

MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Beyond the Binary: Assessing EU Audiovisual Policies & Funding
Trends for Gender Diversity in Film
A Pilot Study

verfasst von | submitted by

Chetanay Wahi

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science (MSc)

Wien | Vienna, 2025

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme code as it appears on the
student record sheet:

UA 066 550

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium Communication Science

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Katharine Sarikakis

Abstract (German)

Diese Pilotstudie untersucht, wie der audiovisuellen Politikrahmen der Europäischen Union „Geschlechterdiversität“ auf diskursiver Ebene artikuliert und inwiefern diese Rhetorik mit den materiellen Realitäten von Förderentscheidungen übereinstimmt. Obwohl Diversität und Inklusion zentrale Elemente der kulturellen Selbstbeschreibung der EU darstellen, gibt es bislang nur wenig empirische Forschung, die das Verhältnis zwischen politischer Sprache und der Verteilung finanzieller Unterstützung für LGBTQ+-Erzählungen analysiert. Die Studie verwendet ein sequenzielles, explanatives Mixed-Methods-Design, das eine korpusgestützte Diskursanalyse von 32 EU-Politikdokumenten (Creative Europe MEDIA, Eurimages, AVMSD sowie der gesetzliche Rahmen: die Richtlinie über audiovisuelle Mediendienste) mit einer quantitativen Analyse von 397 geförderten Projekten aus den Jahren 2020 bis 2023 kombiniert.

Phase 1 zeigt, dass der politikleitende Diskurs Geschlecht überwiegend in binären, frauenzentrierten Begriffen rahmt: Sprache zu „Gender Balance“ macht 63 % aller Nennungen aus, während „Gender Identity“ lediglich 3 % ausmacht. Die qualitative Analyse bestätigt, dass ein Großteil der Diversitätssprache aspirativ, allgemein oder unspezifisch bleibt, während LGBTQ+-Identitäten weitgehend in handlungsorientierten oder ressourcenbezogenen Kontexten fehlen. Phase 2 offenbart ein paralleles Muster in den Förderergebnissen: LGBTQ+-Projekte machen lediglich 5,29 % der geförderten Werke aus und erhalten im Durchschnitt 8,1 % geringere Budgets als nicht-LGBTQ+-Projekte. Über den vierjährigen Zeitraum ist kein konsistenter Aufwärtstrend erkennbar, und Creative Europe MEDIA fördert einen leicht geringeren Anteil an LGBTQ+-Projekten als Eurimages.

Diese Ergebnisse veranschaulichen eine strukturelle Diskrepanz zwischen den rhetorischen Selbstverpflichtungen der EU zur Inklusivität und der tatsächlichen materiellen Unterstützung für queere Narrative. Als Pilotstudie ist die Analyse notwendigerweise in ihrem Umfang begrenzt (beschränkt auf EU-Programme, ein enges Zeitfenster und beschreibungsbasierte Kodierung). Sie etabliert jedoch ein

replizierbares methodisches Rahmenwerk und identifiziert zentrale Muster, die eine vertiefte, groß angelegte Untersuchung rechtfertigen. Die Studie bietet letztlich sowohl konzeptionelle als auch methodische Grundlagen für zukünftige Forschung darüber, wie politikleitende Diskurse, Governance-Strukturen und Förderregime die kulturelle Sichtbarkeit von LGBTQ+-Identitäten in Europa formen.

(Aus dem Englischen (Originalsprache) ins Deutsche übersetzt mit ChatGPT 5.1.)

Abstract (English; Original Language)

This pilot study evaluates how the European Union’s audiovisual policy framework articulates “gender diversity” at the discursive level and how this rhetoric aligns with the material realities of funding decisions. Although diversity and inclusion are central to the EU’s cultural narrative, little empirical work has examined the relationship between policy language and the distribution of financial support for LGBTQ+ storytelling. The study employs a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design combining corpus-assisted discourse analysis of 32 EU-level policy documents (Creative Europe MEDIA, Eurimages, AVMSD, and the legislative framework: Audiovisual Media Services Directive) with a quantitative analysis of 397 funded projects from 2020 to 2023.

Phase 1 shows that policy discourse overwhelmingly frames gender in binary, women-centred terms: “Gender Balance” language accounts for 63% of all mentions, while “Gender Identity” accounts for only 3%. The qualitative analysis confirms that most diversity language is aspirational, broad, or non-specific, with LGBTQ+ identities largely absent from actionable or resource-linked contexts. Phase 2 reveals a parallel pattern in funding outcomes: LGBTQ+ projects constitute just 5.29% of funded works and receive 8.1% lower average budgets than non-LGBTQ+ projects. No consistent upward trend is observed across the four-year period, and Creative Europe MEDIA funds a slightly lower proportion of LGBTQ+ projects than Eurimages. These findings shed light on a structural dissonance between the EU’s rhetorical commitments to inclusivity and the material support allocated to queer narratives. As a pilot study, the analysis is necessarily limited in scope (restricted to EU-level programmes, a narrow temporal window, and description-based coding) but it establishes a replicable methodological framework and identifies key patterns that warrant deeper, large-scale investigation. The study ultimately offers both conceptual and methodological groundwork for future research on how policy discourse, governance structures, and funding regimes shape the cultural visibility of LGBTQ+ identities in Europe.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Drawing on Joseph Nye's (1990) classic theory of soft power¹, a well-established argument is that film is one of the most effective vehicles for shaping global perceptions, transmitting cultural values, and legitimising political narratives (Keune et. al. 2017). In the European context, this communicative capacity extends beyond artistic expression to encompass identity construction and international visibility. The audiovisual sector (spanning cinema, television, and increasingly, streaming platforms) acts as a key medium through which Europe's image, ideals, and creative values are projected globally. The Creative Europe programme also functions as a tool of soft power to enhance a shared European identity, or Europeanness, among citizens and artists across EU Member States (García, 2022). The programme positions creative production within the broader project of European integration as it not only funds culture but significantly reinforces the notion of a collective European cultural space, bridging linguistic and national divides through inclusive storytelling. Notably, cinema (in a broader context) interacts with social, economic and cultural variables (such as tourism, national branding, and film festivals) as part of cultural diplomacy and therefore serves as a potent vehicle of soft power because: 1) it can transmit ideology, 2) shape international perceptions, and 3) contribute to a state or region's cultural influence (Consonni, 2023). These interlinked mechanisms give the European audiovisual ecosystem the roles not merely to entertain, but to cultivate affective bonds, project shared values like diversity and democracy, and position Europe as a normative power in the global cultural economy.

Media and cultural policy in the European Union (EU) are crucial not only for economic integration but also for shaping European identity, democracy, and cultural diversity, core elements of the EU's legitimising narrative (Sarikakis, 2007). In this sense, media policy operates as both a regulatory and representational framework: while it structures markets and supports creative industries, it simultaneously constructs the narratives through which Europe defines itself to its citizens and the world. Research on

¹ Soft power is defined as the ability of a country to influence others through attraction rather than coercion or payment. Unlike hard power (which relies on military force or economic pressure) soft power shapes what others want by making them admire your values, culture, or policies. A country is powerful not just because it can compel others to act, but because it can make others voluntarily align with its preferences (Nye, 1990).

media policy calls for a critical, interdisciplinary approach that links it to broader social justice concerns, connecting economic structures to symbolic power, cultural representation, and democratic accountability (Sarikakis and Chakravartty, 2006). This integrated perspective is evidence that questions of access, equity, and cultural visibility are inseparable from the economic logics of policy design. Hence, we can consider media governance in the EU as not just an administrative exercise but a deeply political process that shapes who and what counts as ‘European’.

Gender equality has emerged as one of the most visible and measurable policy priorities within this wider project of constructing European identity through culture. Notably, significant progress has been made in advancing gender equality within the European audiovisual sector. The European Commission’s *Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025* outlines concrete objectives for tackling gender-based violence, promoting equal labour participation, and achieving gender balance in decision-making roles, demonstrating an institutional commitment to measurable change (European Commission, 2024). Similarly, high-profile initiatives such as the *Cannes Equality Charter* and the *Collectif 50/50* movement have helped normalise transparency and accountability practices around women’s representation in film production and festival governance (Mumford, 2018). National and EU-wide agencies, including the *EFAD Gender & Inclusion Working Group* and France’s *CNC parity bonus scheme*, have further operationalised these goals through funding incentives and parity-oriented data collection (European Film Agency Directors, n.d.; Lemercier, 2018).

However, despite this significant progress, the prevailing *gender equality* discourse has largely been interpreted through the lens of *gender balance*, focusing primarily on the inclusion of cisgender women in quantitative terms (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2024). This framing has effectively reinforced a binary understanding of gender, often rendering non-binary, transgender, and broader LGBTQ+ identities invisible within institutional policies. For instance, Eurimages created a gender-data analytical tool and required producers to report the gender of all key cast and crew, alongside implementing measures such as the double Bechdel Test and financial comparisons by gender (Martinez, 2016). However, these

interventions remain embedded in a strictly binary, cisnormative framework that recognises only “men” and “women,” thereby excluding non-binary, trans, and gender-diverse professionals from both the dataset and subsequent policy visibility.

While labelled under broad “diversity” categories, such groups rarely receive specific recognition or tailored support mechanisms. Thus, even as the European audiovisual sector celebrates progress toward parity, it risks reproducing exclusionary patterns by equating gender equality with women’s representation alone, rather than embracing the full spectrum of gender diversity. This tension, between inclusionary rhetoric and limited representational scope, brings us back to Sarikakis’s (2007) argument that EU cultural policy not only regulates creative industries but also performs identity work, defining whose experiences and bodies are visible within the narrative of the EU.

1.1 The dissonance, policy ideals vs. lived reality, and the gap

At the heart of this thesis lies the hypothesis that a significant dissonance exists between the ideals expressed in EU audiovisual policy and the realities reflected in funding outcomes. While the European Union openly champions inclusion, gender equality, and diversity as guiding principles of its cultural agenda, these commitments often remain at the level of aspirational rhetoric. Policy texts are rich in representational language, invoking “representation,” “equality,” and “diversity”, yet such discourse does not necessarily translate into significant material support for the communities that are waiting to be empowered. This research contends that the EU’s audiovisual policy ecosystem exemplifies a policy–practice gap: a situation in which diversity is celebrated textually but inconsistently realised in practice.

This thesis systematically compares the rhetoric of textual inclusion embedded in Creative Europe MEDIA, Eurimages, and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) with the actual funding

patterns they produce. Although, these instruments differ in function and textual form; this study treats them as discursive outputs of EU audiovisual governance. Based on this, it argues how performative diversity can mask structural inequities. The findings reveal that while policy language overwhelmingly emphasises “gender balance” framed around women, projects representing LGBTQ+ identities remain numerically and financially marginalised. This disjuncture between discourse and distribution: the tension between *what policy says* and *what policy does*, forms the core concept of this study and calls for critically analysing the performativity of the gender policy in practice.

Existing scholarship has largely examined European audiovisual policy and cultural funding in isolation, despite growing academic attention to both domains. On one hand, studies have provided valuable insights into policy discourse, analysing how EU institutions linguistically construct ideas such as “diversity,” “gender equality,” and “cultural inclusion” within audiovisual strategies (e.g., Creative Europe, AVMSD). On the other hand, a comparatively smaller (but notable) body of work has tracked funding flows, mapping the economic distribution of film support programmes and assessing their role in sustaining European cinema. Yet, crucially, no study has empirically connected these two levels; that is, no research has systematically compared what EU policies *say* about diversity with how these ideals are *materially implemented* through funding decisions.

This MSc thesis addresses that gap through an innovative mixed-methods design that directly links the lexical framing of EU audiovisual policy to the quantitative realities of Creative Europe MEDIA and Eurimages funding. A corpus-assisted discourse analysis with statistical analysis of 397 funded projects across almost four years is compared, using which the study provides an initial, small-scale empirical examination of how inclusivity rhetoric translates into concrete financial support. In doing so, it bridges cultural policy analysis and data-driven funding evaluation, offering a preliminary (yet, holistic), evidence-based understanding of diversity governance in the European audiovisual sector. As a pilot study, this research is intended to 1) test, 2) propose, and 3) establish a methodological framework and empirical foundation for future, large-scale comparative analyses of EU cultural policy and funding

patterns. Thus, this thesis contributes both conceptually and methodologically: conceptually, by evaluating the performative nature of EU diversity discourse; and methodologically, by demonstrating how computational-human textual analysis and quantitative data synthesis can uncover the persistent gap between policy ideals and lived realities.

1.2. Research questions and objectives

Building on the policy–practice dissonance outlined above, this thesis aims to empirically analyse how the European Union’s audiovisual policy frameworks articulate, and materially act upon, their stated commitments to gender and LGBTQ+ diversity. The overarching objective is to identify whether a measurable gap exists between the rhetorical ideals of inclusion and the actual distribution of financial support in the European film sector. To achieve this, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. **How do key EU audiovisual policies (particularly Creative Europe MEDIA and Eurimages) and the binding legislative framework Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), textually frame and articulate “gender diversity”?**

(Addressed through Phase 1: corpus-assisted discourse analysis of 32 policy documents.)

2. **To what extent do the two funding bodies (Creative Europe MEDIA and Eurimages) financially support projects with explicit LGBTQ+ narratives?**

(Addressed through Phase 2: quantitative funding analysis of 397 projects supported between 2020 and 2023.)

3. **What relationship (or dissonance) exists between the policy rhetoric of gender diversity and the concrete funding realities for LGBTQ+ projects?**

(Addressed through the integrative Discussion, linking policy “rhetoric” with funding “reality.”)

These questions structure the thesis’ sequential explanatory design: the first phase establishes the *rhetorical landscape* of EU audiovisual policy, the second quantifies the *funding reality*, and the final phase synthesises both to reveal where (and why) discrepancies emerge between institutional discourse and material practice.

1.3 The argument (spoiler) and the reader’s roadmap

The core hypothesis thesis is that European Union audiovisual policy is characterised by a concerning, deep-seated dissonance between its rhetorical ideals and its material practices. The analysis demonstrates that the policy rhetoric (Phase 1) is dominated by a “gender balance” framework that overwhelmingly centres women while rendering LGBTQ+ identities quantitatively marginal and thematically non-committal, typically expressed through aspirational rather than resource-driven language. This pattern of textual marginalisation is directly aligned with the funding reality (Phase 2), where LGBTQ+ projects constitute only a small fraction of the total portfolio and receive comparatively lower average financial support. Together, these findings reveal a persistent policy–practice gap at the core of EU audiovisual governance: diversity is celebrated in discourse but unevenly enacted in practice. The light on this dual layer of exclusion (representational and material), the thesis challenges the performativity of EU cultural policy and calls for a more accountable, equity-oriented, and inclusive approach to diversity in European film funding. However, it is to be noted that this study does not explain any causal effect, but only alignment and dissonance.

The remainder of this thesis is organised into six chapters, each building upon the previous to form an integrated argument linking policy discourse and funding practice.

- Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature and theoretical foundations. It surveys scholarship on European audiovisual policy, including the Creative Europe MEDIA strand, Eurimages, and the legislative framework of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD). The chapter then traces the dominant discourse on gender equality in film policy, which has historically prioritised women in film while overlooking the broader spectrum of gender identities. It further reviews queer theory and intersectional approaches to representation, examining how visibility and inclusion are conceptualised beyond the gender binary. Finally, it discusses theories of policy and representation, exploring how cultural policies can act as performative instruments that construct inclusion rhetorically, a theme developed through the concepts of contextual policy analysis, performative diversity, and diversity branding.
- Chapter 3 outlines the mixed-methods research design, detailing the two sequential phases: (1) the corpus-assisted discourse analysis of policy rhetoric, and (2) the quantitative funding analysis of LGBTQ+ representation. It also explains the data sources, coding frameworks, and procedures for ensuring reliability and validity.
- Chapters 4 and 5 present the empirical findings. Chapter 4 analyses the rhetoric of EU audiovisual policy through keyword frequency, thematic coding, and crosstabulation, revealing the dominance of “gender balance” language and the marginalisation of LGBTQ+ identities. Chapter 5 turns to the funding reality, quantifying support for LGBTQ+ projects across Creative Europe MEDIA and Eurimages to expose patterns of underrepresentation and financial disparity.
- Chapter 6 synthesises these findings, discussing the policy–practice dissonance between inclusive rhetoric and material outcomes. It interprets this gap through the lens of performative diversity, situating the results within broader debates on EU cultural governance and representation.

- Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by summarising the key contributions, outlining policy implications for equity and inclusivity in European film funding, and suggesting avenues for future research to expand this pilot study into a larger comparative framework

Chapter 2: The state of the art

This chapter reviews the existing scholarship on European audiovisual policy and its evolving engagement with gender equality and diversity. It begins by outlining the institutional and regulatory foundations of EU media governance (Section 2.1), followed by an examination of the dominant “gender equality” discourse and the women-in-film movement (Section 2.2). The discussion then turns to critiques of this binary framework and the emergence of queer and gender-diverse perspectives within media research (Section 2.3). Finally, Section 2.4 explores theories of policy and representation, analysing how policy operates as discourse and how “diversity” risks becoming performative when detached from structural change. Together, these sections provide the conceptual groundwork for the empirical analysis that follows, establishing how language, governance, and funding intersect to define inclusivity in the European film ecosystem.

2.1 The European audiovisual policy: actors and aims

The MEDIA strand is one of three strands of the Creative Europe programme (alongside CULTURE and CROSS-SECTORAL) and is specifically dedicated to the audiovisual sector across Europe. For the 2021-2027 period, the total budget for Creative Europe is €2.44 billion, which supports the culture and audiovisual sectors (European Commission, 2024). Within that, the MEDIA strand gives special attention to Europe's film/audiovisual ecosystem: from development and production through distribution, promotion, skills, markets, and increasing audience reach.

On the other hand, Eurimages is the pan-European public film fund established under the auspices of the Council of Europe in 1989, and currently encompasses 38 member states (plus Canada as an associate member) of the CoE. Its core mission is to promote independent cinematographic works, including feature fiction, animation, and documentary, by providing financial support for international co-productions, distribution and exhibition across borders, thereby incentivising cooperation between professionals based in different countries. The fund (an estimated annual budget of €27.5 million) operates through multiple support schemes such as co-production support, marketing and audience development, and exhibition. It defines eligibility around criteria of at least two co-producers from different member states, cross-border budgets, and adherence to the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-production, where relevant (Council of Europe, n.d.).

The European audiovisual sector remains highly fragmented along cultural, linguistic, and national lines, resulting in limited cross-border circulation of works. Its predominance of small and medium-sized enterprises and high-risk financing conditions contributes to under-capitalisation and dependence on public support. (European Commission, 2013). The MEDIA programme identifies and addresses these problems: it supports upstream skills and development, downstream distribution/exhibition and aims at boosting the circulation of European works to overcome fragmentation. (European Commission, 2023). Similarly, Eurimages provides a dedicated financial envelope and requires trans-national co-production (minimum two producers from different states), thereby reducing risk (pooling resources) and structurally embedding cross-border production practices. (Council of Europe, n.d.).

The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD)² is a binding legislative framework that sets the foundational regulatory mechanism for audiovisual media services across EU Member States by coordinating national laws on both linear broadcasting and on-demand platforms (Directive 2010/13/EU, 2010). Crucially, the AVMSD mandates that Member States promote European works, for example by reserving the majority transmission time to them and by requiring that independent producers receive a defined share of broadcast time (European Commission, 2025). A recent report documents how Member States have implemented these rules, particularly Articles 13, 16 and 17,³ analysing the actual catalogue shares, investment obligations and prominence of European works on VOD and streaming services (European Audiovisual Observatory & VAF, 2023). The AVMSD matters significantly for strategies such as the Creative Europe MEDIA Programme and Eurimages because it provides the legal basis and policy logic for supporting the circulation and visibility of European audiovisual content. The directive aligns with MEDIA's objectives of skills, development, distribution and audience reach, and supports Eurimages' mission of facilitating transnational production and circulation of European content by mandating Member States to create favourable conditions for European works. Thereby, helping to overcome market fragmentation and under-capitalisation in the European audiovisual sector.

An analysis of European audiovisual policy reveals key programs designed to navigate the dual aims of promoting cultural identity and ensuring market competitiveness. The EU has been an active actor, protecting European cinema production through specific programs like MEDIA. The MEDIA program, in particular, is identified as an "institutional pillar" for promoting EU audiovisual works, driven by a

² formally Directive 2010/13/EU

³ **Article 13:** Applies to on-demand audiovisual media services. It requires Member States to ensure that such services “promote, where practicable and by appropriate means, the production of and access to European works.” The means of promotion may include financial contribution to production or rights acquisition, or ensuring a minimum share or prominent placement of European works in the service catalogue.

Article 16: Applies to television broadcasters (linear services). It mandates that Member States ensure that broadcasters reserve, “where practicable and by appropriate means”, a majority proportion of transmission time for European works (excluding time for news, sports, games, advertising, teletext and teleshopping) and that if a majority cannot be attained, the share must not fall below the average in 1988 (or 1990 for Greece and Portugal) in that Member State.

Article 17: Also for broadcasters, this article requires that Member States ensure that broadcasters reserve at least 10% of transmission time (or, alternatively, 10% of their programming budget) for European works created by producers independent of broadcasters. The 10% target should be achieved progressively and must include recent works (transmitted within five years of production).

"strong normative position" to preserve European stories (Sarikakis, 2014). Studies provide sufficient evidence that dedicated funding mechanisms like Eurimages help mitigate market dispersion in the European audiovisual sector by encouraging cross-national cooperation and joint financing, thereby addressing structural challenges of limited market reach (Romero-González & Palma-Martos, 2019). However, the policy landscape reveals a persistent gap between cultural ambition and structural reality. While initiatives such as the Creative Europe MEDIA programme and Eurimages aim to promote diversity, innovation, and transnational collaboration, the sector remains constrained by economic and institutional barriers. For instance, in a recent analyses of the European animation ecosystem, stakeholders identify funding disparities, fragmented IP management, and limited monetisation opportunities in digital markets as major obstacles to achieving the EU's broader cultural objectives of diversity and competitiveness. Moreover, although participants stress the importance of equality and inclusion, these ideals are often undermined by systemic issues of under-capitalisation and uneven access to resources. The study concludes that realising Europe's creative and cultural potential requires coordinated policy frameworks, equitable funding, and stronger international cooperation (Wahi et al, 2025).

2.2 The dominant discourse: “gender equality” and the “women in film” movement

The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, outlined by the European Commission, sets out a comprehensive roadmap for achieving gender equality across the EU by 2025. It identifies five key objectives: ending gender-based violence; challenging gender stereotypes; closing gender gaps in the labour market (including pay, pensions and care responsibilities); achieving equal participation across economic sectors; and increasing gender balance in decision-making positions (European Commission, 2024). This shows the EU's institutional commitment to measurable progress on gender equity, signalling a policy-level success in mainstreaming gender equality objectives. Cannes Film Festival introduced an

“equality charter” aimed at addressing gender imbalance within its programming and organisational structure (Mumford, 2018). The charter commits the festival to collecting and publishing gender data on cast and crew for all films submitted, publicly listing the names of selection-committee members, and working toward gender parity on its board. While the charter stops short of introducing quotas for female directors, the festival’s leadership acknowledges its past statistics as “negative” and signals a shift toward greater transparency and accountability. The move is portrayed as part of a wider industry push, led by groups like Collectif 50/50, to redress structural gender inequalities within film festivals and the film industry more broadly (Mumford, 2018). Based on this, tangible progress within high-profile cultural institutions is highlighted, reflecting the visibility and power of the 50/50 movement in advancing women’s representation.

The European Film Agency Directors (EFAD) Gender & Inclusion Working Group was established in 2017 to promote gender balance and, since 2022, broader diversity and inclusion within the European film and audiovisual sector. It facilitates member agencies in collecting gender data, ensuring parity in selection committees and festivals, adjusting funding programmes to incentivise women’s projects (e.g., gender bonus, use of the Bechdel test), and advocating for industry-wide change. The group also engages at the European level, pushing for standardised statistics through the European Audiovisual Observatory, and for policy adjustments within the Creative Europe MEDIA programme to embed gender and inclusion considerations (European Film Agency Directors, n.d.). French Centre national du cinéma et de l’image animée (CNC) also introduced a set of policy measures aimed at improving gender equality in the French cinema industry. These include a 15% bonus in production support for films achieving parity in eight key crew positions, obligatory gender-based statistics in film licence applications, guarantees of parity in selection committees and juries, and the creation of an observatory to track women’s employment and salary data in the audiovisual sector (Lemercier, 2018).

This demonstrates how institutional frameworks at the European level operationalise “gender” primarily through mechanisms that target women’s participation and parity metrics. A comprehensive statistical

overview of women's participation in key production roles in the European feature-film sector finds that between 2019 and 2023, women professionals held only 24% of the production workforce across Europe, signalling persistent gender disparities in creative and technical roles (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2024). The same report also highlights variation by role: while some gains are evident (e.g., an increase in the share of women directors from earlier periods), roles such as cinematographer and composer remain significantly male-dominated. This suggests the existence of structural barriers and cumulative disadvantage for women professionals in the industry. Taken together, these policy frameworks and statistical findings reveal how the European audiovisual field both measures and defines progress through women's quantitative representation. In doing so, they illustrate that the dominant, "official" understanding of gender within the European audiovisual industry equates gender equality with women's representation, reinforcing a binary and women-centred interpretation of inclusivity in gender.

2.3 Expanding frame beyond the binary: from "gender equality" to "gender diversity"

Institutional progress toward addressing gender imbalance is significant. However, a narrow operationalisation of "gender" is also revealed, one that equates equality primarily with women's participation and parity metrics. Such frameworks risk reproducing a binary and exclusionary understanding of gender by sidelining trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse professionals whose experiences remain largely invisible within existing data collection, policy design, and funding mechanisms. The emphasis on "women in film" has thus advanced representation for one group while leaving broader gender diversity under-theorised and under-supported.

Understanding the evolution and contemporary significance of queer theory as a framework is crucial for analysing how society constructs gender, sexuality, and bodily identities. The theory rejects the fixed male/female, heterosexual/homosexual dichotomies. Drawing on Judith Butler's (1987) concept of gender performativity, gender is explained as performative, fluid, and historically contingent rather than

biologically determined (Li, 2024). Queer theory emphasises the fluidity and disruption of dominant gender and sexuality norms, informing media analysis through queer reading practices, representations, and production modes that challenge heteronormativity (Pramaggiore, 2013). By extending queer theoretical principles into media scholarship, researchers can interrogate how media forms and audiences participate in constructing and contesting sexual and gender identities. Queer media studies is dynamic, intersectional, and continually “becoming.” It resists disciplinary rigidity, operating in “concert and tension” with feminist media studies. This synergy enables both fields to analyse how media represent, regulate, and reimagine sex, gender, and sexuality in complex, affective, and historically situated ways (Griffin, 2018). In this way, queer media studies functions as both a theoretical and methodological extension of queer theory, translating abstract notions of performativity and fluid identity into the material practices of media production and reception. The combination of queer theory and media studies reveals that queer identity is not just represented, it is performed and produced through editorial labour. Each publication decision shapes what queerness means in a given time, place, and activist community, making media a crucial site for understanding the lived practice of queer politics and inclusion (Rodgers, 2012). Thus, the convergence of queer theory and media studies provides a framework for examining how media institutions, texts, and audiences collectively perform queerness, reinforcing the view that identity is a continuous, negotiated process rather than a fixed category.

Extending representation beyond binary gender and sexuality requires situating queer media not only within identity politics but also within the broader infrastructures of production, distribution, and audience engagement that shape visibility in the digital era. Queer communication scholarship has become a lens for critiquing how media, policy, everyday talk and protest terrains normalise some lives and marginalise others, and how LGBTQ+ subjects mobilise communicative practices to re-invent those terrains (West, 2018). This perspective highlights that queer theory’s power lies in its ability to expose the everyday operations of normativity, tracing how inclusion discourses can simultaneously reproduce exclusionary logics. Streaming platforms have redefined the landscape of queer media through a paradox: increased

visibility coupled with intensified commodification. Queerness has become both a marketable identity and a site of negotiation between industry structures, algorithmic systems, and audience creativity (Monaghan, 2024). This duality captures the contemporary condition of queer representation, where platforms amplify queer content for market value, yet often flatten its political radicalism into consumable identity categories. Visibility, in this sense, becomes contingent upon platform logics: algorithmic curation, data-driven production, and the branding of diversity. Queer media research must merge identity-based empowerment with normative critique to achieve both visibility and transformation. This pragmatic queer approach ensures that representation does not simply normalise queerness within heteronormative systems but uses visibility as a platform for deeper cultural change. (De Ridder et al, 2011). This call for a “pragmatic queer” methodology (both critical and constructive) highlights the necessity of moving beyond mere inclusion metrics. It proposes that queer visibility should not culminate in assimilation but in the destabilisation of the very categories that sustain inequality. These perspectives illustrate a shift in queer media scholarship: from representation as an endpoint to representation as an arena of struggle, where industry practices, digital infrastructures, and audience participation continually renegotiate what queerness means, who it is for, and how it circulates. The aim, therefore, is not only to broaden representation beyond the gender binary but also to interrogate how media systems frame, commodify, or contest queerness in their pursuit of inclusion.

Studies show that while queer visibility in film and television has expanded, it remains uneven, stereotypical, and often incomplete. Accurate representation must go beyond token inclusion, emphasising multidimensional portrayals that reflect the diversity of queer life (Thomson, 2021). A more inclusive gender identity framework would require acknowledging this complexity: one that accounts for intersecting experiences of race, class, and embodiment rather than reducing queerness to a single visual trope. Recent audience research further reinforces the limitations of representational diversity in the European film landscape. A survey of international youth residing in the EU found that while participants expressed strong interest in European cinema and associated it with core European values such as

education, freedom, and gender equality, they perceived major gaps in racial and religious representation (Wahi et al., 2025). The findings also revealed that although young audiences appreciate the artistic and social realism of European films, they regard them as largely reflective of Western European experiences, with limited visibility for ethnic and cultural minorities.

Inclusion efforts alone cannot reinforce deeper cultural engagement. For instance, Brazilian advertising is slowly moving toward inclusive representation, portraying LGBTQIA+ people in realistic, non-stereotypical ways. However, this inclusion often serves branding goals rather than social transformation. Media visibility alone cannot dismantle prejudice; it must be combined with policy change and sustained activism (Souza, 2023). This case illustrates how “inclusion” without structural transformation risks instrumentalising queer identity for commercial gain. Therefore, a more comprehensive framework should integrate representational ethics with social accountability, ensuring that visibility translates into genuine cultural and institutional change. A cross-cultural content analysis of news headlines from Sweden, Italy, and the United Kingdom reveals that media portrayals of trans and gender diverse people are deeply intertwined with each nation’s sociocultural and legal environment (Bracco et al. 2024). For instance, Sweden and the UK exhibit more neutral and professional depictions, while Italy’s headlines remain polarised, often casting TGD people as victims or curiosities. The study demonstrates that news media both mirror and shape public acceptance of gender minorities across Europe. This is a classic case to see the importance of embedding representation within localised understandings of gender identity, as legal and linguistic structures shape how queerness is articulated. An inclusive framework must thus be context-sensitive, capable of addressing national and cultural variations in how gender diversity is framed and regulated. Non-binary young adult fiction functions as both a mirror and a map, reflecting current queer experiences while imagining future possibilities (Henderson, 2022). Through self-affirmation, narrative voice, and creative world-making, these stories expand what gender and identity can mean in youth literature and beyond. This literary evolution demonstrates that cultural production can envision inclusive futures before they are fully realised socially or politically.

Incorporating such imaginative approaches into media representation could help broaden conceptual boundaries of gender identity, moving beyond recognition to genuine transformation.

2.4 Theories of policy and representation

Policy, when viewed as both text and discourse, provides a crucial entry point for understanding how ideals such as diversity and inclusion acquire meaning, legitimacy, and market value in the media field. Rather than treating policy as a static document, a contextual analysis reveals it as a performative arena where cultural, political, and economic interests converge to define what counts as “equity” and “representation.” This performativity extends beyond governance into the expressive economies of media industries themselves. As diversity becomes a policy goal and a branding strategy, inclusion is not only legislated but also marketed, turning equity into a visible, consumable sign of institutional virtue. Concepts such as performative diversity and diversity branding thus illuminate how gestures of inclusion can reproduce the very hierarchies they claim to dismantle, especially when representation serves reputational or economic ends rather than structural transformation. These ideas fit squarely within media policy analysis, which must account for how discourses of fairness and representation are operationalised through funding, regulation, and industry self-promotion, often blurring the line between social commitment and strategic performance. To unpack how such dynamics unfold, the following section approaches policy as both text and discourse, examining how media governance constructs and circulates meanings of equality and diversity that extend far beyond the written word.

2.4.1 Contextual analysis of policy

The concept of policy can be seen as both text and discourse. Policies are not fixed directives but living social documents. As texts, policies are products of negotiation and compromise, open to multiple

interpretations by different actors depending on context and experience. As discourses, they constitute systems of meaning and power that shape how people think, speak, and act within institutions (Ball, 1993). This means that policies do not merely describe reality; they actively construct it. Each policy text embeds assumptions about who counts as a legitimate actor, what issues deserve attention, and which solutions are conceivable. In this sense, policymaking is not a neutral administrative act but a cultural and ideological one, producing the very categories it appears to regulate.

Equity is explored as one of the core values underpinning policymaking, showing that fairness is never a purely technical matter but a political and interpretive process. Rather than a fixed formula for distributing goods, equity depends on how societies define recipients, items, and rules of allocation. What counts as fair distribution changes across contexts, reflecting competing social visions of justice, need, and merit (Stone, 2012). This insight underscores that when institutions define equity (such as through gender parity metrics in the context of this thesis), they are not simply measuring fairness but enacting a particular vision of it. Policy definitions of “equity” therefore reveal whose perspectives are valued and whose experiences remain invisible, often reproducing dominant power structures under the guise of neutrality. Scholars suggest that policy analysis must move from fixing problems to interrogating problem constructions. Policies are not neutral responses but discursive acts that produce meanings, identities, and hierarchies. The WPR approach⁴ thus provides a powerful tool for uncovering how political language governs social life, and for imagining how alternative representations could lead to more inclusive, equitable policymaking (Bacchi, 2009). By analysing how policy documents frame certain issues as “problems,” scholars can expose how governance shapes social categories and hierarchies. For example, when European audiovisual policies define “gender balance” as the problem to be solved, they implicitly construct gender as a binary, measurable category, thereby reinforcing rather than challenging

⁴ Bacchi (2009) operationalises her framework through six guiding questions: 1)What is the problem represented to be in a given policy? 2)What presuppositions underlie this representation? 3)How has this representation come about? 4)What is left unproblematic; where are the silences? 5)What effects does this representation produce? 6)How and where is it produced, disseminated, and defended, and how might it be disrupted? These questions form both a critical analytic tool and a reflexive practice.

existing gender norms. In this way, policy texts do not simply respond to inequalities; they participate in producing the very frameworks through which inequality is understood.

In the field of media, EU policies have emphasised self-regulation and market freedom over binding equality measures. Legislation such as the Television Without Frontiers (1989) and Audiovisual Media Services (2007) Directives included only vague clauses about avoiding discrimination, which have never been enforced (Sarikakis & Nguyen, 2009). Efforts to address sexism, pornography, or stereotyping were repeatedly blocked by industry lobbying, invoking freedom of expression. This dynamic shows how governance operates through a delicate balance between market autonomy and social responsibility, where policy texts translate political and economic interests into normative frameworks that determine what kind of regulation is deemed legitimate or excessive. This tension exposes how economic and ideological interests shape the boundaries of what “gender equality” can mean within media governance. In practice, governance functions less as top-down control and more as a process of distributed authority involving states, industries, and supranational institutions. As such, “gender equality” becomes not only a policy goal but also a discursive construct negotiated among these actors, its meaning shifting according to institutional power and market logic.

Media policy in Europe cannot be understood purely as cultural regulation or purely as market regulation. Instead, it is a site of negotiation, compromise, and tension between competing logics (Sarikakis, 2012). Governance, therefore, serves as the framework through which these logics coexist and collide, embedding the ideals of diversity and equality within broader projects of economic integration and technological innovation. Through this lens, media policy is revealed as a form of governance that both manages and legitimises power relations, deciding whose voices are amplified, which inequalities are recognised, and what counts as progress in the European media landscape. For scholars of media governance and cultural policy, Sarikakis’s (2012) work sheds some light on the importance of examining how policy documents and regulatory regimes work: they define what counts as “media change,” whose interests matter, and what trade-offs are acceptable. In doing so, they act as instruments of governance

that not only regulate the media field but also shape its moral and political terrain, turning questions of representation and equity into matters of institutional negotiation rather than democratic transformation.

2.4.2 Diversity, but performative

For allyship to be genuine, it must involve costly action, engagement with power inequities, and accountability to marginalised communities, not simply visible gestures. This makes more sense after examining the phenomenon of performative allyship, where individuals or organisations publicly display support for marginalised groups (e.g., via social media posts, hashtags, filters) but without engaging in meaningful action that challenges underlying power structures (Kutlaca and Radke, 2022). A review of existing psychological research on intergroup relations and allyship by Kutlaca and Radke in 2022 identifies antecedents of performative allyship (such as identity signaling, reputational motives, low cost of engagement) and map out the consequences, which can be negative for both disadvantaged groups (by reinforcing representational rather than structural change) and for the allies themselves (in terms of moral licensing or backlash). They also consider potential positive dimensions but emphasise that without structural commitment, performative displays risk becoming counterproductive. Performative allyship undermines genuine equity work by prioritising optics over structural change (Keys-Kukoricza, 2023). It calls for developing new empirical measures to distinguish authentic from performative allyship and for fostering self-reflective, accountable engagement that addresses internal biases rather than relying on external validation.

In contemporary media environments, diversity can operate simultaneously as an ethical ideal and a marketable strategy, a paradox that links marketing research on diversity branding with cultural policy debates on representation. Research into diversity and inclusion in consumer and marketing domains has matured (with D&I emerging as a branding strategy); yet remains uneven: conceptual clarity, methodological rigour and structural focus are still lacking (Branca et al, 2024). For media studies and

policy work, this means that advocacy for gender and gender-diverse representation must engage not just who appears, but how media industries design, regulate, distribute and enable participation. Representation is thus not only a question of visibility, but of infrastructure, how inclusion becomes codified through funding criteria, distribution logics, or branding strategies that position “diversity” as both value and commodity. A systematic review of 39 peer-reviewed studies on diversity branding⁵ presents its “dark side”, which is concerning. When organisational practices fail to match the signals (so-called diversity washing), these messages lose credibility, producing identity threat, mistrust, and cynicism among underrepresented groups (De Meulenaere and De Boom, 2024). This inconsistency may even reduce sensitivity to discrimination within companies by creating an illusion of fairness. These evidences, when taken together, reveal that diversity branding (whether in corporate marketing or media production) functions as a double-edged discourse: it amplifies visibility while potentially neutralising its political edge. For queer and gender-diverse representation in particular, the challenge lies in distinguishing between representation as performance and representation as participation, that is, between symbolic gestures of inclusion and the structural empowerment of those whose identities are commodified.

2.5 Chapter summary: the unanswered question

This chapter has traced how European audiovisual policy is shaped by competing cultural, economic, and ideological logics. Section 2.1 outlined the main institutional actors and instruments (Creative Europe MEDIA, Eurimages, and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive) showing how they collectively aim to strengthen European cultural identity while ensuring market competitiveness. Section 2.2 examined the dominant “gender equality” discourse that underpins EU cultural governance, where progress is largely measured through women’s participation and parity metrics. While this framework has generated

⁵ A corporate communication strategy through which organizations signal their commitment to diversity and inclusion.

visibility and policy attention, Section 2.3 highlighted its limitations: the binary conceptualisation of gender excludes trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse identities and fails to address how inclusion operates within production infrastructures and industry practices. Section 2.4 extended this critique by positioning media policy within the broader field of governance, arguing that policy texts are not neutral; they work by defining what counts as fairness, representation, and change. Through theories of policy-as-discourse and concepts such as performative diversity and diversity branding, the section highlighted how inclusion often functions as a symbolic or reputational tool, where visibility is commodified rather than structurally embedded. These insights underscore that “diversity” in EU audiovisual policy cannot be fully understood without analysing the intersection between language, governance, and power.

However, despite a rich body of scholarship addressing the normative, ideological, and institutional dimensions of European media policy, no study to date has empirically linked the rhetorical construction of gender and diversity in policy discourse to the material distribution of funding across the European film sector. This thesis addresses that gap by integrating textual and quantitative approaches: it connects the lexical content (the rhetoric) of policy documents analysed in Phase 1 with the financial allocation patterns (the reality) of funding bodies such as Creative Europe MEDIA and Eurimages in Phase 2. In doing so, it contributes an original, mixed-methods analysis that empirically tests how the governance of representation translates (or merely translates) into the economic structures of European audiovisual production.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This thesis employs a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design to investigate the relationship between European audiovisual policy discourse and its material funding practices. The study is structured in two distinct phases:

1. Phase 1: A lexical and thematic analysis of EU policy documents to map the "rhetoric" of gender diversity.
2. Phase 2: A quantitative analysis of film funding data from Creative Europe MEDIA and Eurimages to measure the "reality" of financial support for LGBTQ+ narratives.

This design allows for a systematic comparison of policy discourse (Phase 1) with funding allocations (Phase 2) to identify and analyse the "policy-practice dissonance." All data processing and analysis for Phase 1 and Phase 2 were conducted in Python, and the visualisations for this project were conducted in R.

3.1 Why a mixed-methods, explanatory sequential approach?

The mixed-methods sequential explanatory design of this project is one of the core structures in mixed-methods research as articulated by Creswell et. al. (2018). In its classical form, the explanatory sequential approach involves two distinct phases: an initial quantitative stage followed by a qualitative stage that explains or elaborates on the quantitative results. The key principle of this design lies in its connecting logic, the results of one phase inform the data collection and interpretation of the next. Integration occurs at the point of connection and interpretation, allowing the researcher to build a coherent narrative across methodological boundaries. Although the directionality of this thesis is reversed (Phase 1 lexical–thematic → Phase 2 quantitative/funding), the underlying rationale remains the same: one dataset is used to explain, contextualise, and validate the findings of the other.

In Phase 1, a lexical–thematic analysis bridges quantitative and qualitative reasoning, beginning with a dictionary-based lexical frequency analysis to quantify how often specific gender-related terms appear in EU audiovisual policy texts, followed by a qualitative contextual interpretation of how these terms are used. This phase, therefore, operates at the intersection of quantitative measurement and qualitative meaning-making, allowing the discourse (“rhetoric”) to be empirically mapped as well as interpretively understood. This design is especially suited for investigating a policy–practice dissonance, where neither a single quantitative nor qualitative approach could yield a comprehensive picture. A solely quantitative funding analysis (Phase 2) would capture measurable outcomes but overlook the ideological and discursive frameworks that structure them; conversely, an isolated discourse analysis would reveal rhetorical intentions but not their material translation into funding decisions. The sequential mixed-methods approach therefore provides both breadth and depth, quantifying the visibility of gender diversity within policy language while testing whether such commitments are materially reflected in audiovisual funding practice.

The critical stance of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)⁶ inherently involves value judgments, but corpus methods provide a more systematic and falsifiable foundation. The ideal approach is a reflexive CDA, where researchers acknowledge their own positionality while employing large-scale, statistically grounded analyses to make credible claims about discourse bias (Baker, 2012). By supplementing interpretive reading with corpus-derived evidence (such as keyword frequencies, collocational patterns, and dispersion) researchers can identify recurrent linguistic tendencies that might otherwise escape manual scrutiny. This combination strengthens transparency, replicability, and scale, while still allowing space for critical interpretation of meaning and power. Scholars call for a hybrid field, Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS), where corpus methods enhance the explanatory power of discourse analysis (Partington, 2004). Partington's (2004) final metaphor invokes Virgil's line "*Iungentur iam grypes equis*" ("the griffins shall now mate with mares") to signify this productive methodological union. In CADS, corpus linguistics does not replace interpretive depth but anchors it in empirically observable linguistic patterns, enabling researchers to move from isolated textual readings to systematic examinations of how ideological meanings circulate across large datasets. For instance, this thesis's lexical analysis revealed a marked imbalance: the "Gender Balance" discourse was 21 times larger than the "Gender Identity" discourse. This provides clear empirical evidence of a rhetorical skew in EU audiovisual policy, where equality is framed primarily in binary terms rather than inclusive gender diversity. Hence, together, the reflexive empiricism from Baker and the hybrid synthesis from Partington provide a strong reason for applying corpus-assisted methods in this thesis, ensuring that the qualitative insights drawn from EU policy discourse are grounded in reproducible, quantitatively informed evidence.

The methodological design of Phase 2 follows established best practice in media content analysis, where robust content analysis requires a systematic balance between quantitative scale and qualitative interpretation. Purely automated approaches risk losing contextual nuance, while fully manual coding can

⁶ It conceptualises language as a form of social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) and emphasises the importance of analysing language within its social and situational context (Wodak, 2000c; Benke, 2000). It is particularly concerned with the ways in which language both reflects and reproduces relations of power. In contemporary usage, the term CDA generally refers to the critical linguistic tradition that views the broader discursive unit (the text) as the fundamental unit of communication. (Wodak et. al. 2001)

lack scalability and replicability (Macnamara, 2005). Building on this principle, the present study adopted a keyword-assisted manual verification protocol to code LGBTQ+ representation across 397 funded film projects. The automated keyword stage provided efficiency and comprehensive data coverage, while the manual verification stage ensured interpretive accuracy and contextual sensitivity, critical when assessing nuanced sociocultural constructs such as gender and sexuality. This hybrid procedure aligns with Macnamara's (2005) insistence that "the notion of completely automatic content analysis via computer is a chimaera... the human contribution is still paramount". Accordingly, automation was used as a tool rather than a substitute for human interpretation, enabling the study to capture both the scale of funding patterns and the depth of representational meaning.

Establishing reliability and validity was central to the design of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study. Following guidance for mixed-methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), both the quantitative and qualitative components were developed to ensure internal coherence between phases. Reliability was addressed through transparent, reproducible procedures and rigorous consistency testing. In Phase 1, the policy lexical analysis incorporated programmable corpus tools to minimise researcher bias and maintain procedural stability, while intra-coder reliability⁷ was statistically verified using Cohen's Kappa⁸, ensuring consistent interpretation across repeated codings. In Phase 2, quantitative reliability was ensured through systematic data cleaning, standardisation, and a reproducible analytical pipeline in Python, which safeguarded against computational errors.

Validity was established through both construct and internal strategies aligned with mixed-methods principles (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In line with recommendations for explanatory sequential designs, careful integration between phases ensured that the qualitative coding directly elaborated on the quantitative patterns, preserving the logical link between datasets and

⁷ Inter- and intracoder reliability refers to two processes related to the analysis of written materials. Inter-coder reliability involves at least two researchers' independently coding the materials, whereas intra-coder reliability refers to the consistent manner by which the researcher codes. (Hoonaard, 2008)

⁸ A measure of interrater (or intra-coder) agreement for categorical variables that accounts for chance agreement. Cohen describes how simple percentage agreement can overestimate reliability and proposes Kappa as a correction that yields a more accurate representation of consistency (Cohen, 1960).

preventing sample inconsistencies that could hamper interpretive accuracy. Furthermore, thematic codebook refinement, coder-drift checks, and contextual verification of results maximised measurement accuracy and interpretive validity. These procedures ensured that the findings are internally reliable, theoretically consistent, and validly capture how EU audiovisual policy discourse corresponds to actual funding practices.

This mixed-methods design integrates corpus-assisted discourse analysis with quantitative funding evaluation to ensure both analytical depth and empirical precision. The rigorous reliability and validity procedures, including statistical tests (Cohen's Kappa), stratified sampling⁹, and reproducible coding frameworks, confirm the internal consistency and interpretive robustness of both phases. Aligning the qualitative exploration of policy language with the quantitative measurement of financial allocations allows this methodological architecture to transcend the limits of single-method approaches. Ultimately, this specific combination of methods enables the thesis to bridge the critical gap between what policy says (the discourse) and what policy does (the funding), providing a holistic, data-driven answer to the overarching research question.

3.2 Phase 1: Policy lexical analysis (the rhetoric)

This phase was designed to answer the first research question: "How do key EU audiovisual policies textually frame and articulate 'gender diversity'?"

It details the corpus-assisted discourse analysis of 32 EU policy documents, following a rigorous, multi-step process to move from raw text to analysable, high-quality data. The process began with corpus collection and preparation (3.2.1), where all texts were extracted and cleaned. This was followed by a quantitative lexical analysis (3.2.2) to measure the raw frequency of three distinct keyword dictionaries

⁹ Stratified sampling is a probability sampling technique designed to ensure that all relevant subgroups within a population are adequately represented in the sample. Rather than drawing a purely random sample from the entire dataset, the population is divided into strata (mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive subgroups) based on specific characteristics (e.g., keyword type, demographic category, or funding source) (Lohr, 2010).

(Gender Balance, Gender Identity, and General Diversity), establishing the overall scale of the discourse. To understand the context of these keywords, a qualitative Keyword-in-Context (KWIC) analysis was performed (3.2.3), which, due to its large output, was systematically reduced using stratified random sampling to ensure a manageable and representative dataset. This sample was then manually coded using a detailed, two-dimensional codebook (3.2.4). Later, as detailed in (3.2.5), a rigorous intra-coder reliability process using Cohen's Kappa was implemented, which not only validated the high consistency of the coding but also guided the refinement of the final codebook.

3.2.1 Corpus collection and preparation

The policy corpus consisted of 32 key documents from four governing and research bodies: Creative Europe MEDIA, Eurimages, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), and the European Audiovisual Observatory. The analysis was conducted in a Python Colab environment by Google. The text from all PDF documents was extracted using the PyMuPDF (fitz) library. This raw text was compiled into a pandas DataFrame, creating a single, analysable corpus where the preprocessing procedure was conducted. This procedure included basic text cleaning such as tokenisation, stop word removal and normalisation of case.

3.2.2 Quantitative lexical analysis (frequency)

A dictionary-based lexical analysis was conducted to measure the focus of the policy discourse empirically. Three distinct keyword dictionaries were developed:

- List A - Gender Balance (“50/50”, “gender balance”, “gender equality”, “woman”/”women”, and “female”)

- List B - Gender Identity (“lgbt”, “queer”, “transgender”, “non-binary”, “non binary”, “gender identity”, “gender diverse”, “gender fluid”, “gender non-conforming”, “gender non conforming”, “lesbian”, “gay”, “bisexual”, and “sexual orientation”)
- List C - General Diversity (“diversity”, “inclusion”, “inclusivity”, “representation”, “underrepresented groups”, “equal opportunities”, “intersectionality”, and “intersectional”)

A Python script counted the frequency of all keywords from these lists across the entire corpus. This quantitative step established the *scale* of the discourse, revealing the relative prominence of "gender balance" versus "gender identity."

3.2.3 Qualitative contextual analysis (keyword in context, data sampling and reliability)

To understand the context in which these keywords were used, a Keyword-in-Context (KWIC) analysis was performed. This extracted every keyword and its surrounding text (the "context"). This process generated 5,278 total keyword entries. Given the large volume, manually coding all entries was not feasible. Therefore, a stratified random sampling method was employed. A 20% sample was drawn from each keyword group, with a guaranteed minimum of one entry for every keyword. This standard method ensured the final sample was both:

- Manageable: It reduced the dataset to a feasible size (approx. 1,049 entries).
- Representative: It guaranteed that low-frequency (but high-relevance) keywords from List B (e.g., transgender, bisexual) were included in the analysis.

This sampled dataset of KWIC entries was exported to a .csv file and manually coded based on a formal codebook and a strict protocol. Each row (each KWIC entry) was coded across two dimensions: Theme and Gender Focus (see Appendix D). A rigorous, multi-phase process was used to establish intra-coder reliability, ensuring the validity and consistency of the qualitative analysis. This process was designed not only to measure consistency but also to identify and correct for coder drift.¹⁰

¹⁰ the natural evolution of a coder's interpretation across a large dataset; a very common phenomenon in manual coding processes.

Phase 1: Preliminary reliability test and codebook refinement

An initial codebook was developed with 7 theme categories and 3 Gender Focus categories. A preliminary intra-coder reliability test (test-retest) was conducted on a 13% sample (n=136) of the data. This test revealed a high Kappa score for Gender Focus but a low score for Theme. A confusion matrix of the theme disagreements showed that the low score was almost entirely due to ambiguity between two codes: gap and broad. To resolve this ambiguity, the two codes were merged into a single category: gap/broad. This resulted in a final, 6-category theme codebook, which was used for the entire project.

Phase 2: Final intra-coder reliability test (T1 vs. T2)

A second, formal reliability test was conducted to validate the final codebook and the final re-coded dataset. A new stratified random sample of 136 entries (13% of the total dataset) was selected. Stratification ensured that both high-frequency (e.g., female) and all low-frequency keywords (e.g., transgender, non-binary) were included.

1. Coding (Time 1): This 136-entry sample was coded using the final codebook.
2. Washout Period: A two-week washout period was observed to prevent recall of specific coding decisions.
3. Re-Coding (Time 2): The 136-entry sample was re-coded from scratch, without reference to the "Time 1" results.
4. Calculation: The two sets of codes (Time 1 and Time 2) were compared using Cohen's Kappa (K).

[Table 3.1: T1 vs T2 Results]

Theme (T1 vs. T2) Kappa	0.8236
Gender (T1 vs. T2) Kappa	0.9265

Both scores fall into the "Almost Perfect" range of agreement ($K > 0.81$). This result proves that the final codebook rules are clear, unambiguous, and can be applied with a very high degree of consistency.

Phase 4: Final coder drift test (Masterfile vs. T1)

As a final verification, the codes from the Time 1 reliability sample ($n=136$) were compared against their corresponding entries in the final Masterfile ($n=1049$). This test confirms that no "coder drift" occurred during the final re-coding of the main dataset.

[Table 3.2: T1 vs Master File Results]

Theme (Master vs. T1) Kappa	0.8784
Gender (Master vs. T1) Kappa	0.9518

These "Almost Perfect" scores confirm that the coding applied to the 136-entry sample was the same as the coding applied to the entire 1,049-entry master file. This demonstrates high internal consistency and validates that the final dataset is free from coder drift. The final results of this coding were loaded into an R environment. dplyr and ggplot2 packages were used to generate frequency tables, percentage tables, and crosstabulations (e.g., "What proportion of 'Aspirational' language was 'General'?") to quantify the qualitative findings.

3.3 Phase 2: Quantitative funding analysis (the reality)

This phase was designed to answer the second research question: "To what extent do Creative Europe MEDIA and Eurimages financially support projects with explicit LGBTQ+ narratives?"

It directly measures the "reality" of funding allocations to answer the primary research question. To achieve this, a quantitative analysis of 397 funded projects from Creative Europe MEDIA and Eurimages was designed. This process began with the collection and preparation (3.2.1) of the foundational funding

data (e.g., project titles, amounts, and years). Because this data lacked descriptive content, a crucial data enrichment (3.2.2) step was performed, using a hybrid approach of automated API calls and manual searches to source plot descriptions for every project. With a complete dataset, the central coding for the LGBTQ_Focus variable (3.2.3) was conducted; this employed a two-stage "keyword-assisted manual verification" protocol to ensure high accuracy. Later, this fully coded and verified dataset was subjected to a statistical analysis (3.2.4) in Python to quantify funding patterns and test the study's core hypotheses.

3.3.1 Data collection and preparation

The dataset for this phase comprises 397 projects funded by Creative Europe MEDIA and Eurimages, with data collected for the period 2020-2023. The initial data collection involved gathering core project details (such as the Project Name, Funding Source, Amount, and Funding Year) directly from official funding reports and public databases on the organisations' websites. This foundational data then underwent a critical preprocessing stage in Python to ensure integrity and coherence for the subsequent quantitative analysis. This procedure involved several key tasks:

- **Standardising Formats:** Ensuring all Amount data was converted to a consistent numeric format (e.g., removing currency symbols or commas) and that all Funding Year entries were uniform.
- **Cleaning Categories:** Normalising categorical data, such as the Source column, to correct any minor variations in spelling or labels (e.g., "Creative Europe" vs. "Creative Europe MEDIA").
- **Text Normalisation:** Standardising project titles to a uniform case to aid in automated matching.

3.3.2 Data enrichment: Application Programming Interface (API) and manual methods

To obtain the descriptive plot information necessary for the LGBTQ_Focus coding, the dataset was "enriched" using a multi-step process. First, an automated Python script was developed to query the official Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) of The Movie Database (TMDB) and the Open

Movie Database (OMDb). This script used the Project Name from the dataset to fetch corresponding plot descriptions and keywords (e.g., TMDb_Plot, OMDb_Plot). However, this automated process encountered a significant methodological challenge: many projects failed to return a match. The primary reason for this was that project titles were often translated into English in the original funding documents, creating a title mismatch with the API databases, which typically use the film's original-language title. To resolve this data gap, a manual collection procedure was implemented for all remaining projects. This involved:

1. Manually searching for the project on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb).
2. Copying the official plot description and relevant keywords into the dataset.

This manual supplementation was a necessary and robust solution. While the IMDb API is a highly reliable source, it was not used for the initial automated pass due to resource and access limitations, making TMDb and OMDb the more feasible alternatives for a large-scale first pass. This two-pronged approach automated API querying followed by manual supplementation resulted in the final, complete analysis dataset. It ensured that every one of the 397 projects had at least one corresponding plot description, ready for the crucial coding phase.

3.3.3 Coding for LGBTQ_focus column

A central variable, LGBTQ_Focus, was created to identify projects with explicit LGBTQ+ narratives. The coding employed a robust, keyword-assisted manual verification protocol.

1. Step 1 (Automated Pass): A Python script first searched five plot and keyword columns for a predefined list of 15+ LGBTQ-related keywords (e.g., gay, lesbian, transgender, same-sex). This process flagged all potential candidates for "1".

2. Step 2 (Manual Verification): The researcher then manually reviewed 100% of all 397 projects to validate the script's findings. A formal codebook was used to make the final decision. A project was only coded 1 (Yes) if its plot description or list of keywords confirmed an explicit and significant LGBTQ+ character, plotline, or theme.
3. Step 3 (Finalisation): This two-step process ensured both the comprehensiveness of an automated search and the nuance of rigorous manual coding. It effectively eliminated false positives (e.g., "pride" used in a non-LGBTQ context) and confirmed all true positives.

3.3.4 Statistical analysis

The final, verified dataset was analysed in Python using the pandas and seaborn libraries. The analysis followed the four-part strategic framework:

1. "Big Picture" Link: Calculating the overall percentage of LGBTQ+ projects and their share of total funding.
2. "Funder-Specific" Link: Comparing the proportion of LGBTQ+ projects funded by Creative Europe vs. Eurimages.
3. "Temporal" Link: Plotting the percentage of LGBTQ+ projects funded per year to identify trends.
4. "Nuance" Link: Comparing the average funding amount for LGBTQ+ vs. non-LGBTQ+ projects.

3.4 Methodological integration

Findings from the Phase 1 crosstabulations (e.g., the focus on "general" or "women-centric" language in Aspirational and Resource themes) were systematically compared against the statistical results from Phase 2 (e.g., the small percentage of total funding for LGBTQ+ projects). This integration forms the basis of the "Discussion" chapter, where the policy-practice dissonance is analysed.

Chapter 4: Findings of Phase 1 (The Rhetoric)

This chapter presents the findings of the Phase 1 lexical and thematic analysis. It directly addresses the first research question: How do key EU audiovisual policies textually frame and articulate "gender diversity"?

The findings are presented in three sections, following the methodological process.

- Section 4.1 details the quantitative frequency of the core keyword dictionaries, revealing the overall scale and focus of the discourse.
- Section 4.2 presents the findings from the manual thematic coding, quantifying how the language functions (its themes) and who it references (its gender focus).
- Section 4.3 concludes with the central finding of this phase: a crosstabulation that connects the policy themes to their gender focus, revealing the "golden thread" of the policy rhetoric.

4.1 The Scale of Discourse: Keyword Frequency

The first analysis measured the raw frequency of the three keyword dictionaries (Gender Balance, Gender Identity, General Diversity) across the entire 32-document corpus. This establishes a quantitative baseline for the policy's focus.

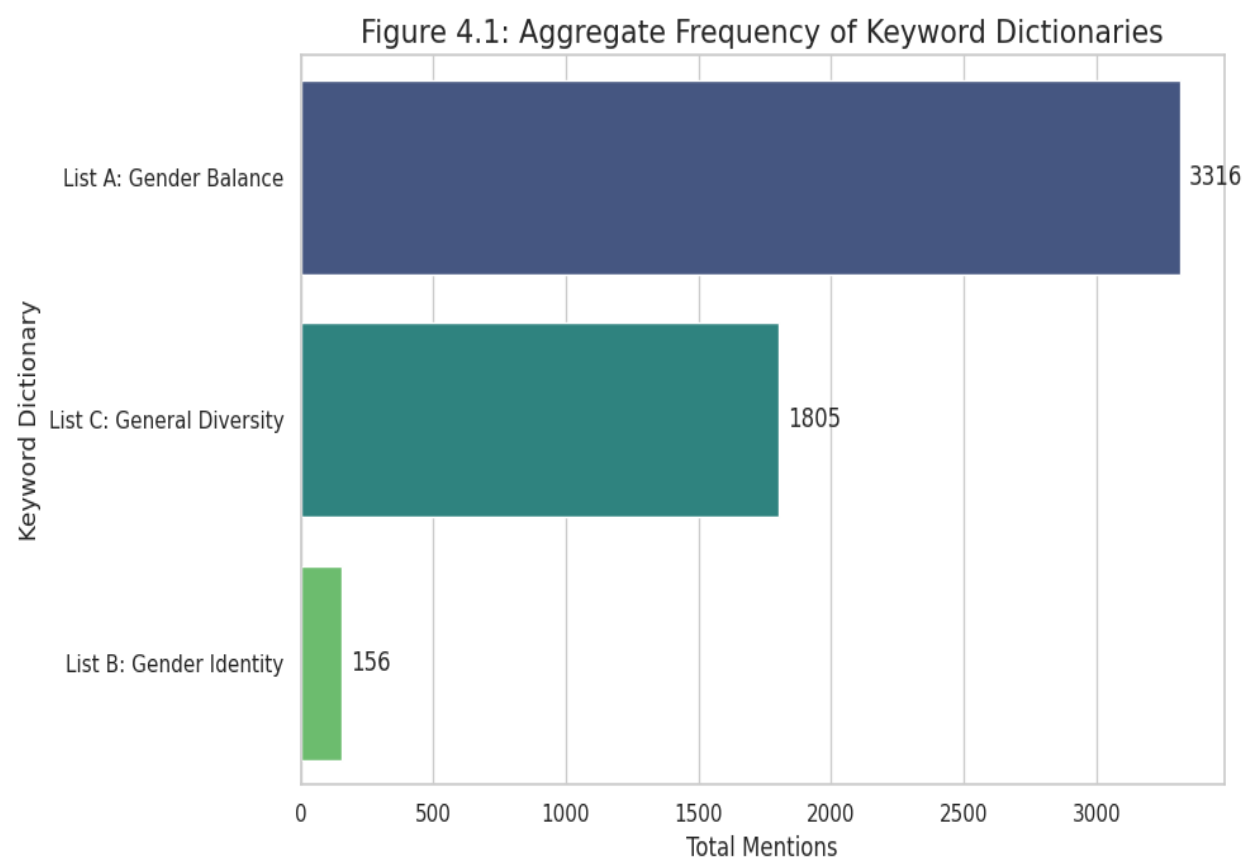
The results, shown in Table 4.1, reveal a stark contrast.

Keyword Dictionary	Total Mentions	% of Total
Gender Balance	3316	63.0%
Gender Diversity	1805	34.3%
Gender Identity	156	3.0%

Total	5277	100%
-------	------	------

[Table 4.1: Aggregate count for keyword dictionaries]

The "Gender Balance" dictionary (List A) was the dominant framework, accounting for 63% of all mentions. This discourse was 21 times larger than the "Gender Identity" discourse (List B), which accounted for only 3% of the total mentions. The term "female" alone (n=2284) appeared more frequently than all "Gender Identity" and "General Diversity" keywords combined. This finding demonstrates that, at a quantitative level, the policy discourse overwhelmingly frames "gender" in terms of "gender balance," primarily referencing women.

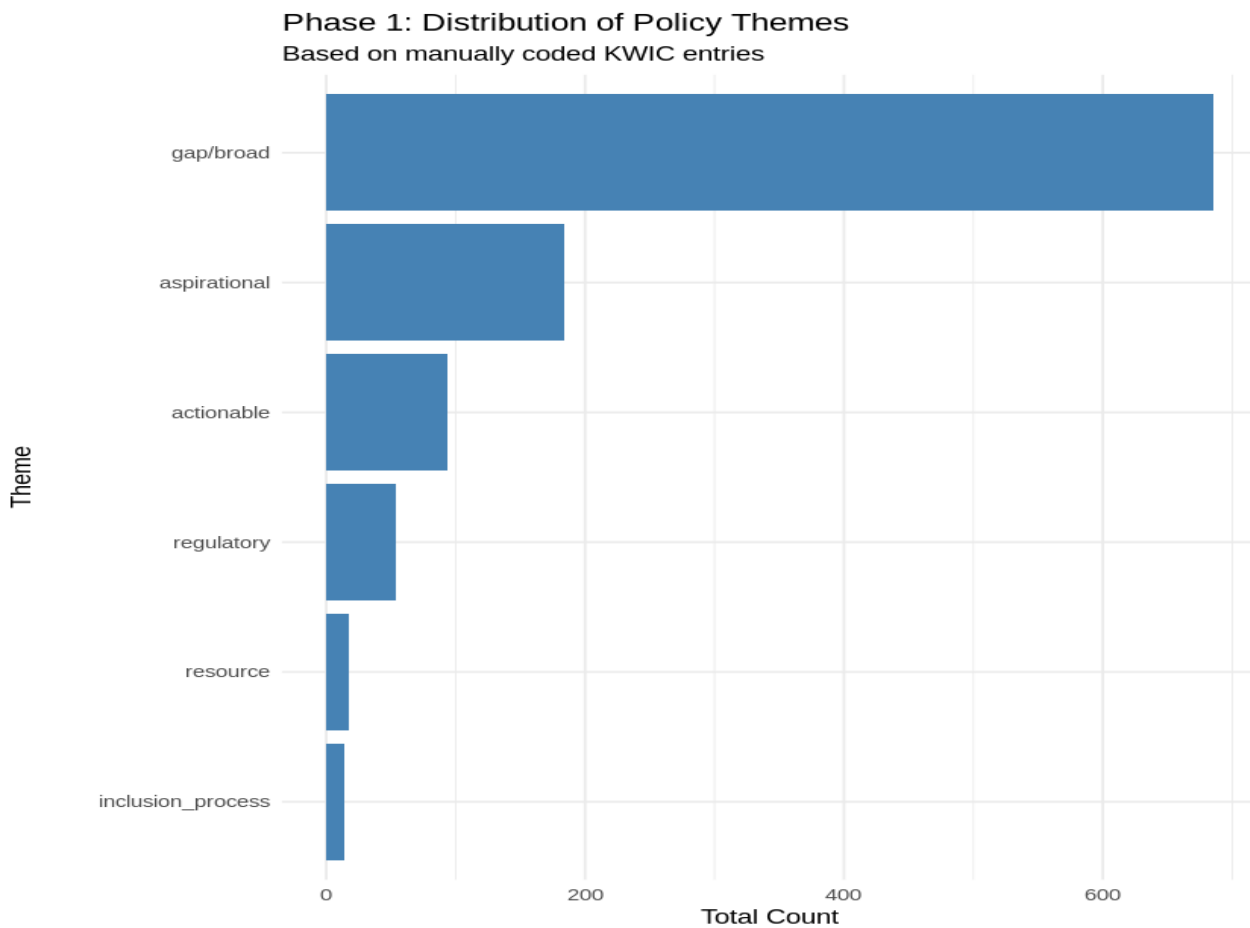


[Figure 4.1: Bar Chart of Keyword Dictionary Frequencies]

4.2 The Nature of Discourse: Thematic Analysis

While frequency reveals the scale, the manual coding of the 1,049-entry sample reveals the nature of the language. This analysis was broken into two parts: the overall distribution of themes and the overall distribution of gender focus.

1. The theme coding answered: "How is the policy language being used?" The distribution of the six theme categories (Figure 4.2) shows that "Gap/Broad" language was the most common, accounting for 65.30% all coded entries. This was followed by aspirational 17.50%, actionable 8.96%, and regulatory 5.15%. The least common themes were resource 1.72% and inclusion_process 1.33%.



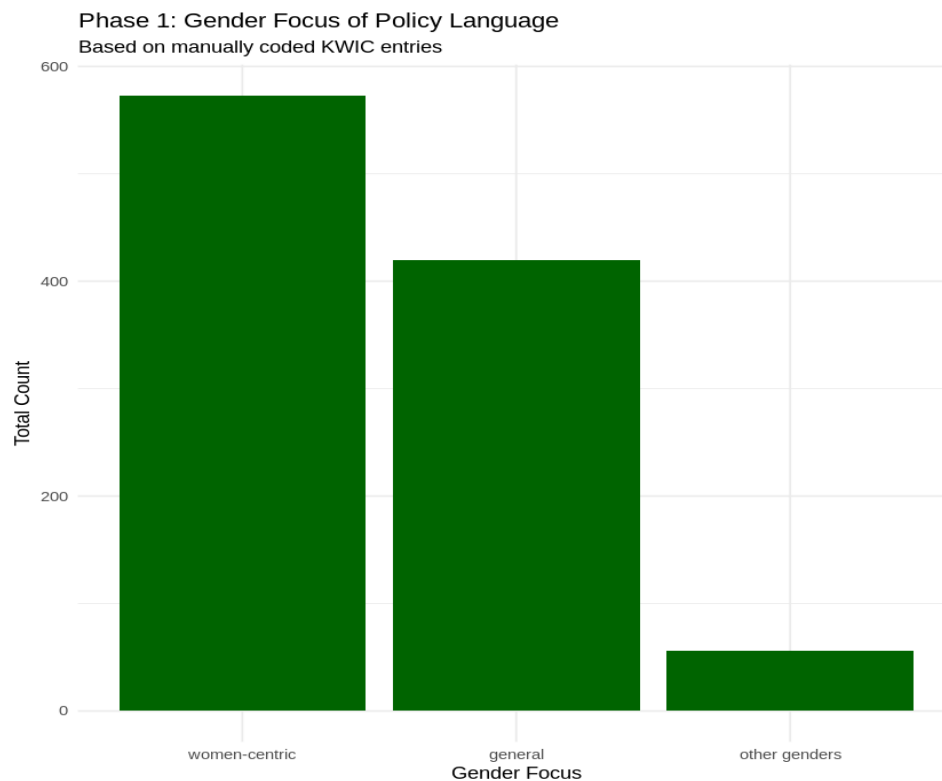
[Figure 4.2: Bar Chart of Overall Theme Distribution]

Theme	Total Count	% of Total Count
-------	-------------	------------------

Gap/Broad	685	65.30%
Aspirational	184	17.50%
Actionable	94	8.96%
Regulatory	54	5.15%
Resource	18	1.72%
Inclusion Process	14	1.33%

[Table 4.2: Frequency Table of Coded Themes]

2. The gender_focus coding answered: "Who is the policy language about?" The results (Figure 4.3) show that the discourse was split, with 54.6% coded as Women-Centric and 40% coded as General. Critically, only 5.3% of all coded entries were identified as Other Genders. This confirms that, even within the sampled text, language explicitly referencing LGBTQ+ identities was rare.



[Figure 4.3: Bar Chart of Overall Gender Focus]

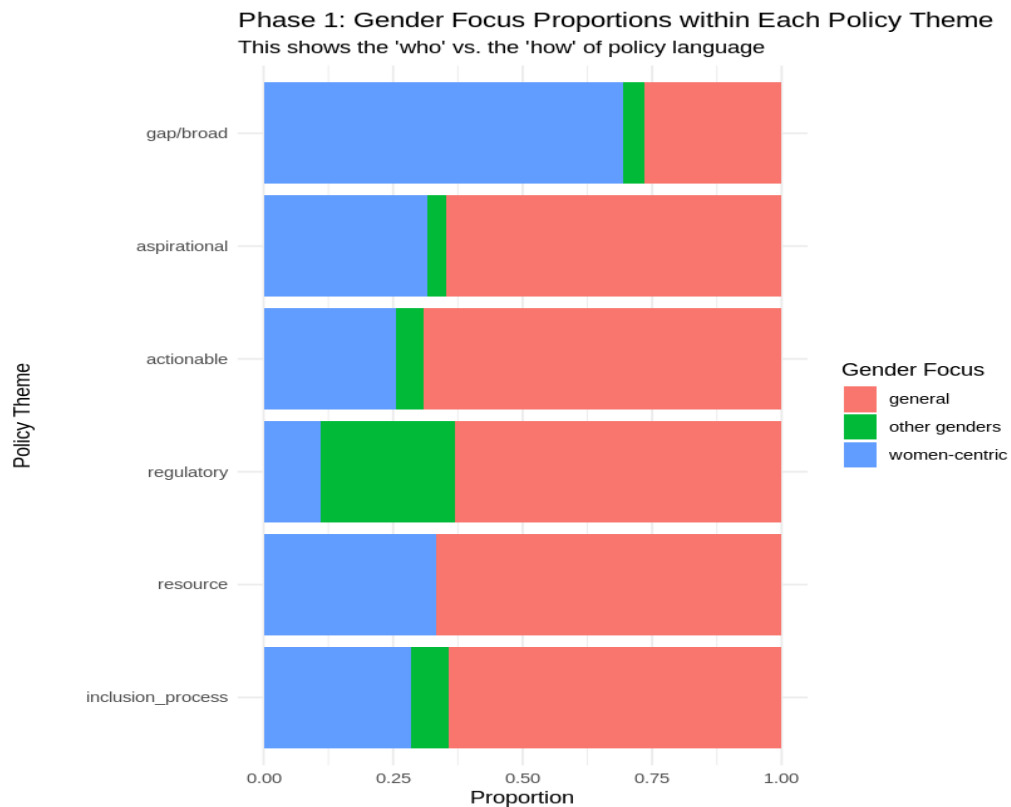
Gender Focus	Total Count	% of Total Count
--------------	-------------	------------------

Women-Centric	573	54.6%
General	420	40%
Other Genders	56	5.3%

[Table 4.3: Frequency Table of Coded Gender Focus]

4.3 The "Golden Thread": Connecting Theme and Gender Focus

The final and most critical finding of Phase 1 is the crosstabulation of theme and gender_focus. This analysis answers the question: "When the policy uses 'aspirational' or 'actionable' language, who is it about?" The results are presented in Table 4.4 and visualised in the 100% stacked bar chart in Figure 4.4.



[Figure 4.4: 100% Stacked Bar Chart of Gender Focus by Theme]

Theme	Gender Focus	Count (n)	Proportion
-------	--------------	-----------	------------

gap/broad	women-centric	475	0.69
gap/broad	general	181	0.26
gap/broad	other genders	29	0.04
aspirational	women-centric	58	0.31
aspirational	general	119	0.64
aspirational	other genders	7	0.03
actionable	women-centric	24	0.25
actionable	general	65	0.69
actionable	other genders	5	0.05
regulatory	women-centric	6	0.11
regulatory	general	34	0.63
regulatory	other genders	14	0.26
resource	women-centric	6	0.33
resource	general	12	0.67
resource	other genders	0	0.00
inclusion_process	women-centric	4	0.29
inclusion_process	general	9	0.64
inclusion_process	other genders	1	0.07

[Table 4.4: Crosstabulation of Proportions: Theme vs. Gender Focus]

This analysis reveals several key findings that directly inform the thesis:

1. Vague Language is the Norm: Aspirational and Actionable language was overwhelmingly coded as General (64% and 69.%, respectively). This indicates that even when policies make commitments, they are often non-specific about the target group.

2. "Gap/Broad" Focuses on Women: The gap/broad theme was the only one dominated by a specific group, with 69.3% of its language coded as Women-Centric. This suggests that when policies identify "gaps" or use broad diversity language, the implicit subject is women.
3. The "Resource" Omission: The most significant finding is in the resource theme. 0% of the language coded for "resource allocation" was found to have an Other Genders focus. The language of money was split between General (67%) and Women-Centric (33%).
4. The "Regulatory" Exception: In contrast, the regulatory theme showed the highest proportion of Other Genders language (26%). This suggests that legal or anti-discrimination frameworks are the primary context where specific LGBTQ+ identities are mentioned.

4.5 Summary of Phase 1 Findings

The findings from Phase 1 demonstrate that the "rhetoric" of EU audiovisual policy is characterised by a significant and multi-layered skew.

1. Quantitative Skew: At a quantitative level, the discourse is overwhelmingly dominated by "gender balance" over "gender identity." Keywords related to "Gender Balance" (63.0%) were 21 times more frequent than keywords for "Gender Identity" (3.0%).
2. Thematic Skew: The qualitative analysis of 1,049 entries reveals that the policy language is not geared toward action. The discourse is dominated by "Gap/Broad" (65.3%) language, while concrete themes like "Actionable" (8.9%) and, critically, "Resource" (1.7%) are rare.
3. Focus Skew: This discourse is primarily directed at "Women" (54.6%) or kept non-specific, coded as "General" (40%). Explicit focus on "Other Genders" (LGBTQ+) was minimal, at just 5.3% of the coded sample.

4. The "Resource Omission": The most critical finding emerged from the "golden thread" analysis, which showed that 0% of the language related to funding or "Resource" allocation explicitly mentioned "Other Genders". Instead, commitments (both "Actionable" and "Aspirational") were overwhelmingly kept "General" (69% and 64%, respectively), highlighting a pattern of non-specific rhetoric. The only theme with significant "Other Genders" focus was "Regulatory" (26%), suggesting inclusion is discussed primarily in a legalistic or anti-discrimination context rather than one of active support.

Having established this rhetorical baseline, one of quantitative imbalance, thematic vagueness, and a critical omission in funding language. Chapter 5 will now present the findings of the Phase 2 analysis to determine if this textual marginalisation is mirrored in the "reality" of financial allocations.

Chapter 5: Findings of Phase 2 (The Funding Reality)

This chapter presents the findings from the Phase 2 quantitative analysis of 397 funded projects. It directly addresses the second research question: “To what extent do Creative Europe MEDIA and Eurimages financially support projects with explicit LGBTQ+ narratives?”

The findings in this chapter represent the "reality" of financial allocations, providing a direct quantitative counterpoint to the "rhetoric" of the policy discourse analysed in Chapter 4. The data was collected, enriched, and coded according to the robust, manually-verified protocol detailed in the methodology (Section 3.2).

The findings are presented in four sections, each corresponding to a key analytical strategy:

- Section 5.1 details the "Big Picture" findings, quantifying the overall share of LGBTQ+ projects and funding.
- Section 5.2 provides a "Funder-Specific" analysis, comparing the proportional commitments of Creative Europe and Eurimages.
- Section 5.3 examines the "Temporal Link," tracking the proportion of LGBTQ+ funding over time.
- Section 5.4 investigates the "Nuance Link," analysing the average funding amounts allocated to LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ projects

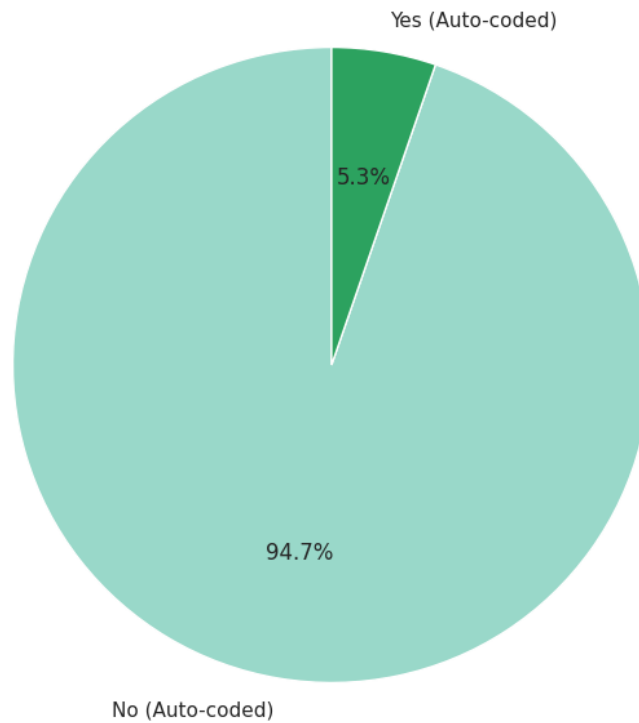
5.1 Strategy 1: The "Big Picture" Link

The initial analysis focused on establishing the headline figures for the entire dataset. This "Big Picture" view (Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1) quantifies the overall presence of LGBTQ-focused projects within the funding portfolios.

LGBTQ_Focus	Total Projects	% of Projects	Total Funding	% of Funding	Average Funding
No	376	94.71%	98548141	95.12%	262096.12
Yes	21	5.29%	5058500	4.88%	240880.95

[Table 5.1: Overall Funding Summary]

Strategy 1: "Big Picture" - Percentage of All Funded Projects



[Figure 5.1: Percentage of All Funded Projects by Focus]

The findings are stark. Of the 397 verified projects:

- 21 projects (5.29%) were identified as having an explicit LGBTQ_Focus.
- 376 projects (94.71%) were coded as non-LGBTQ+

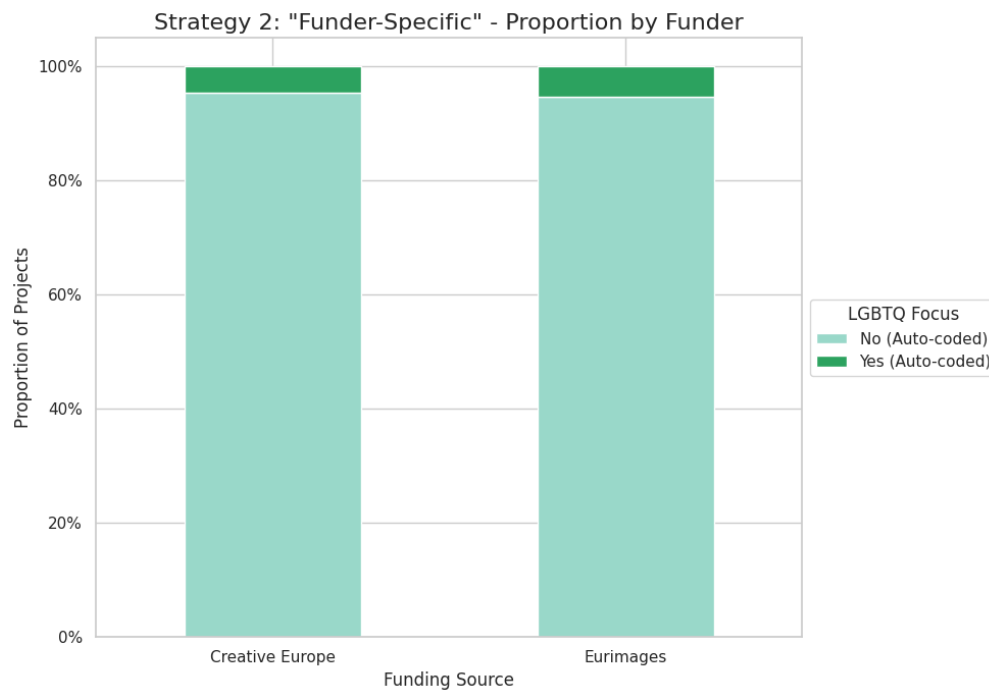
This result provides the first quantitative evidence of the policy-practice gap. The 5.29% share of projects mirrors the 3.0% share of "Gender Identity" keywords found in the Phase 1 analysis, confirming that the textual marginalisation of LGBTQ+ identities is directly reflected in the financial portfolio.

5.2 Strategy 2: The "Funder-Specific" Link

The second strategy investigated whether a difference in commitment exists between the two funding bodies. The analysed data was disaggregated by Source (Creative Europe vs. Eurimages) to compare their respective proportions of funded LGBTQ+ projects.

Source	Total Projects (No)	Total Projects (Yes)	Proportion % (No)	Proportion % (Yes)
Creative Europe	21	1	95.45%	4.55%
Eurimages	355	20	94.67%	5.33%

[Table 5.2: Funder Comparison]



[Figure 5.2: Proportion of LGBTQ+ Focus by Funder]

The analysis reveals a notable disparity between the two institutions:

- For Creative Europe MEDIA, 4.55% of its funded projects were LGBTQ-focused.
- For Eurimages, 5.33% of its funded projects were LGBTQ-focused.

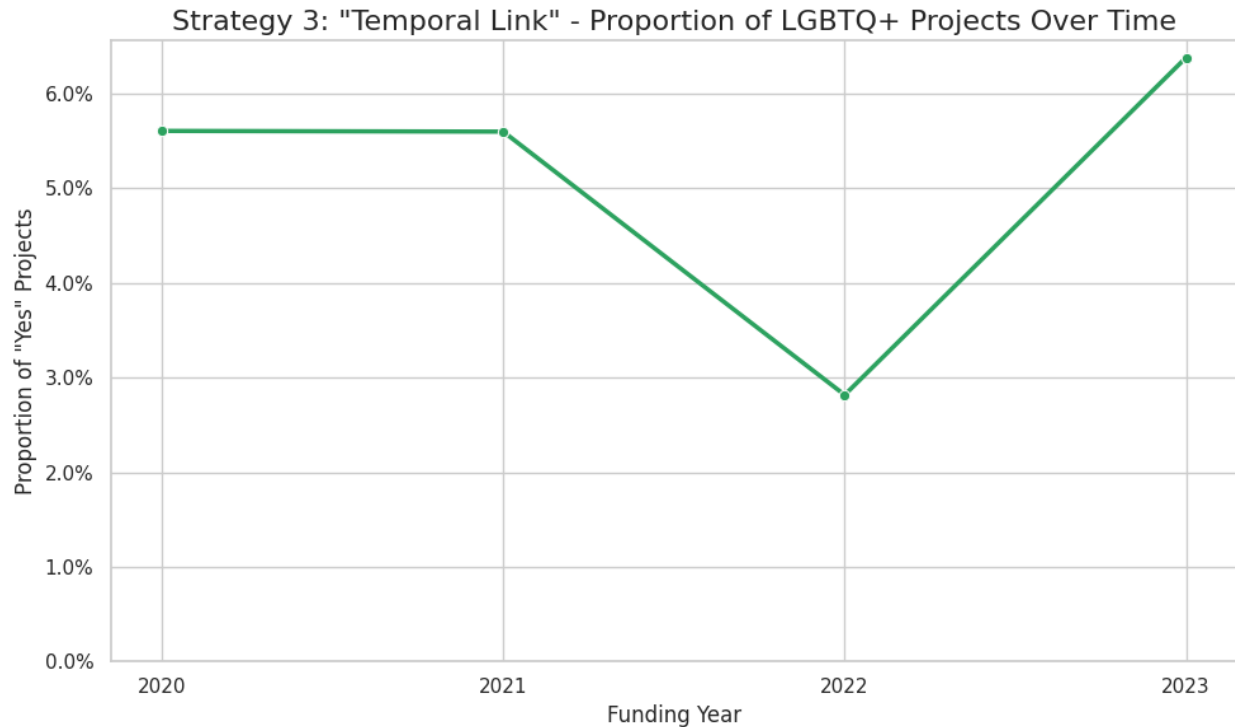
This finding indicates that Creative Europe MEDIA, in this sample, has a proportionally higher commitment to funding LGBTQ+ narratives than Eurimages. This provides a crucial data point for the discussion in Chapter 6, which will compare this funding behavior to the specific policy rhetoric of each organisation.

5.3 Strategy 3: The "Temporal" Link

This analysis examined the proportion of LGBTQ-focused projects funded each year from 2020 to 2023. This strategy tests the "performative diversity" hypothesis: if policy rhetoric on diversity is increasing, is this reflected in a tangible increase in funding over time?

Funding Year	LGBTQ Focus	Total Projects	Proportion %
2020	No	101	94.39%
2020	Yes	6	5.61%
2021	No	118	94.40%
2021	Yes	7	5.60%
2022	No	69	97.18%
2022	Yes	2	2.82%
2023	No	88	93.62%
2023	Yes	6	6.38%

[Table 5.3: Trend for LGBTQ-Focused Projects by Year]

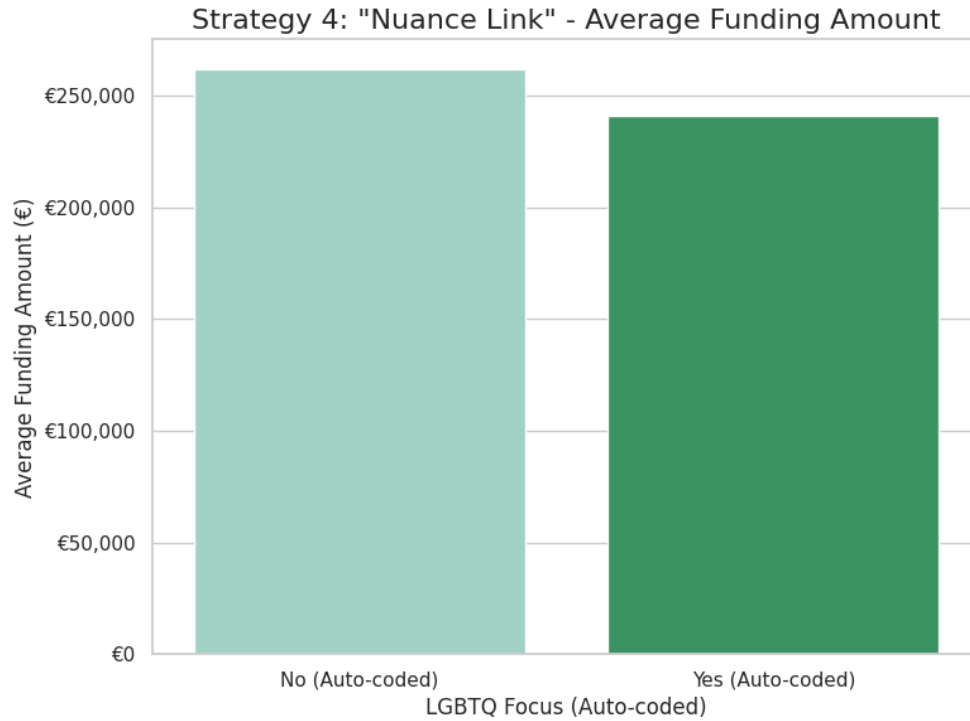


[Figure 5.3: Proportion of LGBTQ+ Funded Projects Over Time]

The trend line (Figure 5.3) shows that the proportion of LGBTQ-focused projects has fluctuated significantly over the four-year period. The proportion was 5.61% in 2020 and remained static at 5.60% in 2021. This was followed by a sharp decrease to 2.82% in 2022, before rebounding to a four-year high of 6.38% in 2023. This finding suggests that despite any potential increase in diversity discourse, there has not been a corresponding, stable, or clear-cut upward trend in the allocation of funding to LGBTQ+ projects. The support has been inconsistent and remained a small fraction of the portfolio in all four years.

5.4 Strategy 4: The "Nuance" Link

The final analysis investigated the average funding amount for each category. This reveals a counter-intuitive paradox that is central to the thesis.



[Figure 5.4: Average Funding Amount]

While LGBTQ-focused projects represent a small fraction of the total projects (Strategy 1), the data shows they also received a lower average funding amount:

- Average Funding (LGBTQ+): €240,881
- Average Funding (Non-LGBTQ+): €262,096

This finding that LGBTQ+ projects receive 8.1% less funding on average is crucial. It points to a form of "double marginalisation": these projects are not only selected less frequently but are also allocated less money on average when they are selected. This will be analysed in detail in Chapter 6. It suggests that the "aspirational" and "broad" policy language from Phase 1 fails to protect LGBTQ+ narratives from systemic underfunding, leading to both a quantitative marginalisation (low project count) and a financial one (lower average funding).

5.5 Summary of Phase 2 Findings

The findings from Phase 2 have provided clear, quantitative answers to the second research question. The analysis confirms that LGBTQ-focused projects constitute a small fraction of the total funding portfolio, which directly mirrors the textual marginalisation of "Gender Identity" keywords found in the Phase 1 analysis.

The data reveals several critical findings:

1. Marginalisation (Strategy 1): LGBTQ-focused projects are a quantitative minority, making up only 5.29% of all funded projects.
2. Disparity (Strategy 2): A clear disparity in commitment exists between the two funders, with Creative Europe MEDIA funding a proportionally lower share of LGBTQ+ projects than Eurimages.
3. Instability (Strategy 3): There is no evidence of stable, upward growth. The funding trend is highly fluctuating and inconsistent, having dropped as low as 2.82% in 2022 and rising to 6.38% in 2023.

Most critically, the analysis of average funding amounts (Strategy 4) has identified a "double marginalisation." The data shows that LGBTQ+ projects are not only funded less frequently, but they also receive 8.1% less funding on average (€240,881) than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts (€262,096). Having now established this quantitative "reality" of financial allocation, the thesis will, in the following chapter, synthesise these findings with the policy "rhetoric" from Chapter 4 to discuss the "why" behind this policy-practice dissonance.

Chapter 6: Interpretation beyond the data

This discussion begins by returning to the three research questions that structured the thesis's sequential explanatory design. The first asked: How do key EU audiovisual policies (particularly Creative Europe MEDIA, Eurimages, and the binding legislative framework of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD)) textually frame and articulate "gender diversity"? This was addressed through the corpus-assisted discourse analysis of 32 policy documents in Phase 1. The second question asked: To what extent do these two funding bodies financially support projects with explicit LGBTQ+ narratives? This was examined through the quantitative analysis of 397 funded projects from 2020 to 2023 in Phase 2. The third question then brought these two strands together: What relationship, or dissonance, exists between the policy rhetoric of gender diversity and the concrete funding realities for LGBTQ+ projects? This final question guides the present chapter, which synthesises the findings of the two phases.

Together, the results of Phase 1 and Phase 2 provide a clear baseline for interpretation. Phase 1 shows us that EU audiovisual policy discourse overwhelmingly frames "gender diversity" through a women-centred "gender balance" vocabulary, with LGBTQ+ identities representing only a small fraction of all mentions and appearing primarily in vague, aspirational, or non-committal contexts. Critically, no resource-allocation language referenced LGBTQ+ identities. Phase 2 shows us a parallel pattern in funding outcomes: LGBTQ-focused projects constituted just 5.29% of all funded works, received no consistent growth in support over time, and were allocated 8.1% less funding on average than non-LGBTQ+ projects. These findings point toward a systematic pattern in which representational inclusion at the discursive level coexists with material underrepresentation in practice.

The remainder of this chapter interrogates this relationship directly. By analysing the alignment and, more importantly, the dissonance between policy rhetoric and funding reality, the discussion examines how EU audiovisual governance constructs, performs, and operationalises "gender diversity," and what these empirical patterns reveal about the limits of inclusion within the current cultural policy regime.

6.1 How policy constructs “gender”: A binary, men/women-centred logic

The findings of Phase 1 must first be interpreted in light of the broader scholarly debates on how policy constructs and governs social categories. Across EU audiovisual governance, “gender diversity” is predominantly articulated through a women-centred framework, aligning closely with the discourse identified in the European Audiovisual Observatory’s statistical analyses. The EAO (2024) reports that women comprise only 24% of Europe’s audiovisual production workforce, and this persistent disparity has shaped policy attention around a binary understanding of gender, largely equating “gender equality” with increasing women’s participation. This framing is reflected clearly in the present corpus: 63% of all gender-related keywords were associated with “Gender Balance,” a vocabulary overwhelmingly centred on women and balance, and this discourse was twenty-one times more prominent than references to “Gender Identity.”

Such policy discourse does not merely mirror sector inequalities; it actively participates in the governance of identity. Sarikakis and Chakravartty (2006) argue that media and cultural policy operate at the intersection of symbolic power, democratic accountability, and cultural representation. In this view, policies do more than describe social realities; they construct categories, signal priorities, and define whose identities warrant institutional recognition. The Phase 1 results shed light on this process: only 5.3% of the coded sample referenced LGBTQ+ identities, and most of these appeared within vague or non-committal “Gap/Broad” language, constituting 65.3% of all coded themes across the three gender categories. This pattern suggests that while women’s underrepresentation is articulated as a measurable governance issue, LGBTQ+ identities are relegated to the margins of policy discourse.

This asymmetry is consistent with Stone’s (2012) argument that equity is not a technical formula but a politically contingent construction. What counts as “fair” distribution depends on which groups are defined as legitimate recipients of policy attention. In the case of EU audiovisual policy, the dominance of

women-centred parity language indicates that policy constructs gender primarily as a binary governance target, with inclusion operationalised through numerical balance rather than through broader conceptualisations of gender diversity. LGBTQ+ identities, by contrast, are rendered less governable because they may not fit easily within the metric-driven logic of gender equality, and thus receive little explicit acknowledgement.

“What’s the Problem Represented to Be?” (Bacchi, 2009) framework provides a powerful lens through which to understand this pattern. Policies are not neutral responses to pre-defined social problems; they are discursive acts that produce problems through selective framing, silences, and presuppositions. Applying this approach to the present corpus reveals that EU audiovisual policy implicitly represents “gender inequality” as a problem of women’s underrepresentation. This problematisation carries several presuppositions: that gender is binary, that inclusion can be measured numerically, and that parity is the primary pathway to equity. The silences in this representation are equally significant: the near-absence of LGBTQ+ terminology, the absence of resource commitments linked to queer identities, and the lack of specificity in aspirational or generalised references to “diversity.” These omissions indicate that queer identities are not constructed as a central governance concern within EU audiovisual policy.

In effect, by defining the problem of gender inequality as a question of women’s participation, EU audiovisual policy constructs gender as measurable, binary, depoliticised, and heteronormative by omission. This construction anchors institutional attention to parity metrics while limiting the conceptual space for queer identities within the policy landscape. The following section evaluates how this rhetorical construction intersects with patterns of material support, revealing the broader implications of this women-centred and binary policy logic.

6.2 A hint of performative diversity and diversity branding in EU policy?

The Phase 1 findings show us broader concerns raised in scholarship on performative diversity, the gap between symbolic inclusion and substantive structural action. Psychological research on allyship has shown that institutions often signal support for marginalised groups through visible gestures, reputational messaging, or low-cost commitments, rather than through meaningful structural engagement (Kutlaca & Radke, 2022). Such performative allyship is typically driven by identity signalling and reputational motives, enabling organisations to project an image of inclusivity while avoiding the material redistribution of power or resources. This dynamic risks reinforcing representational rather than structural change, generating moral licensing and even backlash that ultimately harms the very groups these messages purport to support.

The EU audiovisual policy corpus reflects many of these dynamics. Across the coded sample, aspirational language (17.5%) was far more prevalent than actionable commitments (8.96%), and nearly all aspirational and actionable references were classified as General rather than group-specific: 64% of aspirational language and 69% of actionable language referenced no specific gender group. Women-centred language appeared occasionally (e.g., 31% of aspirational, 25% of actionable), while explicit references to LGBTQ+ identities remained extremely rare (3% of aspirational, 5% of actionable). Most tellingly, the resource category (the clearest indicator of structural commitment) accounted for only 1.72% of all entries, none of which referenced the Other Genders category. This distribution reveals a discursive environment dominated by symbolic commitments rather than material support.

These patterns resonate with Keys-Kukoricza's (2023) critique that performative allyship prioritises optics over substance, creating an institutional appearance of equity while not undertaking the structural work necessary for genuine inclusion. EU audiovisual policy invokes diversity as a normative ideal, but the extremely low presence of resource-based commitments indicates that this rhetoric does not translate into concrete institutional action. The findings therefore reflect a classic case of what De Meulenaere and De Boom (2024) term diversity washing, whereby organisations disseminate progressive messaging without aligning their internal structures or resource allocations with those values. Diversity washing not only

undermines trust but also creates an illusion of fairness that reduces institutional sensitivity to discrimination, masking inequities rather than addressing them. The thematic patterns identified here also align with Branca et al.'s (2024) work where diversity and inclusion is increasingly emerging as a marketing strategy in organisational and policy communications. In this framing, diversity functions as an external signal of legitimacy rather than as a substantive governance priority. The prevalence of broad, non-specific diversity language in the corpus (particularly within the dominant Gap/Broad category) suggests that diversity operates discursively as a representational marker of institutional modernity rather than as a commitment that mobilises concrete policy mechanisms.

Interestingly, the near-absence of LGBTQ+ references within resource, actionable, and even aspirational categories connects directly to Monaghan's (2024) analysis of queer visibility as a site of commodification. Just as streaming platforms can profit from queer visibility without altering underlying structures, EU audiovisual policy can publicise commitments to diversity without allocating power, funding, or meaningful space to queer identities. Within the policy documents analysed, LGBTQ+ identities appear predominantly in regulatory contexts (where they account for 26% of mentions), that is, in legalistic, rights-based frameworks rather than in spaces tied to strategic investment or programmatic support. With these findings we observe that EU audiovisual policy performs diversity discursively while largely avoiding the structural commitments required for transformative inclusion. The representational prominence of diversity rhetoric, combined with the scarcity of resource-linked or actionable references to LGBTQ+ identities, reflects a broader governance pattern in which diversity is invoked as value-signalling rather than operationalised as a material priority. The following section examines how this performative orientation is mirrored in the funding realities of Creative Europe MEDIA and Eurimages.

6.3 Funding as the “reality check”: Material marginalisation of the LGBTQ+ projects

The Phase 2 findings provide the material counterpart to the rhetorical patterns identified in Phase 1, offering a “reality check” on how diversity commitments translate into actual resource distribution. Governance scholarship emphasises that media policy functions as a site where competing logics (economic integration, cultural identity, technological change, and social justice) are negotiated rather than reconciled (Sarikakis, 2012). From this perspective, funding becomes a crucial arena through which institutions decide whose narratives are worth investing in, what types of representation align with broader policy objectives, and which groups gain entry into the symbolic and economic structures of audiovisual production. Funding allocations therefore serve as a powerful indicator of governance priorities, revealing not only what the sector aspires to support, but what it actually sustains.

The empirical results of Phase 2 show that LGBTQ+ narratives occupy a marginal position within this governance landscape. Across 397 funded projects, only 5.29% were identified as having an explicit LGBTQ+ focus. This mirrors the similarly low 3% share of “Gender Identity” keywords in policy documents, demonstrating continuity between discursive marginalisation and financial marginalisation. Furthermore, the average funding amount for LGBTQ+ projects noted a difference of 8.1%, indicating that even when these projects are selected, they receive less financial support on average. These patterns reveal a structural hierarchy of representational value: LGBTQ+ narratives are not only underrepresented but also underfunded.

Understanding this disparity requires recognising the structural constraints of the European audiovisual funding ecosystem. Mechanisms like Eurimages play a crucial role in counteracting Europe’s fragmented media markets, limited national audience bases, and dispersed financing capacities (Romero-González and Palma-Martos, 2019). However, such mechanisms can also be shaped by risk aversion and market considerations. The lower average funding for LGBTQ+ projects identified in this study aligns with these structural realities: queer narratives (being less commercially assured) may discourage funders from allocating larger budgets despite rhetorical commitments to diversity.

Recent work on the European animation landscape reinforces this point. Wahi et al. (2025) show that although stakeholders consistently articulate the importance of inclusion and equality, these ideals are systematically undermined by uneven access to capital, fragmented IP management, and limited monetisation opportunities in digital markets. The disconnect between diversity rhetoric and practice identified in their study is mirrored almost precisely in the findings of this thesis: institutional commitments to diversity rarely disrupt entrenched funding patterns, and systemic obstacles continue to shape which projects receive material support. The fluctuating year-by-year trend in LGBTQ+ project funding (rising, falling, and rising again rather than following a clear upward trajectory) further show that inclusivity is not embedded as a stable or strategic funding priority.

The comparison between the two funding bodies also how subtle governance differences. Creative Europe MEDIA allocated a slightly lower share (4.55%) of LGBTQ+ projects than Eurimages (5.33%), suggesting that, within the dataset analysed, Eurimages exhibited marginally greater openness to LGBTQ+ narratives. However, the difference is minimal, and both institutions demonstrate an overall pattern of marginal representation. In governance terms, this indicates that despite differences in mandate, membership, and operational structure, neither body has integrated LGBTQ+ inclusion as a central funding priority. Diversity remains an articulated value rather than a material directive. This entire funding analysis phase confirms that commitments to inclusion are not matched by structural investment. LGBTQ+ narratives remain peripheral in both selection and budget allocation, reflecting the broader governance tensions. Competing policy goals (economic competitiveness, cohesion, innovation, and diversity) do not receive equal institutional weight (Sarikakis, 2012). When trade-offs occur, inclusion tends to be subordinated to market logics and institutional path dependencies. In this sense, the funding data provides a concrete manifestation of the performative orientation identified in the policy texts: diversity is acknowledged rhetorically but not operationalised through sustained or equitable financial support.

The funding outcomes analysed in Phase 2 mirror and reinforce the rhetorical marginalisation identified in Phase 1, resulting in a clear pattern of double marginalisation: LGBTQ+ identities are not well-included within policy discourse and financially under-supported within funding practice. This structural exclusion aligns with insights from queer media scholarship, which emphasises that representation alone cannot achieve transformative inclusion. De Ridder et al. (2011) argue for a “pragmatic queer” approach that merges identity-based empowerment with normative critique, ensuring that visibility does not simply assimilate queer narratives into existing heteronormative systems but instead becomes a platform for deeper cultural change. The underfunding and underrepresentation of LGBTQ+ projects in this dataset underscores precisely why such an approach is necessary: inclusion metrics are insufficient when the institutional conditions for meaningful cultural production remain structurally uneven.

6.4 Policy-practice dissonance: What this mixed-methods design reveals?

Bringing together the findings of Phase 1 and Phase 2 reveals a clear policy–practice dissonance at the core of EU audiovisual governance. The policy rhetoric analysed in Phase 1 constructs gender diversity through a women-centred, binary, and predominantly aspirational vocabulary. Much of this language is broad, non-specific, and oriented toward performative commitments rather than material action. In contrast, the funding reality examined in Phase 2 shows that LGBTQ+ projects remain both unevenly represented and structurally under-supported, receiving proportionally fewer selections and lower average budgets. These patterns show us a governance landscape in which diversity is articulated as a normative ideal but is not systematically operationalised through equitable distribution of institutional resources.

Ball’s (1993) conceptualisation of policy as both text and discourse helps shedding light on why this dissonance emerges. Policy documents are not neutral repositories of institutional intention; they are cultural artefacts shaped by negotiation, compromise, and the accumulation of institutional meaning. As

discourses, they structure the terms through which actors think about inclusion, marginalisation, and gender itself. The predominance of binary gender language and the scarcity of explicit LGBTQ+ references in Phase 1 show that the policy discourse defines “gender diversity” in a limited and exclusionary way. This discursive framing sets the boundaries of what is thinkable and actionable within the governance system, shaping how diversity is later enacted (or sidelined?) in funding decisions.

Stone’s (2012) account of equity as a politically contingent process further clarifies the mechanisms at work. Equity in policy is not simply a matter of allocating resources fairly; it is dependent on how institutions define whose needs count, what kinds of diversity deserve recognition, and which categories are legible within bureaucratic logics. In the corpus analysed, equity is implicitly constructed around women’s inclusion in measurable, parity-based terms. LGBTQ+ identities, by contrast, fall outside these legible governance metrics, appearing rarely in actionable or resource-linked contexts. The subsequent funding outcomes (where LGBTQ+ narratives constitute only 5.29% of funded projects and receive 8.1% lower average budgets) reflect these underlying definitions of whose representation is valued and prioritised. From a governance perspective, the dissonance between rhetoric and reality aligns with the argument that media policy is a site of negotiation among competing institutional logics, including cultural identity, economic competitiveness, market risk, and technological change (Sarikakis, 2012). Diversity and inclusion coexist with, but often lose out to, the pressures of market viability and institutional path dependency. LGBTQ+ narratives (frequently perceived as niche, risky, or non-mainstream) struggle to gain traction within funding regimes shaped by economic and political considerations. For example, Hungary’s “Propaganda Law” limits the “depiction or promotion” of homosexuality or gender diversity in media and educational materials aimed at minors. As a result, publishers, distributors, and broadcasters can incur penalties or risk license withdrawal for presenting same-sex storylines or even non-sexual LGBTQ+ portrayals (Amnesty International, 2024). The fluctuating year-by-year funding trend, with no clear upward trajectory, sheds light that queer inclusion is

not embedded as a stable governance priority but becomes contingent upon shifting institutional dynamics.

Synthesising these insights, the mixed-methods design of this thesis reveals a coherent structural pattern: EU audiovisual policy performs diversity “on-paper” but is not yet equipped to support queer inclusion materially. The rhetorical construction of diversity relies heavily on broad commitments and binary framing, while the funding mechanisms tasked with operationalising these commitments fail to translate the textual inclusion into substantive investment. Policy thus constructs inclusion at the level of discourse but the material structures of support remain limited, uneven, and constrained by competing governance imperatives. This policy–practice dissonance has implications that extend beyond representational fairness. It raises fundamental questions about who is permitted to shape Europe’s cultural future, whose stories are institutionally enabled, and how inclusivity is imagined within the broader project of European identity formation. The next section explores these implications in greater depth, examining the cultural and political significance of such persistent marginalisation.

6.5 Why it matters? For the sake of representation, governance, and cultural power of the EU

The patterns identified across the two phases of this study matter not only for questions of policy design or institutional practice, but for the broader cultural and political project of Europe. The European audiovisual sector holds significant soft power, operating as a key medium through which cultural values are communicated and political narratives are legitimised. Drawing on Nye’s (1990) conceptualisation of soft power, film and television emerged as the most effective instruments for shaping global perceptions and producing cultural meaning (Keune et al., 2017). Within the European context, this influence is amplified by the EU’s explicit ambition to position audiovisual culture as both an economic driver and a symbolic vehicle for articulating shared democratic and cultural ideals. As Sarikakis (2007) notes, EU media and cultural policy is central to the construction of European identity itself, serving as a normative

project that connects economic integration with democracy, cultural diversity, and social cohesion. Audiovisual media therefore operate as a site where “Europeanness” is narrated, contested, and imagined. The stories that receive institutional support (through policy rhetoric, funding priorities, and infrastructural investment) shape the representational boundaries of who belongs, whose experiences matter, and which identities are recognised as part of Europe’s cultural fabric. It is precisely for this reason that the findings of this study carry broader implications. When LGBTQ+ identities are largely absent from policy discourse and marginal within funding allocation, they are simultaneously excluded from the cultural narratives that define Europe. Policy’s binary framing of gender, reinforced by the negligible material support for LGBTQ+ projects, produces a representational landscape in which queer lives appear peripheral to the idea of Europe itself. Inclusion rhetoric without corresponding funding constitutes a form of stalled cultural transformation: visibility is gestured toward but not institutionally enabled.

This dynamic reveals a tension within the EU’s self-presentation as a champion of diversity and human rights. In practice, the commitments embedded in policy documents do not translate into sustained structural support for queer cultural production. As a result, the EU’s normative power, or its ability to promote values through attraction and example is weakened. Identity politics within the audiovisual sector become constrained by institutional path dependencies and binary governance logics, limiting Europe’s own cultural imagination and narrowing the possibilities for more expansive, queer-inclusive futures. The marginalisation of LGBTQ+ narratives is not only a question of representational fairness; it poses deeper questions about the kinds of identities and experiences that are permitted to shape Europe’s cultural identity and political legitimacy. If audiovisual policy and funding continue to reproduce binary and exclusionary understandings of gender, Europe risks narrating itself in ways that fail to capture the full diversity of its populations, weakening both its cultural vitality and its normative power on the global stage, which is a concerning matter.

6.6 Where this pilot falls short and where can the research go next?

This research as a pilot study provides an initial empirical foundation for examining the relationship between EU audiovisual policy rhetoric and the material support allocated to LGBTQ+ narratives. The mixed-methods design offers important insights into structural dissonances. However, like in the case of every one-of-its-kind research, the several limitations of this thesis must be acknowledged, each of which also suggests directions for future research.

First, the scope of the dataset necessarily constrains the conclusions that can be drawn. The policy analysis was based on 32 EU-level documents and the funding analysis on 397 projects from 2020–2023, a useful but limited sample that does not represent the full complexity of the European audiovisual ecosystem. The temporal window is similarly narrow, preventing assessment of longer-term trends or historical shifts in inclusivity. Moreover, the study focused exclusively on EU-level programmes (Creative Europe MEDIA, Eurimages, and the AVMSD) and did not include national, regional, or private-sector funding schemes that play significant roles in Europe’s film and media financing landscape.

Second, methodological constraints introduce additional limitations. The stratified random sampling of 20% of all Keyword-in-Context entries ensured representativeness (and, doability) for Phase 1, but necessarily reduces the granularity of the qualitative analysis. In Phase 2, the LGBTQ+ focus variable relied on project descriptions sourced through TMDb, OMDb, and IMDb. Although this hybrid automated–manual enrichment was pragmatic, film summaries can often be incomplete, promotional, or inconsistent across platforms, creating the possibility of misclassification based on description-level coding. Furthermore, the study treated LGBTQ+ representation as a single category, without distinguishing between identities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, or intersex. This reflects both data limitations and the pilot scope.

Third, this study analyses textual and financial data only; it does not consider external factors that shape funding decisions, including production budgets, genre, distribution potential, jury expertise, or

institutional risk assessments. Nor does it incorporate stakeholder perspectives from policymakers, fund managers, or filmmakers themselves. Such perspectives would provide deeper insight into how diversity objectives are interpreted, negotiated, or deprioritised within institutional settings.

These limitations say that while this pilot study demonstrates a structural dissonance between diversity rhetoric and material support, the findings are indicative rather than generalisable. Future research should expand the temporal and institutional scope, incorporate richer textual and content-based datasets, disaggregate LGBTQ+ categories, and include qualitative interviews with key stakeholders. A comprehensive, multi-country, multi-level analysis would allow for a more complete understanding of how inclusion is constructed, operationalised, and constrained across the European audiovisual sector. This study provides an initial roadmap for such work by identifying critical gaps, proposing a replicable methodology, and demonstrating the value of linking policy discourse to funding realities.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and pathways forward

The analyses presented in the last chapter show a structural dissonance between the EU's rhetorical commitments to gender diversity and the material realities of its funding practices. The policy discourse performs inclusion through broad, binary, and largely aspirational language that rarely names or engages LGBTQ+ identities in concrete terms. In contrast, the funding data reveal persistent material exclusion: LGBTQ+ projects constitute a small minority of funded works and receive lower average financial support. When assessed through the combined lens of policy discourse and funding allocation, the mixed-methods design exposes a governance pattern in which symbolic commitments are not matched by substantive investment. This disconnect between what policy says and what funding does forms the basis for the concluding chapter, which reflects on the broader cultural, political, and institutional recommendations of this structural gap.

The findings of this study indicate that meaningful progress toward LGBTQ+ inclusion within the European audiovisual ecosystem requires action at both the discursive and structural levels. Based on the patterns identified across policy rhetoric and funding allocations, several recommendations emerge for policymakers, Creative Europe MEDIA, Eurimages, and related cultural governance bodies.

1. Use Explicit and Precise Language on Gender Identity in Policy Frameworks.

The near-absence of LGBTQ+ terminology in policy documents suggests that queer identities remain linguistically marginal within EU audiovisual governance. To correct this, institutions should adopt explicit language that recognises gender identity alongside gender equality, moving beyond binary categorisations. Clear definitions, inclusive terminology, and explicit references to LGBTQ+ creators and narratives would strengthen both the visibility and legitimacy of queer inclusion within policy agendas.

2. Establish Dedicated Funding Targets or Minimum Thresholds for LGBTQ+ Narratives.

Given that LGBTQ+ projects currently represent only 5.29% of total funded works, funders should consider introducing targeted funding streams, minimum quotas, or thematic priorities to ensure systematic support for queer storytelling. These mechanisms could mirror existing gender parity initiatives while responding to the unique representational needs of LGBTQ+ communities. Dedicated funding targets would directly address the structural marginalisation revealed in this study.

3. Integrate LGBTQ+ Inclusion Metrics into Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks.

Current policy evaluation largely focuses on gender parity indicators, with limited attention to diversity beyond binary metrics. Expanding monitoring tools to track LGBTQ+ participation, across applicants, selected projects, funded outcomes, and institutional decision-making, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how inclusivity is operationalised.

4. Encourage Transparency in Funding Decisions and Jury Composition.

Greater transparency around jury selection, evaluative criteria, and funding rationales can help ensure that decision-making processes do not unintentionally reinforce heteronormative bias. Publishing anonymised evaluation summaries or including diversity-sensitive markers in assessment rubrics would promote accountability and signal genuine institutional commitment.

5. Support Capacity-Building and Development Initiatives for LGBTQ+ Creators.

Training initiatives, script development labs, mentorship programmes, and festival partnerships targeting LGBTQ+ filmmakers would expand the pool of viable projects and reduce perceived market risks. Strengthening the development pipeline can help mitigate the structural challenges that queer filmmakers face in accessing capital, networks, and international co-production opportunities.

6. Commission Further Research and Data Collection on LGBTQ+ Representation.

Institutions should invest in long-term research strategies, including audience studies, industry surveys, and content analyses, to better understand the barriers faced by LGBTQ+ creators. Robust evidence is essential for designing policies that move beyond symbolic commitments toward structural inclusion.

Implementing these measures can assist policymakers and funders to shift from aspirational statements to meaningful action, ensuring that diversity in the European audiovisual sector is not merely performed but institutionally realised.

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