Contemporary Issues in Politics: European Equal Pay Day Campaign

Introduction

When searching for a contemporary issue in politics in the middle of that search for an essay topic, equal pay day popped up. It is a very interesting topic, which isn't an subject talked about every day. To be specifically this essay will talk about the campaign European Equal Pay Day and has this as essay question: In what ways are equal pay days important politically? Equal pay day is held mostly in the beginning of November. This day is about the fact that women earn less than men. The underlying term for this is the gender pay gap. Besides the European equal pay day, some countries have their own national equal pay day. For example, the UK and Belgium. (European commission. [n.d.].)

There will be discussed why this issue is a political issue. And what arguments are for and against. And throughout the essay there will be links with ideologies like feminism or socialism. This topic has been chosen after reading the chapter differences by Graham and Hofmann. Near the end of this essay there will be discussed why the topic fits into that chapter. Closing this essay will be with a conclusion and a referencing list.

Summary about the issue

The gender wage gap is a real issue in the European Union nowadays. Women living in the EU are still paid less than their male colleagues because they are women, an issue based on gender discrimination. EU has been making policies in the past to end this gender discrimination. And they also have a special day on the calendar called Equal pay day. This is a day that calls for action and consciousness. On the 4th of November of 2019 there was an equal pay day in Europe. From 4th November till January first of 2020 women are working for free in comparison to their male colleagues. Women earn 16% less than men hourly. (European Commission 2020)a.

There are also national equal pay days held for example in the UK and in Belgium. (European commission. [n.d.].)

These two countries are interesting to look at because there's a difference between there national pay gaps. As Belgium has a pay gap from 20% which isn't a good number. (Colin Clapson 2019).

Almost half of the world population is female, this can also be said for all countries in Europe. (common known thing, don't need resource?) The impact on women of not being treated equally to men is a topic that is political. The unfair treatment of women affects approximately half of the EU population. As it affects this many people it is a topic that entered the world of policies. National governments are trying to take various actions, so is the EU with their equal pay day campaign but also with legally binding treaties and law system. (European commission. [n.d.]. https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-

pay/eu-action-equal-pay_en)

Why can we consider equal pay day political?

- · Own definition of politics + analysis/reflection: your view on politics + underpinning theories

Equal pay day is considered political topic.

You could place, wanting women to have equal rights to men under the feminism theories. As women are getting more rights in the 20th century like voting. Equal pay also enters the political area. (Lorber 2001.)

One famous quote by Anne Phillips describes it very well. ‘’Feminism is politics’’. But still there are some issues with women in politics. As an example you see this in the gender pay gap.(Phillips 1998 p.1)

Politics is more than just institutions like the EU, or a government that decides on things that affect a community or a society. But issues that occur in society can be picked up by politicians and politics itself.

Maybe controversial issues like women not being paid equal to men for the same hours and same job as men, could have been a topic that was picked up by the people itself, and later made illegal by a political process. Or making actions with as example ‘equal pay day’. (bron zoeken) iemand inspiratie? Vind voorlopig geen bron om dit te underpinnnen)

Politics can also be found in our daily civil lives. While you’re doing groupwork you might vote what idea is going to be used to fulfill a project. The democracy is used in everyday life. Democracy is an important role in the world of politics. If a majority of the parliament thinks women shouldn’t be paid less than actions can be taken by a political instution. (bron zoeken over democratie) iemand inspiratie (vind voorlopig geen bron om dit te underpinnen)

Other important words in a political definition are power and decision making. A democratic state is the only one that is able to punish someone for doing illegal things. One person to another cannot decided whether they did something unlawfully or not. People in society cannot take action towards one person like imprison someone. But the state can, as they have rules, rules that have been communicated. Those same rules should be a reflection of the norms and values of the society it represents. (Squires 2013)

Politics should benefit the people and the society. It should regulates everyday life. Like explained by Hobbes, in leviathan the people give the state or government power to regulate life. (Boucher and Kelly 2003). If a government announces that paying women less than men is illegal than people should listen to it. Equal pay day is actually a day where people are being informed and learnt about the gender wage gap.(zou ik dit opnieuw moeten refereren?) It’s a good thing for people to involve in political topics like these and being concerned. This can be linked with John Stuart Mills vision on the positive effects of learning about politics. (Heywood 2015)

Equal pay day is a topic that can be both seen under the process versus arena definition. For arena we can tell that the campaign is an action from the European union, leaded by the European commission. Here is where they decide to take actions on inequality. They vote for actions or not. (Holland 2017). But also national governments haven taken part in this campaign or a similar national campaign. (European commission n.d.).

Equal pay day has been an process as well. This day hasn't come from one day to another. Women started realizing in the past that they earn less than men. (Holland 2017.).

Arguments

As law forbid gender discrimination. There are still a large group of people in this world justifying and thinking, there shouldn't be equal pay for women. Something that is seen in the sport world for instance. This as an American example but this express what people could possibly think. There was a lawsuit filed by the US women's national soccer team. They sue the fact that they earn less than their male colleagues in the other soccer players team. The United States Soccer Federation, are against paying women the same and think their claim is unjustified because their bodies are not equal to men bodies. The fact that this federation is using this as an argument against equal pay means that this is something still thought by many people. Because they are so vocally telling this kind of argument with no hesitation. (Kim 2020)

But also in Europe, we see people vocally speaking up striving against unequal pay. Even a company like BBC that provides news to the world, is accused of gender discrimination. Something you wouldn't expect from a news broadcast. Samira Ahmed is a journalist at BBC. She discovered that she had a lower wage than her male colleague for the same kind of work. She has sued BBC for this. (Dixon 2019)

Luckily, the European socialist party are campaign heavily in favor of equal pay day in Europe. They insist it's time for a feminist economy. (PES socialist and democrats 2020)

Sometimes you hear arguments like, it's normal for women to earn less because most of them have part time jobs. Knowing that the pay gap is based on the hourly income that isn't correct. (European commission B, n.d.)

Women tend to work part-time more than men. (Schäfer and Gottschall 2015)

Some industries earn less, and in some of those industries women are over-employed. Like care worker jobs and sales etc. Some industries are more manly and have higher salaries. Education-wise, women have more degrees than men. So that argument can be thrown overboard. There's no way that women get paid less because there education level isn't as high as men. That assumption is wrong. Glass ceiling, is also a known term where women even if they have the qualifications aren't hired for a top job while men are. It's harder for them to get bonus and to get a higher function than it is for men. There aren't as many female CEO's in this world. (European commission. B [n.d.].

Women still do more unpaid work than men. There's still this kind of tradition where women take care of the children and the household. Or even taking care of their elderly parents. That's time that can't go into time on the labor market. The caring for others is something rooted deep

down in society where they condition this to be something that a woman should do. (find source)

According to the Eurobarometer, 10% of the Europeans think women should earn less for the same kind of work while 90% think they shouldn't. Pay discrimination based on gender is illegal. European citizens are calling for action. The Eurobarometer claims that 90% of the under asked persons say that this is condemnable. What is off big concern is that still 10% do think it is a lawful thing to do. The gap has improved over the years but it is very slow process. (European commission A n.d.)

Politically matter

How is equal pay day is affecting politically. Every year on this day the politicians shine a light on this issue. Many EU politicians have made statements about it. People are learning about this and the campaign brings awareness. The debates in the European Parliament show why equal pay day is necessary. (The Parliament Magazine 2020).

In 2017 a Polish member of European Parliament named Janusz Korwin-Mikke made a shockingly comment. While there were debates about the gender pay gap. He said, it's the most normal thing in the world that women earn less because they are ''weaker, smaller and less intellectual''. Everyone knew the claims he was making were not true and there's no evidence for it. The fact that somebody in power still has this kind of view means we will need a lot more equal pay days. Euronews (in English) 2017).

European Equal Pay Day is of immense value because it educates everyone in the working field about that fact that women are still being paid less. The campaign has a strong sensibilization factor. (Observatory European Charter for Equality of Women and men in local life 2020).

This kind campaign is very needed as if we look closer to the gender pay gap results from the Eurobarometer. Almost 76% of the people don't know that it is illegal to pay women less. Besides that it is nice to hear that 90% are condemning the fact that women are paid less. According to those 90% they don't deserve that kind of treatment. (European commission a, n.d.).

Link with chapter differences

Allocating back to the chapter giving to us for writing this essay. The European equal pay day campaign fits perfectly in the chapter differences from Hoffman and Graham. Based on their gender men earn more, and women less. Being a women or a men is seen as part of your identity. Equality doesn't mean there aren't any difference between the genders or sexes. It means all genders, and however you choose to identify yourself is off equal value. Your life, work, emotions are equal. There is no justifying in treating differently based on a difference. Women differ from men, and men from women. But do they really differ besides the physical and biological looks? Aren't woman taught from a young age to be caring, motherly and sweet. While boys are told the opposite. To protect women, to provide for his family. And mostly to not show strong emotions because that is something that females should do. There is no evidence that the work of a women is off less value. There is no evidence that she is not equal to her male colleague. Still she is getting paid less. Why? This might be something historically. Men

were the dominant gender in the old days, women didn't have right to vote. Men were their headship and held all powers. Men were superior, women inferior. Luckily, we've come a long way and this has changed. Partly because of the 3 waves of feminism explained in the chapter. But equal pay day makes us aware that women are still not paid equally on the working field. (Hoffman and Graham 2015)

Conclusion

Equal pay day has educated us about the gender wage gap. It has set a light on things we don't always think about. (verder uitschrijven)

Reference list

1. European Commission - European Commission. 2020. Press Corner. [online] Available at: [Accessed 1 May 2020].
2. European Commission.a What Europeans have to say about the gender pay gap & the principle of equal pay for equal work. Kantar Public. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/ebs_465_infographic_gender_pay_gap.pdf [Accessed 1 May 2020].
3. Squires, J., 2013. Gender in political theory. John Wiley & Sons.
4. Phillips, A. ed., 1998. Feminism and politics. Oxford University Press on Demand.
5. Kim E., 2020. Forbes. [Online]. [11 May 2020]. Available from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/kimelsesser/2020/03/11/us-soccer-says-women-dont-deserve-equal-pay-because-they-have-less-skill/#19c81ab26bb0
6. Hayley dixon. 2019. The Telegraph. [Online]. [5 May 2020]. Available from: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/10/21/samira-ahmed-takes-bbc-court-equal-pay/
7. PES socialist and democrats. 2020. Equal pay campaigns. [Online]. [5 May 2020]. Available from: https://www.pes.eu/en/pes-women/campaigns/equal-pay-/index.html
8. Colin Clapson. 2019. Belgian women taking home 20% less than their male co-workers. [Online]. [5 May 2020]. Available from: https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/en/2019/11/04/belgian-women-taking-home-20-than-their-male-co-workers/
9. Heywood, A., 2015. Political theory: An introduction. Macmillan International Higher Education.
10. Marsh, D. and Akram, S., 2015. Political participation and citizen engagement: beyond the mainstream.
11. Holland, D., 2017. The nature of the political reconsidered. Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 47(1), pp.32-57.
12. Observatory European charter for equality of women and men in local life. [n.d.]. European Equal Pay Day. [Online]. [7 May 2020]. Available from: https://charter-equality.eu/news/european-equal-pay-day.html
13. European commission. C [n.d.]. Equal pay day. [Online]. [3 May 2020]. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/equal-pay-day_en
14. Hoffman, J. and Graham, P. (2015) Introduction to Political Theory (3rd Ed.) Abingdon: Routledge
15. European Commission. B [n.d.]. Equal Pay? Time to close the gap!. [Online]. [7 May 2020]. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/factsheet-gender_pay_gap-2019.pdf

16. European Commission. D [n.d.]. EU action for equal pay. [Online]. [5 May 2020]. Available from: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/eu-action-equal-pay_en
17. Lorber, J., 2001. Gender inequality. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.
18. Phillips, A. ed., 1998. Feminism and politics. Oxford University Press on Demand
19. Boucher, D. and Kelly, P., 2003. The social contract from Hobbes to Rawls. Routledge.
20. Heywood, A., 2015. Political theory: An introduction. Macmillan International Higher Education.
21. Schäfer, A. and Gottschall, K., 2015. From wage regulation to wage gap: how wage-setting institutions and structures shape the gender wage gap across three industries in 24 European countries and Germany. Cambridge Journal of Economics, 39(2), pp.467-496.
22. The Parliament Magazine. 2020. EU Equal Pay Day Highlights Women ‘Working For Free’ Until Year End. [online] Available at: [Accessed 12 May 2020].
23. Euronews (in English). (2017). Polish MEP launches sexist tirade in EU Parliament. [Online Video]. 2 March 2017. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40hhc0cjYyg. [Accessed: 6 May 2020].
24. Observatory European charter for Equality of Women and Men in local life. 2020. » European Equal Pay Day - Observatory Of The European Charter. [online] Available at: [Accessed 12 May 2020].