (most notably Slovenia and the Czech Republic).²⁴

Among long-term EU members, Greece has the lowest score on the WFA, which could suggest that the WFA score is influenced by exposure to asylum flows. However, other countries strongly exposed to asylum flows (both geographically and numerically) feature higher scores (most notably Spain). In addition, the bivariate correlations between the WFA and indicators of exposure are relatively low (see Table A2 in the Appendix).

Finally, the role of political parties seems to be of less relevance. Although there is a positive, albeit very weak correlation between the WFA and the political power of the left ($r = .09$), there is no discernible bivariate relationship between the WFA and the political power of right-wing populist parties ($r = .01$).

After this initial inspection of the data, we now turn to a multivariate analysis of the WFA. We use simple ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions.²⁵ Model 1 in Table 2 displays the results, regressing the WFA on our nine independent variables. However, several of the independent variables are highly correlated, most notably, the levels of economic and political development (see Table A2 in the Appendix). As a result, the vector inflation factor reaches a critical level (mean variance inflation factor (VIF) = 2.24). We therefore provide a second model without the weakest performing independent variables in Model 1 (exposure to female asylum seekers, distance to conflict zones, and political strength of right-wing populist parties) as well as without the indicator for economic development (the weaker of our two development variables in Model 1). In Model 2, in Table 2, the vector inflation factor does not reach critical levels (mean VIF = 1.60). We return to the dropped variables in the section on robustness tests.

As Table 2 shows, both models lead to identical conclusions. Significant predictors of variation of the WFA are the share of female MPs (Hypothesis 1) and attitudes toward non-EU migrants (Hypothesis 3b). In contrast, the political strength of the left-wing and right-wing populists respectively (Hypotheses 2a and 2b), perceptions on gender equality (Hypothesis 3a), exposure to female asylum seekers as well distance to conflict zones (Hypotheses 4a and 4b), and the levels of economic and political development (Hypotheses 5a and 5b) display no

Table 2. The Determinants of Women-Friendly Asylum Policies.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Share of female Members of Parliament	0.831** (0.360)	0.874*** (0.297)	0.897*** (0.239)	0.852*** (0.248)	0.865*** (0.280)	0.904*** (0.256)
Political strength of the left	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.000 (0.001)	—	—	—	—
Political strength of the right-wing populists	-0.000 (0.005)	—	—	—	—	—
Perceptions on gender equality	-0.051 (0.140)	-0.049 (0.120)	—	—	—	—
Attitudes toward immigration from non-EU countries	-0.004* (0.002)	-0.004* (0.002)	-0.004** (0.002)	-0.003* (0.002)	-0.004* (0.002)	-0.004** (0.002)
Exposure to female asylum seekers (%population)	1.532 (23.192)	—	—	—	—	—
Distance to conflict zones	0.000 (0.00)	—	—	—	—	—
Level of economic development (GDP per capita)	-0.000 (0.000)	—	—	—	—	—
Level of political development (years as democracy)	0.002 (0.002)	0.001 (0.001)	—	—	—	—
Postcommunist countries	—	—	—	-0.040 (0.051)	—	—
New EU member states	—	—	—	—	-0.014 (0.060)	—
First year of EU membership	—	—	—	—	—	0.000 (0.001)
Constant	0.683* (0.381)	0.638* (0.333)	0.563*** (0.145)	0.552*** (0.147)	0.565*** (0.148)	0.367 (2.454)
R ²	.626	.612	.593	.602	.593	.593
Adjusted R ²	.440	.524	.560	.553	.543	.542
N	28	28	28	28	28	28

Standard deviations in parentheses. EU = European Union; GDP = gross domestic product.

* $p < .1$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

relevant co-variation with the WFA. These seven independent variables are thus dropped from the analysis. Model 3 in Table 2 shows that the removal of these variables does not affect the relationship between the remaining two independent variables and the WFA. With only two independent variables, Model 3 accounts for a large share of the cross-national variation in the WFA (as reflected in the high adjusted R^2 of .56).

Can these two variables account for the difference between Western and Eastern countries, as shown in Figure 3? Table 2 suggests that they can. Model 4 adds a dummy variable for EU member states with a communist past, Model 5 adds a dummy variable for EU member states that entered in 2004 or later, and, finally, Model 6 adds a variable capturing the first year of EU membership (e.g., 2004 in the case of Hungary). In all three models, the new independent variables are far from significant, whereas attitudes toward non-EU migrants and in particular the share of female MPs remain significant predictors of the cross-national variation in the WFA. The dummy variable capturing the communist past of some EU member states turns out to be the most relevant predictor of the WFA. Yet even in this case, the coefficient is not significantly different from zero (t value of -0.77).

Substantially, the two main predictors of a country's WFA score have relevant effects. Our results indicate that with a 10 percentage point increase in the share of female MPs, a country's WFA score improves by 0.09, which corresponds approximately to the difference between the Netherlands (at 0.74) and Spain (at 0.83). Similarly, a 10 percentage point decrease in the share of respondents concerned about immigration from non-EU countries allows a country to improve on the WFA by 0.04.

In sum, our findings suggest that asylum policies are on average more women-friendly in countries characterized by a strong mobilization of women in the political sphere and (more) positive attitudes toward immigrants from non-EU countries. The latter variable accounts—at least to some extent—for the large East/West divide, as displayed in Figure 3. Adding dummy variables for postcommunist countries or new EU members does not improve the model's explanatory power. However, it should be noted that the addition of a dummy variable for postcommunist countries reduces the explanatory power of the variable capturing public opinion toward non-EU migrants (t value declines from 2.4 to 1.8).

Robustness Tests

We have conducted a series of robustness tests to assess the validity of our results. First, we consider whether the inclusion of one of the other

independent variables improves the explanatory power of our final model or, alternatively, whether their addition influences the other observed relationships. Our final model contains two independent variables. If anyone of the other independent variables discussed above is added to this model, the results are not affected. Neither does any of these additional variables have a significant effect on the WFA.

Second, we assess to what extent the results are driven by the inclusion of single cases. Removing any single country from the data set does not substantively affect the results.²⁶

Third, we look at the extent to which our results depend on the specific operationalization of our independent variables. For instance, it could be argued that the observed effect of opposition to immigration from non-EU member states is not so much a function of the geographical origin of migrants (non-EU member states) but rather a reflection of general anti-immigration attitudes. We therefore use the Eurobarometer 84.3 (Fall 2015) to assess the extent to which immigrants from other EU member states equally evoke negative feelings. The two indicators, which are operationalized in the same way but focus on different kinds of immigrants, are highly correlated ($r = .66$). Yet the inclusion of this new variable does not substantively affect our findings.

More controversially, it might be argued that political development is better captured by a country's humanitarian tradition rather than years as democracy. We measure humanitarian tradition as public spending on official development assistance as a share of gross national income in 2015.²⁷ Adding this variable to Model 3 in Table 2, we observe no relevant changes as humanitarian tradition fails to have a significant effect on the WFA.

Furthermore, we have looked at alternative measures of exposure to asylum seekers. In particular, we have looked at exposure to both male and female asylum seekers in 2015 (rather than female only), the difference between absolute and relative exposure (the latter taking resident population size into account), the exposure to asylum seekers in 2010 to account for possible time lags, and, finally, the increase in asylum requests between 2010 and 2015 to control for changes in numbers rather than levels. None of these variables have any significant effect on the WFA.

Fourth, we have also controlled for nonindependence of observations and possible geographical clustering effects by inserting a variable capturing the neighboring countries' average WFA score.²⁸ However, the variable has no significant effect on the WFA. Geographical clusters and common borders can therefore not account for the observed cross-national differences.

Finally, we have also looked at the three dimensions (application, procedure, and reception) of the WFA separately. As mentioned above, the bivariate correlations between the three dimensions are in fact quite low. Yet the three models lead to identical conclusions with the share of female MPs and positive attitudes toward immigrants from non-EU countries having positive effects on the women-friendliness of asylum policies. However, it must be emphasized that in these three models with the three dimensions analyzed separately, the coefficients do not always achieve the conventional levels of significance, but with t values between 1.15 and 2.77, these models support the interpretation that our main findings are robust.

Conclusion

Despite the gendered origins of the refugee concept and the increasing feminization of asylum, research has paid surprisingly little attention to the specific needs of female asylum seekers and the women-friendliness of contemporary asylum policies. In this article, we have added to the literature on gender perspectives in asylum by presenting the WFA for all 28 EU member states in 2015. The WFA reveals significant variation in the extent to which national policies consider women's needs in the application, credibility assessment, and reception of asylum seekers. Among other things, the index identifies a large gap between the asylum policies of Western and Eastern European countries, with the Eastern EU members featuring considerably lower scores on the WFA. There are also remarkable, and somewhat unexpected, differences between Western European countries. For instance, although Sweden reaches an almost maximum score on the WFA, the score of neighboring Denmark is considerably lower.

Our new map of Europe offers a snapshot of the judicial, administrative, and procedural hurdles facing female asylum seekers today. It also provides a fresh point of departure for an analysis of cross-national differences. Based on the rich literature on gender gaps and comparative public policies, we have forwarded several arguments to explain women-friendly asylum policies. Our empirical analysis has shown that asylum policies are on average more women-friendly in countries characterized by a large share of female MPs and positive attitudes toward immigrants from non-EU countries.

In contrast, the electoral strength of right-wing populist or left-wing parties, popular attitudes on gender equality, exposure to the inflow of female asylum seekers, and economic and political development cannot account for the cross-national variation on the WFA. This is not to say that these variables

are without any effect. For instance, it is quite likely that popular attitudes on gender equality and the level of political development have a positive effect on women's political representation (see Table A2 in the Appendix), which in turn has a positive effect on the women-friendliness of asylum policies. Yet, these variables' effect is clearly more remote. Once we add variables capturing popular attitudes toward immigrants from non-EU countries and, in particular, women's political representation to the statistical model, their effects disappear. Similarly, the widespread concerns about immigration from non-EU countries (in some countries, more than 80% of the respondents expressed such concerns in Fall 2015) may have pushed political parties from all ideological specters to harden their position on asylum seekers, which could explain why we find no party effects on the women-friendliness of asylum policies.

In this article, we have analyzed the women-friendliness of asylum policies in 2015—the year the EU member states received over 1,200,000 asylum applicants. As is well known, this massive inflow triggered a series of reforms aimed at restricting the right to claim asylum, and it may be questioned whether our results still hold in 2019. Although it is certainly true that asylum policies, overall, have become more restrictive in recent years, these reforms have rarely referred to the gendered nature of regulations or targeted equality issues within the asylum framework.²⁹ We therefore expect the observed differences in women-friendliness to remain rather stable.

Our research can be extended in several ways. Expanding the analysis to include the women-friendliness of asylum policies in countries outside the EU, we would expect to observe similarly large variations. It would also be valuable to address the frequently criticized Western-centered approach of migration research and include sending states in the analysis. A gendered perspective on the preconditions and channels of migration would add substance and context to the WFA score. Alternatively, future research might emphasize the implementation side of policies as there is likely to be a discrepancy between the “letter of the law” and the actual performance “on the ground.” In fact, it is possible that such a discrepancy is backed politically. A more qualitative approach, investigating policy outcome, would certainly add to the understanding of women's experiences within the European asylum framework and the analysis of individual mainstreaming efforts, for example, the Istanbul Convention, would be helpful in evaluating the convergence process of European states.

Finally, from a human rights perspective, there is a lot of work yet to be done. Expanding the definition of “gender” to consider sexual identity and placing the analysis in an intersectional framework would be an important

contribution. Another underrepresented group in migration research is minors, and our study could be extended to include children's perspectives in existing asylum policies. Children constitute an increasingly large part of asylum flows, faced with a specific set of challenges related to the age determination process and their vulnerable status as minors.

Europe has experienced several waves of migration prior to 2015 and will most likely be on the receiving end of many yet. National asylum systems will remain in focus also in the years to come, with the efficiency and inclusiveness of policies at the top of political agendas. Addressing the gendered challenges facing displaced women and the women-friendliness of European asylum policies will not only enrich the academic discussion but also provide long-awaited recognition to the situation of female asylum seekers.

Appendix

Table A1. Descriptives.

	Obs.	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Women-Friendliness in Asylum Index	28	0.55	0.16	0.31	0.90
Share of female members of parliament	28	0.26	0.10	0.09	0.44
Political strength of the left	28	37.46	15.68	1.80	64.90
Political strength of the right-wing populists	28	5.69	5.98	0.00	21.08
Perceptions on gender equality	28	2.66	0.25	2.26	3.32
Attitudes toward immigration from non-EU countries	28	64.42	14.58	31.63	86.66
Exposure to female asylum seekers (%population)	28	0.00079	0.00116	0.00000	0.00472
Distance to conflict zones	28	1,215.1	741.5	0.0	2,648.7
Level of economic development (GDP per capita)	28	30,365	20,622	6,993	101,910
Level of political development (years as democracy)	28	46	21	15	69

EU = European Union; GDP = gross domestic product.

Table A2. Correlation Matrix.

	Women-Friendliness in Asylum Index	Share of female members of parliament	Political strength of the left	Political strength of the right-wing populists	Perceptions on gender equality	Attitudes toward immigration from non-EU countries	Exposure to female asylum seekers (%population)	Distance to conflict zones	Level of economic development (GDP per capita)	Level of political development (years as democracy)
Women-Friendliness in Asylum Index	1.00									
Share of female members of parliament	.71	1.00								
Political strength of the left	.09	.19	1.00							
Political strength of the right-wing populists	.01	.10	-.14	1.00						
Perceptions on gender equality	.48	.61	.06	-.09	1.00					
Attitudes toward immigration from non-EU countries	-.61	-.47	-.14	.26	-.44	1.00				
Exposure to female asylum seekers (%population)	.24	.24	.13	.19	.28	-.24	1.00			
Distance to conflict zones	.08	.25	-.30	.04	.32	.14	.14	1.00		
Level of economic development (GDP per capita)	.40	.40	-.12	-.06	.51	-.51	.31	.21	1.00	
Level of political development (years as democracy)	.53	.50	-.04	.10	.57	-.46	.37	.06	.80	1.00

EU = European Union; GDP = gross domestic product.

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Notes

1. The Common European Asylum System (CEAS) rests upon the fundamental right to seek asylum as recognized in the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 resp. 1967), applying Article 1 of the Convention to define refugee status.
2. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, Article 1A(2).
3. The 1967 Protocol, the UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women (1991); CEDAW General Recommendation No. 32 on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality, and statelessness of women (2014); and EU antidiscrimination laws.
4. Examples include the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011), with the dual ambition of raising awareness and providing a legal framework, specifically addressing migration issues and cross-border dimensions of violence against women. European Union (EU) antidiscrimination legislation is also reflected in the CEAS intended to provide “. . . common high standards and stronger cooperation to ensure that asylum seekers are treated equally in an open and fair system—wherever they apply.”
5. Proposal for replacement 2016/0224, Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common procedure for international protection in the Union and repealing Directive 2013/32/EU.
6. Joint staff working document Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020.

7. From a human rights perspective, this is well motivated as equality issues are unrelated to the claim itself but refer to the total process.
8. Several important aspects of women-friendly asylum policies had to be excluded from the analysis due to the unavailability of data, in particular, security upon arrival, access to child care during assessment interview, as well as two additional grounds for gender-specific persecution as listed by the UNHCR (forced abortion and forced sterilization).
9. We have deliberated weighting the three dimensions, particularly, considering that grounds for application might have stronger implications for women-friendly experiences than the determination procedure and reception conditions. However, in the absence of weights that we can derive theoretically, we have abstained from using weights altogether. Still, our findings hold when using weights (application weight 3, procedure weight 2, and reception weight 1).
10. See, for example, Asylum Aid “Safe for whom?” (<https://www.asylumaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Safe-for-Whom.pdf>) and FIDH “Safe countries: A denial of the right of asylum” (https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/safe_coutries_-_a_denial_of_the_right_of_asylum.pdf).
11. See, for example, Human Rights Watch “Greece: Dire Risks for Women Asylum Seekers” (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/15/greece-dire-risks-women-asylum-seekers>).
12. We recognize women’s mobilization as key for the development of women-friendly asylum policies. However, due to limited availability of data, we are not able to include it as a single variable. Instead, we review two variables that we believe to be highly correlated with mobilization, perceptions on gender equality and women’s political representation, finding the latter the most powerful predictor of women-friendly asylum policies.
13. See <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/> (variable *migr_asyappctza*).
14. Although it could also be argued that the attractiveness of wealthy countries for migrants might make these countries particularly “reluctant countries of immigration” (Cornelius, Tsuda, Martin, & Hollifield, 2004).
15. Alternatively, it might be argued that in situations of economic crisis, public attention is focused on domestic needs. Trauner (2016) examines the impact of the economic crisis on European asylum policies and concludes that increasing numbers of refugees together with financial constraints have increased the variation in asylum standards across states. Yet, a separate analysis shows that the WFA is not correlated with economic problem pressure (captured by the average unemployment rate and economic growth rate in the period 2006 to 2015).
16. See <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/> (variable *asyl_app*).
17. Several European countries introduced similar reforms, for example, Austria’s exclusion of asylum seekers from basic care reception conditions upon rejection of application (FrÅG 2017), Denmark’s delay of family reunification and confiscation of migrant’s valuables (Bill of the Law on Amending the Aliens Act, Law No. 87, 2017), and Sweden’s request for photo identification upon crossing the Danish border ((EU)2016/399).

18. See <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS>.
19. The four questions are as follows: All in all family life suffers when the mother has a full-time job (qb1_1); women are less willing than men to make a career for themselves (qb1_2); overall men are less competent than women to perform household tasks (qb1_4); and a father must put his career ahead of looking after his young child (qb1_5). A factor analysis reveals that all four variables score on the same factor. Please note that our indicator of attitudes toward gender equality is strongly correlated with the EU's Gender Equality Index used in Figure 2 ($r = .75$).
20. See <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/> (variable asyl_app).
21. We thank André Walter for help in calculating these numbers.
22. See <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>.
23. See <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html>.
24. We arrive at similar conclusions when looking at the new EU member states (entry year 2004 or later) or when creating a group of Central and Eastern European countries including Greece.
25. Considering the truncated dependent variable (which ranges per definition from 0 to 1) does not change our findings.
26. Although removing Ireland from the sample turns the coefficient of the variable capturing attitudes toward non-EU immigration narrowly insignificant (with a t value of 1.63).
27. Data are taken from Eurostat: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/>.
28. We use common land borders to identify neighboring countries. Due to the presence of a bridge connecting Copenhagen and Malmö, we consider Denmark and Sweden to be neighboring countries. In addition, for historical reasons, we code Cyprus and Greece as neighboring countries. Finally, we consider Italy to be a neighboring country of Malta, but not vice versa. Malta shares no land border with any other state, but Italy is the geographically closest country. Hence, Italy is likely to influence Malta.
29. For example, a temporary Swedish law from July 2016 (2016:752) introduces restrictions by granting persons eligible for subsidiary protection temporary residence permits rather than permanent ones. Asylum seekers granted subsidiary protection do no longer have the right to family reunification. Although this reform impedes the scope of protection and restricts family member immigration, it does not per se target the gendered foundation of regulations as the actual criteria of eligibility for family reunification (spouse, co-habiting partner, same-sex partner) remain unchanged. Nevertheless, it may have secondary gendered effects.

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