

**The Language of the Maze: Analyzing the
language of the Greek and Spanish legal gender
recognition frameworks**

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1 Abstract

Legal gender recognition (LGR) laws mark a key point in how states define and regulate gender identity in Southern Europe. This thesis investigates the political dynamics and specific actors that influenced the legislative processes in Greece and Spain, aiming to identify the divergent pathways taken by these two nations. Unlike traditional qualitative assessments, this study uses a quantitative methodological framework using Natural Language Processing (NLP) to analyze the discourse of political parties, transgender advocacy groups, and opposition organizations.

The research utilizes a dual-metric approach: a fine-tuned sentiment analysis model to evaluate the political stance of the actors, and a semantic similarity index to quantify the proximity of their discourse to the finalized legal text. The comparison shows clear differences between the Greek and Spanish cases; specifically, the discourse surrounding the Spanish legislation exhibited significantly higher positive sentiment and semantic alignment with the final law compared to the Greek context. Furthermore, the data indicates that leftist political factions served as the primary parliamentary supporters, and that both transgender advocacy groups and anti-trans political actors demonstrated high semantic proximity to the enacted legislation in both countries. While this analysis cannot establish causal influence, the strong semantic alignment suggests that both pro- and anti-minority groups can influence minority rights legislation; therefore, the direct cooperation of affected communities and political parties is a crucial predictor of legislative alignment regarding the passage of minority rights legislation.

2 Introduction

The journey of a transgender person affirming their identity is a multifaceted process encompassing social, medical, and legal dimensions. While social transition involves changes in expression, such as name, pronouns, and attire, and medical transition may include hormone therapy or surgery, it is

the legal dimension that solidifies a person's gender in the eyes of the state. The ability to change one's legal name and gender marker is a crucial step, enabling an individual to navigate society and conduct official business with documents that reflect their true identity.

Globally, the landscape of LGR is deeply fractured. A significant number of countries, including Russia, China, and Hungary, along with the United States at a federal level, offer no formal path to such a change. Even among the nations that do permit it, disparate legal frameworks prevail, creating a crucial distinction between two primary non-medicalized approaches: the ascriptive model, where recognition is granted by an external authority like a court, and the elective model, based on an individual's declaration. While significant research has explored the impact of medical requirements, less attention has been paid to the procedural and philosophical differences between the ascriptive and elective models themselves. This study posits that the shift from ascriptive to elective systems marks a critical evolution in recognizing the autonomy of transgender individuals.

The distinction between ascriptive and elective frameworks carries profound implications for transgender individuals seeking legal recognition. Under an ascriptive model, the individual must petition an external authority, typically a court, to evaluate and ultimately grant the requested change, positioning the state as a gatekeeper whose approval must be earned. This framework, even when stripped of medical requirements, preserves a fundamental power asymmetry: the transgender person must justify their identity to an institution that retains discretionary authority to accept or reject their claim. The elective model, by contrast, reconceives LGR as an act of self-determination rather than institutional permission. By obligating the state to register an individual's declared gender without substantive review, this approach treats gender identity as a matter of personal knowledge to which the individual alone has privileged access. These structural differences shape not only the practical experience of seeking recognition, but also communicate distinct messages about the legitimacy of transgender identities and the proper relationship between citizen and state in matters of personal identity.

To investigate the drivers of this legislative divergence, this study presents a comparative anal-

ysis of the political landscapes in Greece and Spain. These two nations, while sharing a Southern European context, have adopted fundamentally different paths regarding LGR. Greece, through Law 4491/2017, exemplifies the ascriptive model; while it removed medical requirements, it retained a court-mandated procedure, reflecting a specific compromise among political actors. In stark contrast, Spain's Law 4/2023 embodies the elective model, allowing individuals to update their legal gender through a simple administrative declaration resulting from a distinct configuration of political pressure and advocacy. By examining these cases, this thesis seeks to identify the specific political actors that influenced these laws and to quantify the differences in their discursive strategies. Through this investigation, this paper aims to identify the divergent pathways taken by the political actors within the two nations.

The thesis proceeds as follows. Following this introduction, Chapter 3 reviews the existing literature on LGR and the political sociology of LGBTQ+ rights. Chapter 4 introduces the thesis' methodology, detailing the data collection process and the NLP techniques used to measure text similarity and sentiment. Chapters 5 and 6 provide the necessary context, detailing the socio-political background and the specific legal frameworks of Greece and Spain, respectively. Chapter 7 forms the core of the comparative analysis. Instead of relying solely on theoretical observation, this chapter presents the results of the computational analysis, mapping the stance of political parties, advocacy groups, and opposition forces to determine how closely their discourse aligned with the final legislation. Chapter 8 presents a discussion of the collective results, synthesizing the quantitative findings to explain why the Spanish and Greek political actors produced such divergent outcomes. Chapter 9 offers policy recommendations based on the efficacy of advocacy involvement observed in the data, chapter 10 provides potential avenues for further research, while Chapter 11 presents concluding remarks.

3 Literature Review

LGR refers to the procedure by which an individual can change their legal gender on official documents, such as passports and birth certificates, to match with the gender they identify with (Outright International, 2023). While many countries around the world do not legally recognize the gender identity of an individual, the countries that do grant this right are also marked by distinct models.

The first models of LGR included a number of medical pre-requisites that an individual needed to fulfill. The first such example is Germany's *Transsexuellengesetz*, written in 1980 and approved in 1981 (ILGA World Database). According to this law, the person requesting the change needed to be sterilized and to have performed gender-affirming surgery, in order to make their genitalia similar in appearance to the biological sex the person identifies with (*Transsexuellengesetz*, 1980). A similar example is shown in the UK's *Gender Recognition Act* (2004). While a gender-affirming surgery is not required, a person would need to be examined by a panel of medical professionals, be diagnosed with gender dysphoria, and have already lived as a person of the desired gender for the previous two years.

This procedure was considered the norm until 2012, when Argentina passed its own Gender Identity Law, which got rid of any and all medical requirements for a person to change their legal gender marker. In addition, the law suggests that, once the individual submits their application to change their legal gender marker, the authorities will proceed without any judicial or administrative procedure to approve the issuing of a new birth certificate with the new legal gender identity (Ley 26.743, 2012). This law set a precedent for a model of LGR based on self-identification, getting rid of the previous medicalized procedures.

However, there also exists a model, in which, while the individual is no longer obliged to present any evidence of a medical procedure or diagnosis, they still need to present in court for their legal gender to be recognized, potentially with other requirements in place. An example of such a law is present in France, where applicants are required to present sufficient evidence of the

mismatch between their assigned and self-identified gender identities, either by presenting as the desired gender, making sure that their parents or friends know about the mismatch, or whether the person had already adopted a name not matching the gender identity assigned at birth (ILGA World Database).

This variation in legal frameworks has been systemized by scholars. Osella and Rubio-Marín (2023) propose a comparative framework of four distinct models, distinguished by whether the process is based on self-determination or external ascription, and whether the process involves medical proof. Their analysis of laws and court cases provides a clear typology for understanding the global landscape of LGR, moving beyond simple dichotomies to capture the nuances of different state approaches. The fundamental distinction between these models often lies in the principle of self-determination, which Maciej Szydłowski (2016) argues is the vital foundation upon which LGR should be based. For Szydłowski, self-determination is not merely an ideological preference but a necessary precondition for transgender individuals to fully exercise their rights to health and healthcare. In particular, this thesis compares two non-medicalized frameworks, thus highlighting the strategic differences political parties use beyond centering on a perceived need for medical proof of one's transgender identity.

The importance of accessible LGR is underscored by research demonstrating the significant socioeconomic disparities faced by the transgender community. A study by Carpenter, Eppink, and Gonzales (2020) using survey data from the United States found that transgender status is directly associated with adverse outcomes, including lower rates of employment, reduced household incomes, and higher rates of poverty, even when controlling for other factors. LGR emerges as a critical tool to mitigate these disadvantages. Gamarel et al. (2023) show how legal gender affirmation can be particularly impactful for transgender women of color, who are overrepresented in the criminal-legal system. By reducing the discrimination they face in employment, housing, and education, legal recognition can improve economic opportunities and, in turn, lessen their involvement with the carceral state.

Beyond socioeconomic benefits, the impact of LGR on mental and physical health is profound. A survey of transgender individuals in Massachusetts and Rhode Island conducted by Restar et al. (2020) found a direct correlation between having an updated legal name and gender marker and improved mental health. Specifically, individuals with recognized identities reported lower levels of depression and anxiety and experienced fewer upsetting emotional responses to instances of gender-based mistreatment. This connects directly to Szydłowski's (2016) broader argument: when the state legally validates a person's identity through a self-determination-based process, it not only affirms their dignity but also dismantles a key barrier to accessing health services, thereby helping to establish and protect their fundamental right to health.

While much of the literature emphasizes the structural and legal implications of gender recognition, recent qualitative research highlights the equally critical social and informational dimensions of gender identity formation. Huttunen and Kortelainen (2021) show that transgender individuals rely heavily on meaningful information shared by peers when navigating their own transitions. Similarly, Herry et al. (2025) find that retrospective accounts of white American transgender adults reveal how social context, especially peer and community engagement, shapes the process of gender identity development. These findings suggest that access to affirming information networks functions as a form of informal recognition, reinforcing the argument that legal recognition and social validation operate in tandem to support well-being.

Despite the clear benefits and the existence of international legal precedents, the path to full equality remains fraught with challenges. Iina Sofia Korkiamäki (2014) highlights a critical gap between legal theory and practice within the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). While the European Convention of Human Rights contains articles that should protect the rights of transgender people, Korkiamäki finds that, in practice, equality considerations under Article 14 have often been neglected in court proceedings concerning private and family life. This demonstrates that even in regions with established human rights frameworks, the application of law can fail to provide adequate protection, leaving transgender individuals vulnerable despite theoretical safe-

guards.

Comparative perspectives from outside Europe also expose how structural and cultural barriers can undermine the promise of recognition. Human Rights Watch (2024) documents how Nepal's LGR process remains deeply medicalized and restrictive, requiring unnecessary procedures and often forcing individuals into a third-gender classification they do not identify with. Together, these studies reveal that even where rights frameworks exist, systemic rigidity and social hostility can hollow out the benefits of formal recognition.

In order for LGR to be legalized, it needs to be voted for by a country's parliament; hence, the study of political actions around the process is paramount. However, the public is particularly divided with regards to the issue across the European Union (European Commission, 2020, p. 124). Therefore, as Bräuninger and Giger (2018) show, political parties in the European Union are often incentivized to use ambiguity, as this strategy can attract a greater number of voters, especially when there are strong partisan lines in a country. Moreover, smaller parties tend to emphasize specific talking points, whereas larger parties demonstrate a larger use of ambiguity in their strategy to assemble a broad electoral basis (Rovny, 2012). Similarly, ideology can shape a party's use of ambiguity, with centrist parties showing more ambiguity in their political positions, compared to parties on either extreme of the political spectrum (Galindo-Silva, 2024).

Particular attention needs to be drawn to the role of opposition and smaller parties in influencing policy. On one hand, it is frequently assumed that, within the European context, opposition parties' activity has a preventative role (Bräuninger and Debus, 2009). However, smaller opposition parties may still submit their own suggestions for legislation in parliament, in order to signal the existence of an alternative to the current government's policies (Bräuninger and Debus, 2009). Moreover, in some cases, such an effort might prove successful; for instance, the right-wing opposition to Denmark's left-wing government of the 1990s resulted in the adoption of a harsher penal stance by the Danish government (Seeberg, 2013). This effect has also been observed across European parliaments, as the ideological position and previous electoral successes of mainstream parties may

result in varying levels of influence exerted by single-issue smaller parties, such as anti-immigration or green parties (Abou-Chadi, 2014).

The LGR process is also affected by the interest groups and lobbying employed to convince political actors to vote in favor of or against specific laws. While it can be argued that interest groups could distort voters' preferences, Giger and Klüger (2015), studying the results of Swiss referenda and comparing them to the voting preferences of Swiss members of parliament, suggested that interest groups can have an auxiliary effect, as conservative groups tend to lobby more towards representatives of conservative districts and vice-versa. Moreover, within the European Union context, interest groups' usage of framing is crucial in shaping the narratives regarding the passage of specific laws, as well as empowering specific political actors (Eising et al., 2015), depending on a group's policy capabilities (Albareda et al., 2023). In order to analyze the effects of interest group influence, large-scale text analysis has been suggested, comparing interest groups' positions with the text of the final policy (Klüver, 2009).

One of the most promising techniques to achieve this large-scale text analysis is NLP, through capabilities such as real-time political discourse analysis, as well as detecting sentiment or policy shifts (Marwala, 2023). Crucially, NLP has already been applied in the context of analyzing the historical shift in the methods employed by political parties around the world, ranging from the party manifestos of political parties in New Zealand (Orellana and Bisgin, 2023), to the shift from evidence-based to intuition-based speeches in the US Congress (Aroyehun et al. 2025). Aside from historical analysis, methods of computational analysis have also been used in a variety of 61 studies to automatically analyze the sentiment and opinions expressed by political actors during parliamentary debates (Abercrombie and Batista-Navarro, 2020).

In summary, the existing literature establishes a clear typology of LGR frameworks, distinguishing between ascriptive and elective models (Osella and Rubio-Marín, 2023). A significant body of research demonstrates that models based on self-determination yield superior outcomes for transgender individuals' mental health, socioeconomic stability, and access to healthcare (Restar et

al., 2020; Carpenter et al., 2020), reinforcing the normative argument that LGR should be a fundamental aspect of self-determination and the right to health (Szydłowski, 2016). However, despite pressure from supranational bodies like the ECHR, many states continue to utilize ascriptive models, and the practical differences between these frameworks on the ground remain undertheorized (Korkiamäki, 2014). Moreover, the LGR process remains deeply affected by the actions of political parties in parliament, who may be more or less ambiguous, as well as interest groups who may influence the behavior of members of parliament. The advances of the field of NLP show potential for large scale analysis through methods such as sentiment analysis and text similarity; thus, this thesis attempts to apply NLP to the LGR context in Greece and Spain.

4 Methodology

4.1 Overview

This analysis employs a quantitative framework grounded in NLP to systematically analyze the discourse of key political actors involved in the LGR legislative processes in Greece and Spain. The methodology rests on two complementary metrics. First, a sentiment analysis model, fine-tuned on a corpus of sentences related to pro-trans, anti-trans, or neutral sentences during parliamentary procedure, is used to classify and score the political stance of each actor along a spectrum ranging from explicitly anti-trans to explicitly pro-trans sentiment. By fine-tuning a pre-trained language model on labeled examples of supportive, neutral, and hostile discourse toward transgender rights, the classifier captures the nuanced rhetorical positions that generic sentiment tools would likely miss, such as the distinction between paternalistic opposition framed in concern and outright hostility.

Second, a semantic similarity index is computed to quantify the degree of alignment between the finalized legal text of each country’s respective law and each actor’s public discourse, such as parliamentary speeches, press releases, and official statements. Using sentence-level embeddings,

similarity scores are calculated to measure how closely the language, framing, and substantive content of an actor's discourse approximate the provisions ultimately codified in the legislation. Taken together, these two metrics allow for a comparative analysis that moves beyond subjective qualitative interpretation: sentiment scores reveal who supported or opposed the legislation and with what intensity, while similarity scores reveal whose language and policy positions were most directly reflected in the final law, thereby illuminating the relative influence of different actors on the legislative outcome.

4.2 Case Selection

This analysis relies on a Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) to compare the LGR procedures of Greece and Spain. These jurisdictions were selected because they represent distinct policy models within a shared socio-political context. Specifically, Greece employs a judicial determination model; while the 2017 legislation removed medical requirements, the process remains ascriptive, requiring a court decision to validate the applicant's gender identity. In contrast, Spain utilizes an administrative self-determination model, allowing individuals to amend their legal name and gender marker through a civil registry procedure without judicial intervention.

Beyond this divergence in policy design, the two nations share critical similarities that serve as control variables for this analysis. First, both are bound by the supranational legal frameworks of the European Union and the Council of Europe, establishing a shared baseline for human rights obligations. Second, they share parallel socio-cultural dynamics characteristic of the Mediterranean region, including the historically strong influence of the Orthodox and Catholic churches, respectively. Finally, both nations operate within highly polarized political landscapes where progressive reforms, championed by parties such as Syriza in Greece and PSOE in Spain, face significant conservative opposition. This comparability ensures that observed differences can be attributed to the legal frameworks themselves rather than extraneous cultural or geopolitical factors.

4.3 Data Collection

The dataset for this comparative study was curated from diverse sources within Greece and Spain. Specifically, for each country, a corpus was constructed comprising parliamentary speeches delivered by political parties both in favor of and against the proposed LGR legislation prior to its ratification, as well as public statements issued by transgender advocacy groups and opposing organizations.

More specifically, the parliamentary component of the corpus was drawn from the official records of the decisive plenary debates preceding enactment in each country. For Greece, where Law 4491/2017 was adopted within a unicameral legislature, the dataset focuses on the sixth parliamentary session of 9 October 2017 in the Hellenic Parliament. For Spain, where Law 4/2023 moved through a bicameral procedure, the dataset centers on the debate and vote in the Congress of Deputies on 16 February 2023, situated within a longer legislative cycle spanning approximately 2021-2023 (reflecting the extended drafting period, intra-coalition contestation, and subsequent passage through the Senate before final promulgation).

As for civil society actors, the corpus includes official public communications, such as public statements and communications issued to parliamentary bodies, issued by transgender advocacy organizations and by groups opposing the reforms during the relevant legislative windows in each case. These texts were collected from official or formally affiliated channels (such as organizations' websites and designated publication platforms) to ensure authenticity and traceability; a complete inventory of the organizations consulted is provided in Appendix A, with information about the source types, length of text extracted, and date of issue.

4.4 Data Processing

NLP techniques are used to quantitatively analyze political discourse surrounding LGR legislation in Greece and Spain. Parliamentary debates and public political statements were processed to derive

two primary metrics: a semantic similarity index and a sentiment score.

Using NLP makes it possible to compare speeches and statements across actors in a consistent way, something that would be difficult to do manually given the volume and variation of the texts. Legislative debates contain extensive rhetorical framing, strategic ambiguity, and varying levels of direct engagement with policy proposals. Computational analysis allows the study to identify patterns in tone and language across multiple actors in a replicable manner, reducing the subjectivity inherent in purely qualitative interpretation.

Two complementary measurements were extracted from the texts. The first measures the degree of semantic similarity between political statements and the final legal text enacted in each country. The second measures the sentiment expressed toward the legislation, providing an estimate of rhetorical tone, which does not always correspond directly to support or opposition.

Together, these metrics allow the analysis to capture both the *tone* of political discourse and the *degree of alignment* between political rhetoric and legislative outcomes.

4.4.1 Sentiment Analysis and Fine-Tuning

Sentiment analysis was conducted using the `MoritzLaurer/mDeBERTa-v3-base-mnli-xnli` model, a multilingual transformer model available through the Hugging Face repository. Transformer models such as BERT and DeBERTa capture how words relate to each other in context, which makes them useful for detecting how political statements frame a policy rather than just what words they contain. Unlike earlier methods that analyze words individually, these models evaluate how words interact within their broader linguistic context.

In its original configuration, the model performs zero-shot classification, assigning probabilities to categories such as positive, neutral, and negative sentiment. Preliminary validation revealed that the base model primarily captured the emotional tone of the text rather than the political stance toward the legislation. For example, a speech expressing concern about social impacts could be

classified as positive due to its constructive tone even if the speaker opposed the policy.

To address this limitation, the model was fine-tuned using a manually labeled training dataset, which is described in greater detail in Appendix B. Fine-tuning is a process in which a pre-trained language model is further trained on a smaller, task-specific dataset in order to adapt it to a particular classification objective. In this study, a random sample of 300 sentences from the Greek and Spanish corpora was manually labeled according to whether the sentence expressed a supportive, neutral, or opposing stance toward the legislation. While limited in size, the dataset was manually curated to maximize contextual relevance and relevance to the legislative debate under study, shifting the model from evaluating tone to evaluating stance in favor or against the legislation in question.

Following fine-tuning, the model produced probability distributions across the sentiment categories. These probabilities were converted into a single compound score ranging from -1 to +1 using the following equation:

$$Score = P(positive) - P(negative) \quad (1)$$

A positive value indicates supportive rhetoric toward the legislation, while negative values indicate opposition. Scores near zero represent neutral or mixed sentiment.

4.4.2 Semantic Similarity Index

The semantic similarity index was calculated using the `sentence-transformers/paraphrase-multilingual-mpnet-base-v2` model. Sentence Transformers are neural models designed to generate vector representations (embeddings) of entire sentences. These embeddings capture the semantic meaning of a sentence in a numerical form that allows comparisons between texts.

For each speech or political statement, the model generated an embedding which was then compared with the embedding of the final legal text using cosine similarity. Cosine similarity measures the angle between two vectors in a high-dimensional space and produces a score between 0 and 1.

Similarity reflects linguistic and conceptual overlap, which may arise from direct influence, shared institutional vocabulary, or engagement with the same legislative text. Higher similarity scores indicate that the language and concepts used in a speech closely resemble those present in the final law. Lower scores indicate that the speech diverges from the language or conceptual framing of the law.

4.4.3 Model Selection and Visualization

Both models were selected for their multilingual capabilities, allowing direct analysis of texts in Greek and Spanish. This approach avoids the need for machine translation, which could potentially distort political nuance or rhetorical framing.

The resulting sentiment and similarity metrics were visualized using scatter plots. In these plots, the horizontal axis represents semantic similarity to the final legal text, while the vertical axis represents sentiment toward the legislation. This visualization allows for the identification of patterns in political discourse, including clusters of supportive actors, forms of opposition, and differences between the Greek and Spanish legislative environments.

By combining these two metrics, the analysis provides a structured representation of political rhetoric that complements traditional qualitative approaches to legislative studies.

4.5 Statement on Positionality

My positionality as a Greek transgender woman, who has future stakes in the LGR process in Greece, fundamentally shapes my research. While I attempt to provide impartial and rigorous results as part of my study, I acknowledge that my perspective informs the research question, analysis, and objectives of my work. My intention is to contribute to a body of research that can improve the human rights of transgender people, by combating state-backed legal discrimination. Therefore, I am writing to contribute to a body of research in support of a minimally invasive LGR process, which would not require any court visits or medical requirements, respecting trans individuals' dignity and autonomy.

5 Case 1: Greece

5.1 Background Information

5.1.1 Introduction

Greece offers a significant case study for examining the evolution of public policy on LGR. As a nation shaped by the confluence of European legal norms, powerful domestic traditions, and vibrant civil society advocacy, Greece's policy trajectory provides critical insights into how different models of LGR are forged. This section analyzes the development of the Greek LGR framework, positioning it as a non-medical, ascriptive model. This classification is central to the thesis's comparative analysis, which contrasts Greece's framework with the elective model later adopted by Spain. An ascriptive model, in this context, refers to a system where legal gender is changed without medical prerequisites but still requires validation from the judiciary, which formally ascribes the legal status based on the individual's declaration.

This analysis will argue that Greece's adoption of a non-medical, ascriptive framework, primar-

ily through Law 4491/2017, represents a profound liberalization from its pathologizing past. However, the retention of a judicial procedure, rather than a purely administrative one, reflects a carefully negotiated political compromise. This policy outcome was shaped by the competing pressures of European human rights standards and the formidable socio-political influence of conservative domestic institutions, most notably the Greek Orthodox Church. Understanding this framework is essential for the subsequent comparative chapter, which will explore why Greece and Spain, despite similar international pressures, ultimately chose different policy pathways.

5.1.2 The International Legal Context: Europeanization and Normative Pressures

Greece's policy on LGR cannot be understood outside the context of its long-standing membership in the Council of Europe and the European Union. These institutions have established a potent normative and legal environment that has compelled member states to reform their laws concerning LGBTQ+ rights. The jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has been a primary catalyst. By interpreting Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the right to private and family life) as encompassing the core elements of personal identity, the Court has progressively affirmed that states have a positive obligation to provide an accessible procedure for LGR, despite the challenges in practice (Korkiamäki, 2014).

This process of "Europeanization," where domestic policy is increasingly aligned with European legal standards, provided the essential leverage for Greek activists and reform-minded politicians. Recommendations from the Council of Europe, which called for "quick, transparent and accessible" LGR procedures based on self-determination (Sotiropoulos, 2022), created a clear benchmark against which Greece's pre-existing, highly medicalized system was judged to be deficient.

5.1.3 The Domestic Trajectory: From Medicalization to a Non-Medical, Ascriptive Framework

Prior to 2017, Greece lacked any specific legislation for LGR, leaving the process to be governed by invasive and pathologizing court practices. Judges consistently required applicants to provide a psychiatric diagnosis of "gender identity disorder" and, most significantly, to have undergone sterilizing surgeries and other medical interventions (Morgan, 2017). This medical model was widely condemned by human rights organizations as a violation of bodily integrity and human dignity, forcing individuals to choose between their legal identity and their physical autonomy.

The passage of Law 4491/2017 marked the shift of Greek policy away from the medical model, as it abolished any requirement for medical or psychological diagnosis, or any surgical intervention (Smith, 2017). This change was a direct response to the principle of self-determination, recognizing gender identity as an "internal and personal" experience (Constandinidou, 2017).

However, the law did not establish a purely administrative or "elective" system. Instead, it created what can be defined as a non-medical, ascriptive framework. The procedure requires an individual to petition a court, and while the basis for the decision is the applicant's own declaration, the change is ultimately granted by a judicial authority (Iter-Legis). The court's role is to validate the request and formally ascribe the new legal gender, making it a state-sanctioned act rather than a simple registration of an individual's will. This judicial gatekeeping, even without medical criteria, is the defining feature of the ascriptive model and stands in contrast to the purely administrative process of an elective model. A more detailed examination of the specific articles and procedural elements of Law 4491/2017 will be undertaken in a subsequent section.

The Greek framework has continued to evolve. A significant limitation of the 2017 law, which required applicants to be unmarried, was repealed in February 2024 with the legalization of same-sex marriage, removing a discriminatory barrier. Nonetheless, gaps remain, most notably the lack of legal recognition for non-binary identities, which forces individuals into a binary choice.

5.1.4 The Socio-Political Arena: Shaping the Compromise of an Ascriptive Model

The decision to implement an ascriptive rather than a fully elective LGR model was not made in a political vacuum. It was the result of a contentious process and reflects a compromise between progressive goals and powerful conservative opposition.

The Greek Orthodox Church, a deeply influential institution in Greek society, has consistently acted as a powerful opponent of LGBTQ+ rights (Scott, 2024). The Church vehemently opposed the 2017 LGR law, with its Holy Synod describing it as a "satanic deed" that would "destroy human beings" (Smith, 2017). This profound opposition created a political climate where a fully elective, administrative model of self-declaration, as later seen in Spain, was likely perceived as politically unfeasible. The retention of a judicial process could be framed as a more solemn and controlled procedure, serving as a political compromise to mitigate backlash from the Church and its allies, as has also occurred in subsequent pro-LGBTQ+ legislation (Smith, 2024).

The LGR debate exposed deep partisan divisions. The law was passed by the then-governing left-wing SYRIZA party with support from a small centrist party, but was opposed by most of the opposition, including the center-right New Democracy (Smith, 2017). This political fragmentation suggests that an ascriptive model, which maintains a degree of state oversight through the courts, was a more achievable policy goal than a radical administrative overhaul. It represented a significant step forward that could secure a narrow majority, whereas a fully elective model may have failed.

5.1.5 Conclusion

The Greek LGR framework serves as a clear example of a non-medical, ascriptive policy model. Its creation was a landmark achievement, driven by the convergence of European human rights norms and sustained domestic advocacy. This model successfully de-pathologized the LGR process by removing all medical requirements. However, the decision to retain judicial oversight, thereby

creating an ascriptive system, was a strategic political compromise designed to navigate the potent opposition from the Orthodox Church and a polarized political landscape. This analysis of Greece's ascriptive framework provides a critical foundation for the subsequent comparative examination of Spain's elective model, which represents a different policy choice made within a distinct national context.

6 Case 2: Spain

6.1 Background Information

6.1.1 Introduction

Spain's journey toward LGR provides a powerful counterpoint to the Greek case, culminating in the adoption of a non-medical, elective model. This framework, in which LGR is achieved through a simple administrative process of self-declaration, represents one of the most progressive policy outcomes in Europe. This section will analyze the policy trajectory that led to the landmark "Trans Law" of 2023 (Law 4/2023), positioning it as a distinct policy choice when compared to Greece's ascriptive model. An elective model, for the purposes of this thesis, is defined by its foundation in individual will, removing both medical gatekeeping and judicial validation in favor of an administrative procedure.

This analysis will argue that Spain's ability to enact such a progressive law was contingent on a unique socio-political context. This context is characterized by a more secularized public sphere with diminished ecclesiastical influence, a left-wing coalition government where progressive factions held significant sway, and, most notably, a fierce and highly public schism within the nation's feminist movement. The Spanish case demonstrates that while international human rights norms provide a common impetus for reform, the specific design of LGR policy is profoundly shaped by domestic political alignments and ideological contests. Understanding this elective framework

is crucial for the comparative analysis that follows, which will explore why Spain succeeded in implementing a model based on pure self-determination where Greece retained a judicial check.

6.1.2 The International Legal Context: A Shared Starting Point

Like Greece, Spain's policy development has been significantly influenced by its obligations as a member of the Council of Europe and the European Union. The normative standards set by the European Court of Human Rights, which link LGR to the fundamental right to private life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, provided a crucial backdrop for domestic reform efforts (Korkiamäki, 2014). Recommendations from European bodies urging "quick, transparent and accessible" LGR procedures based on self-determination created a clear imperative to move beyond pathologizing requirements. This shared European context established a common goal for activists in both countries: the de-medicalization of gender recognition.

6.1.3 The Domestic Trajectory: From Pathologization to an Elective Framework

Spain's first significant step toward LGR came with Law 3/2007, which regulated the registry rectification of a person's sex (Boletín Oficial del Estado, 2007). This law was considered pioneering at the time because it was among the first in Europe to remove the requirement for gender-affirming surgery (Ministerio de Igualdad, 2020). However, it firmly established a pathologizing model. To change their legal gender, applicants were required to provide a medical or psychological report diagnosing them with "gender dysphoria" and, crucially, prove they had been undergoing medical treatment (typically hormonal) for at least two years to align their physical characteristics with their identified gender (Álvarez, 2021).

While an advancement, this law was criticized for its medical gatekeeping, which activists argued violated the principle of self-determination. Furthermore, the law initially excluded minors from accessing LGR, a provision that was later deemed unconstitutional by Spain's Constitutional

Court in a 2019 ruling, which recognized the rights of minors with "sufficient maturity" and a "stable situation of transsexuality" (Riccioli, 2023).

A paradigm shift occurred with the passage of Law 4/2023, officially the "Law for the real and effective equality of trans people and for the guarantee of the rights of LBTQI people," but widely known as the "Trans Law". This legislation dismantled the previous framework and established a purely non-medical, elective model based on self-determination (Riccioli, 2023).

The core of this new model is a simple administrative procedure. An individual over the age of 16 can request a change to their legal gender at the Civil Registry through a sworn statement, with no medical or psychological evidence required (Jones, 2023). The process involves an initial declaration, followed by a requirement to reappear and ratify the request three months later, after which the change is finalized. This two-step administrative process solidifies the model as elective, as the state's role is reduced to registering the citizen's declared will, rather than validating or ascribing it. A detailed examination of the specific provisions of Law 4/2023 will be conducted in a subsequent section.

6.1.4 The Socio-Political Arena: Forging the Elective Model

The adoption of a fully elective model in Spain was the product of a distinct and highly contentious socio-political environment.

While the Catholic Church in Spain has historically been a dominant political force, its direct influence on state policy has waned significantly in the post-Franco democratic era. Although Catholic groups and bishops voiced opposition to the 2023 Trans Law, their impact was far less pronounced than that of the Orthodox Church in Greece (Obst, 2020). Spain's increasingly secular society and the formal separation of church and state have created a political environment more permissive of progressive social reforms that challenge traditional religious doctrines (Scott, 2023).

The "Trans Law" was a flagship policy of the left-wing coalition government, fiercely champi-

oned by the junior partner, Unidas Podemos, and its then-Equality Minister, Irene Montero (Jones, 2023). The law's passage was a result of this specific government configuration, where a progressive party held a key ministry. However, the process was fraught with tension, not only from the opposition of right-wing parties like the People's Party (PP) and Vox, but also from within the senior coalition partner, the Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), which became a central feature of the debate around the law (Maroño-Porto, 2023).

Unlike in Greece, where opposition was primarily external (from the Church and political right), the most intense and public conflict over Spain's "Trans Law" erupted within the feminist movement. While many LGBTQ+ and feminist organizations supported the law as a fundamental human rights issue, a vocal and influential segment of Spanish feminists, including prominent historical figures and some members of the PSOE, mounted a powerful opposition campaign (Álvarez, 2021). Their core argument was that gender self-identification "erases" the legal and social category of "woman," which is based on biological sex, and could thereby undermine sex-based rights and protections. This debate, which questioned the very definitions of sex and gender, polarized the Spanish left and created a unique political dynamic that distinguished it from other European LGR reform efforts (Obst, 2020).

6.1.5 Conclusion

Spain's adoption of a non-medical, elective model for LGR through Law 4/2023 places it at the forefront of progressive policy in Europe. This policy outcome was not merely an inevitable result of international pressure but was forged in a unique domestic crucible. A secularized public sphere, the specific dynamics of a left-wing coalition government, and a profound and public schism within the feminist movement all contributed to the creation of a framework based on pure self-determination. This analysis of Spain's elective model provides the necessary groundwork for the thesis's central comparison, which will now turn to exploring why these distinct socio-political factors led Spain and Greece to adopt fundamentally different LGR policy models.

7 Results

7.1 Overview

This chapter presents the quantitative findings of the NLP analysis applied to parliamentary debates and political statements concerning LGR legislation in Greece and Spain. Two metrics are used to evaluate the political discourse surrounding the laws.

First, a **sentiment score** measures the emotional polarity of each text, ranging from -1 (strongly negative) to +1 (strongly positive). Second, a **semantic similarity score** measures how closely a political statement resembles the language of the final enacted law using cosine similarity. Higher values indicate greater linguistic proximity to the legal text.

Figures 1 and 2 visualize these metrics for each political actor. In both figures, the horizontal axis represents semantic similarity to the final law, while the vertical axis represents sentiment toward the legislation.

7.2 Greek Political Discourse: Law 4491/2017

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of Greek political discourse surrounding Law 4491/2017. Each point represents a party or political actor whose statements were analyzed.

The Greek discourse environment appears relatively fragmented. While some actors cluster near the center of the graph, few speeches achieve both very high semantic similarity and strongly positive sentiment simultaneously. This suggests that the law emerged from negotiation and compromise rather than clear ideological alignment.

The governing coalition led by *SYRIZA* appears moderately close to the final legal text, with speeches displaying moderate similarity scores and slightly negative to neutral sentiment values. This reflects the complex political environment in which the law was passed, where even supportive

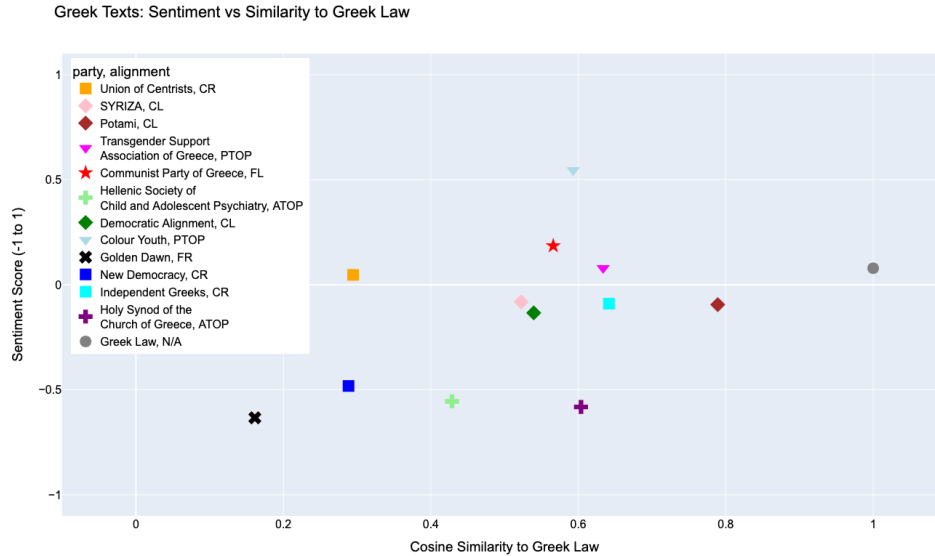


Figure 1: Sentiment and Semantic Similarity of Greek Political Discourse Relative to Law 4491/2017

actors often framed the issue cautiously.

Opposition parties are distributed across the lower half of the chart, indicating more negative sentiment overall. *New Democracy*, the main center-right opposition party, shows moderate semantic similarity but negative sentiment. While its discourse addressed the same legal and procedural issues as the final law, it did so critically.

At the far end of the spectrum, *Golden Dawn* exhibits both very low similarity and strongly negative sentiment. This indicates that its rhetoric diverged substantially from the legal framework ultimately adopted.

An additional noteworthy case is the *Communist Party of Greece (KKE)*. Despite opposing the legislation in the parliamentary vote, its speeches display a slightly positive sentiment score. This outcome likely reflects the party’s rhetorical strategy, which emphasized broader critiques of the law’s scope rather than direct hostility toward the principle of gender recognition itself.

Furthermore, the behavior of pro-trans and anti-trans advocacy groups appears consistent, with the Transgender Support Association and Colour Youth demonstrating a positive score, while the

anti-trans groups have a significant negative sentiment. However, it needs to be noted that the reaction of the Greek Holy Synod was textually as similar to the final law as the discourse by the pro-trans advocacy groups, highlighting that both groups engaged in relevant critique, even if their sentiment was motivated by divergent ideological stances. On the other hand, the statement issued by the Hellenic Society of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry showed a more significant deviation from the original legal text.

Overall, the Greek case shows partial alignment and a fragmented debate. Most actors engage with the policy topic, but relatively few closely mirror the final legal text.

7.3 Spanish Political Discourse: Law 4/2023

Figure 2 presents the distribution of Spanish political discourse surrounding the passage of Law 4/2023, commonly referred to as the Spanish “Trans Law.”

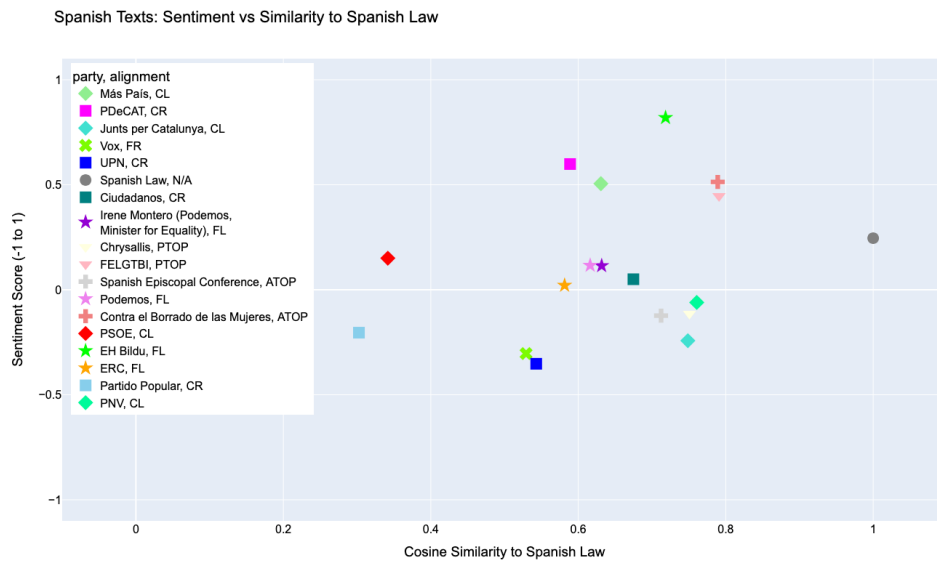


Figure 2: Sentiment and Semantic Similarity of Spanish Political Discourse Relative to Law 4/2023

Compared to Greece, the Spanish discourse displays a clearer ideological structure. A distinct cluster appears in the upper-right quadrant of the plot, where both sentiment and semantic similarity

are high. This cluster includes actors associated with the governing left-wing coalition and pro-LGBTQ advocacy discourse.

Statements from parties such as *Más País* and *Podemos* appear particularly close to the final law in both tone and language. Their speeches show strong semantic similarity with the enacted text and consistently positive sentiment scores, indicating that the final legislation closely reflects the discursive framing promoted by these actors.

The *Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE)* occupies a somewhat more moderate position. While its statements maintain positive sentiment toward the legislation, their similarity scores are lower than those of smaller coalition partners. This pattern may reflect the party's broader, more cautious messaging strategy during the legislative process.

Center-right parties such as the *Partido Popular* and *Ciudadanos* appear in the lower portion of the plot, indicating more negative sentiment. Their similarity scores remain moderate, however, suggesting that their critiques still addressed many of the procedural and institutional aspects contained in the final law.

Far-right opposition from *Vox* displays both negative sentiment and relatively low semantic similarity. This combination reflects rhetorical positions that rejected the conceptual framework underlying the legislation rather than engaging directly with its technical provisions.

According to the results, both pro- and anti-trans advocacy groups demonstrated a high level of syntactic similarity with the final text of the law, indicating that actors on both sides engaged with similar legal and conceptual language present in the legislative process. However, one thing that needs to be noted is that the sentiment score did not correlate with a pro- or anti-trans stance, but with the level of protection echoed by each organization. In particular, both the pro-LGBTQ+ organization FELGTBI and *Contra el Borrado de las Mujeres*, a group echoing trans-exclusionary radical feminist views, demonstrated significantly positive sentiment scores, and both announcements reflected a sense of "protecting" their target audience. On the other hand, the announcement

by pro-trans group Chrysallis demonstrated a criticism of the law in question without the desire for protection being as evident, and this resulted in a negative score, similar to the one received by the Spanish Episcopal Conference.

Overall, the Spanish data reveals a more polarized discursive environment than the Greek case, but also one in which the discourse by both parties and advocates aligns more closely with the final legal text.

7.4 Cross-Case Comparison

Comparing the two cases highlights several structural differences in the discursive environments surrounding LGR legislation.

First, the Spanish debate exhibits a stronger cluster of actors with both high similarity and positive sentiment. This indicates that the final Spanish law closely reflects the framing advanced by its primary supporters.

In contrast, the Greek case shows a more dispersed pattern with fewer actors closely aligned with the final legal language. The distribution suggests that the resulting law emerged from compromise between competing political narratives.

Second, opposition discourse differs between the two contexts. In Spain, ideological polarization produces a clear separation between supportive and opposing actors. In Greece, however, opposition parties often engage with the same procedural themes present in the law while maintaining critical sentiment.

A third notable finding concerns the depth of discursive engagement by non-parliamentary actors. In both the Greek and Spanish cases, advocacy groups representing a wide spectrum of ideological positions demonstrated high levels of semantic similarity to the final legal text. This indicates that both pro-trans and anti-trans organizations did not merely engage in performative or slogan-based opposition; rather, they engaged deeply with the technical, procedural, and conceptual

substance of the legislation. In Greece, this was evident in the high similarity scores of the Greek Holy Synod, which, despite its ideological opposition, utilized the same legalistic vocabulary as pro-trans groups. In Spain, the high semantic similarity across the ideological spectrum suggests that the legislative process was marked by a high degree of substantive, text-based contestation rather than purely abstract ideological warfare.

Finally, the results highlight the role of smaller parties in shaping legislative discourse. In both cases, smaller ideological parties frequently produce speeches with higher semantic similarity to the final legal text than larger catch-all parties, which tend to adopt broader and more cautious messaging strategies.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the Spanish legislative process produced a law more directly aligned with the discourse of its supporting coalition, while the Greek process reflects a more negotiated and fragmented discursive landscape.

8 Discussion of Findings

8.1 Introduction

The results presented in the previous chapter reveal several notable patterns in the political discourse surrounding LGR legislation in Greece and Spain. While the quantitative analysis provides measurable indicators of sentiment and semantic similarity, interpreting these results requires situating them within broader political and rhetorical dynamics.

Three key themes emerge from the findings. First, sentiment analysis does not always correspond directly with legislative voting behavior. Second, opposition parties employ distinct rhetorical strategies that can be distinguished through semantic similarity analysis. Third, differences in party size and ideological positioning appear to shape how closely political discourse aligns with the language of enacted legislation.

Together, these observations highlight both the analytical potential and the interpretive limits of NLP-based approaches to legislative discourse. The application of such methods to parliamentary debates is consistent with a growing body of computational political science research, ranging from the analysis of party manifestos (Orellana and Bisgin, 2023) to the automated detection of sentiment and opinion shifts in legislative speech (Abercrombie and Batista-Navarro, 2020; Marwala, 2023).

8.2 The “Protection Trap”: Sentiment as a Rhetorical Shield

Importantly, sentiment scores throughout this study should be interpreted as indicators of rhetorical tone rather than direct measures of political support. One of the most significant findings of this study is the frequent decoupling of sentiment scores from actual political alignment. This is visible in what can be called the “protection trap”: actors use positive or protective language to frame stances that are fundamentally oppositional or restrictive.

This pattern is first evident in the Greek dataset with the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). Despite voting against Law 4491/2017, the party’s speeches registered a slightly positive sentiment. The KKE’s rhetoric framed its objections through the lens of social welfare, institutional safeguards, and the protection of the vulnerable. This vocabulary, associated with care and stability, is naturally classified as “positive” by sentiment models, even though the underlying policy goal was to obstruct the legislation.

This “protection trap” is not unique to the Greek left but is a recurring rhetorical strategy across the dataset. In the Spanish case, *Contra el Borrado de las Mujeres* (reflecting trans-exclusionary radical feminist views) demonstrated significantly positive sentiment. Their discourse did not manifest as hostility, but as a mission to “protect” women’s rights, using the same protective semantic framework as pro-trans allies.

This suggests that interest groups and parties rely heavily on framing to shape how the issue is understood regarding the passage of laws (Eising et al., 2015). By adopting a “protective” tone, ac-

tors can engage in what might be termed "benevolent gatekeeping," making their critiques harder to categorize through simple polarity metrics but highly visible through semantic similarity analysis.

Consequently, this study demonstrates that sentiment analysis in political science must be interpreted with caution. A high sentiment score does not necessarily signal support for a policy; rather, it often signals the use of "benevolent" or "protective" framing. This allows actors to engage in "polite" opposition, making their critiques harder to categorize through simple polarity metrics but highly visible through semantic similarity analysis.

8.3 Types of Political Opposition: Procedural vs. Fundamental Rejection

The semantic similarity results provide a more nuanced view of political opposition within the Greek case. In particular, they reveal a clear distinction between two forms of opposition represented by New Democracy (ND) and Golden Dawn.

New Democracy exhibits moderate semantic similarity to the final law despite negative sentiment scores. The party's speeches engaged directly with the content of the proposed legislation, addressing procedural aspects such as judicial oversight, eligibility criteria, and administrative mechanisms. Such discourse reflects what may be described as *procedural opposition*, in which actors contest specific elements of a bill rather than rejecting the legislative framework outright.

This pattern aligns with Bräuninger and Debus's (2009) observation that opposition parties within the European context frequently perform a preventative rather than obstructive role, engaging with the substance of proposed legislation in order to shape its final form. New Democracy's moderate semantic proximity to the enacted law suggests that, despite its negative stance, the party's participation in debate may have contributed to the procedural refinement of the legislation.

Golden Dawn, by contrast, displays both strongly negative sentiment and very low semantic similarity to the enacted law. Its rhetoric rarely engaged with the procedural or institutional components of the legislation. Instead, the discourse largely rejected the normative premise underlying

the policy itself. This pattern reflects what may be described as *fundamental opposition*, where the policy objective is rejected in principle rather than debated in terms of implementation. This is also consistent with the finding that parties at the ideological extremes tend to demonstrate less ambiguity and more categorical positioning in their political discourse (Galindo-Silva, 2024), making their rhetorical distance from centrist legislative language predictably greater.

These distinctions illustrate how semantic similarity analysis can help differentiate between forms of political contestation that may appear identical in simple voting records.

8.4 Coalition Politics and Discursive Alignment

A broader pattern across both case studies concerns the relationship between party size and discursive alignment with the final legislative text. Smaller parties in both Greece and Spain frequently exhibit higher semantic similarity scores than larger parties.

This pattern is consistent with existing scholarship on party strategy and ambiguity. Rovny (2012) demonstrates that larger parties tend to employ greater positional ambiguity in order to assemble broad electoral coalitions, while smaller parties are more likely to emphasize specific talking points that reflect clearly defined ideological commitments. Similarly, Bräuninger and Giger (2018) show that ambiguity is a particularly rational strategy for larger parties operating in environments where public opinion is divided, as is demonstrably the case with LGR across the European Union (European Commission, 2020). The discursive breadth observed in major parties such as PSOE or New Democracy is therefore not incidental but structurally incentivized.

Smaller parties, by contrast, tend to represent more clearly defined ideological constituencies. This allows them to articulate policy positions with greater specificity and consistency. Consequently, their rhetoric often more closely mirrors the conceptual framework or technical language ultimately embedded in legislative texts.

This dynamic also has implications for understanding legislative influence. As Bräuninger and

Debus (2009) note, smaller opposition parties may submit independent legislative proposals in order to signal the existence of policy alternatives, and in some cases this signaling can shape the direction of majority policy. The finding that smaller parties exhibit closer discursive alignment with the final legislative text may therefore reflect not only ideological clarity, but also the degree to which their framing was absorbed into the broader legislative discourse, even where they played no formal decisive role in passing the legislation.

Furthermore, the data reveals that even within pro-trans advocacy, sentiment is not a monolith. The results show a distinction between 'protective' advocacy and 'critical' advocacy. In Spain, FELGTBI exhibited positive sentiment, aligning with a discourse of celebration and the protection of rights. In contrast, the group Chrysallis demonstrated a negative sentiment score. This does not imply a lack of support for LGR, but rather reflects a more critical, demanding, and perhaps more aggressive rhetorical stance that sought to highlight the law's inadequacies. This suggests that for advocacy groups, a 'negative' sentiment score may actually be a marker of rigorous, non-complacent political engagement, whereas 'positive' sentiment may correlate with a more defensive or status-quo-aligned rhetoric.

8.5 Cross-National Implications

Finally, the comparison between Greece and Spain suggests that different legislative environments produce distinct discursive patterns. The Greek case displays a relatively dispersed distribution of sentiment and similarity scores, indicating a fragmented debate and a legislative outcome shaped by negotiation and compromise.

The Spanish case, by contrast, shows a stronger clustering of supportive actors whose rhetoric aligns closely with the language of the final law. This pattern suggests that the Spanish legislation more directly reflected the discursive framework advanced by its governing coalition and allied political actors. This is consistent with the role that interest groups and allied civil society actors can play in shaping legislative framing; as Eising et al. (2015) observe, interest groups operating

within the European Union context are particularly effective at empowering specific political actors and consolidating the narratives around particular legislative outcomes. The tighter discursive convergence observed in Spain may partly reflect the more organized mobilization of such framing efforts around that legislation.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate how computational text analysis can illuminate underlying structures in legislative debate. The use of NLP methods in this thesis is also responsive to the methodological suggestion advanced by Klüver (2009), who proposes large-scale text analysis as a means of assessing interest group influence by comparing actors' positions with the content of final policy texts. While the present study focuses on parliamentary actors rather than interest groups directly, the analytical logic is analogous, and the results point to the broader utility of this approach. While sentiment and similarity metrics cannot fully capture political meaning on their own, they provide valuable tools for identifying rhetorical strategies, patterns of opposition, and the relationship between political discourse and legislative outcomes.

9 Policy Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

The empirical findings of this thesis, derived from the comparative analysis of LGR in Greece and Spain, extend beyond a historical record of legislative drafting. By quantifying the distance between the discourse of political actors and the final legal text, this study illuminates the mechanisms that lead to either empowering elective models or restrictive ascriptive ones. The data reveals that the proximity of transgender advocacy groups to the legislative process is a strong predictor of a law's alignment with the principle of self-determination. Furthermore, the application of NLP has exposed the frequent dissonance between the tone of political speech and its substance. Based on these insights, this chapter outlines three key policy recommendations aimed at improving the

drafting of future minority rights legislation.

9.2 Institutionalizing Legislative Co-Creation with Minority Groups

The most significant finding presented in this thesis is the correlation between the semantic alignment of advocacy groups and the resulting legal framework. However, this relationship should be interpreted cautiously, as semantic alignment may reflect shared framing or reactive positioning rather than direct causal influence. In the Spanish case, where the final law (elective model) closely mirrored the discourse of transgender advocacy groups, the legislation successfully codified self-determination. Conversely, in the Greek context, the "discursive gap" between advocacy groups and the final text resulted in a compromise (ascriptive model) that retained judicial gatekeeping.

Therefore, it is recommended that parliaments move beyond distinct periods of "public consultation" and move toward a model of legislative co-creation.

- **Formalized Drafting Committees:** When legislating rights for specific minority groups, representatives from that community should not merely be witnesses in committee hearings but active participants in the drafting stage. The data suggests that when the state attempts to interpret the needs of a minority without their direct semantic input, it defaults to paternalistic structures (e.g., court requirements) rather than autonomous ones.
- **Metric of Representation:** Policymakers should aim to minimize the semantic distance between the demands of civil society and the text of the law. If the similarity index between advocacy statements and the draft bill remains low, it indicates a failure of representation that cannot be fixed by amendments alone.

9.3 Decoupling Sentiment from Substance: Navigating the "Protection Trap"

A critical insight from this thesis is that positive language is not a proxy for political support. The "protection trap" reveals that political actors often employ polite, empathetic, or "protective" rhetoric to mask restrictive or obstructive measures.

Policy recommendations for activists, legislators, and researchers include:

- **Identifying Benevolent Gatekeeping:** Stakeholders must be trained to recognize "benevolent gatekeeping", where high sentiment scores are used to justify judicial or institutional hurdles under the guise of "protecting" the individual or the community.
- **Prioritizing Semantic Substance over Tone:** In evaluating political allies, advocacy groups should prioritize *semantic similarity* (the actual content of the demands) over *sentiment* (the emotional tone). As seen in the comparison between Chrysallis and FELGTBI, a critical/negative tone can be a more accurate indicator of a group's commitment to pushing the boundaries of existing law than a positive, protective tone.
- **Developing Nuanced Monitoring Tools:** Civil society should utilize NLP tools that specifically look for the intersection of high semantic similarity and divergent sentiment to identify "sophisticated opposition" that uses the language of rights to argue for the limitation of those same rights.

9.4 Utilizing Computational Tools for Legislative Transparency

Finally, this thesis demonstrates the utility of NLP not just as an academic tool, but as a mechanism for democratic accountability. The ability to distinguish between principled opposition and opportunistic contrarianism is vital for healthy parliamentary debate. However, future research should investigate the relationship between different modes of political advocacy and their NLP signatures. The results suggest that "reformist" advocacy (aiming to protect and celebrate) may produce

different sentiment-similarity profiles than "radical" or "critical" advocacy (aiming to expose gaps and demand more). Developing a taxonomy of "rhetorical styles", such as *Protective-Positive*, *Critical-Negative*, or *Obstructive-Positive* (the Protection Trap), would allow for a much more granular understanding of how interest groups influence the legislative lifecycle.

- **Automated Auditing of Political Discourse:** Civil society organizations can employ NLP methodologies like the ones used in this case to monitor legislative debates in real-time. By mapping the discourse of opposition parties, it becomes possible to detect whether opposition is based on the content of the law (Semantic Similarity) or strictly on opposing the government of the day.
- **Revealing Polarization:** In cases where opposition parties show high semantic similarity to a bill but deeply negative sentiment, the data suggests the opposition is partisan rather than ideological. Highlighting this discrepancy can help de-polarize minority rights issues, framing them as human rights questions rather than proxies for party warfare.

10 Avenues for Future Research

While this thesis establishes a methodological framework for analyzing the political discourse surrounding LGR, it also uncovers several pathways for further academic inquiry. The application of NLP to political science is a nascent field, and future studies could expand upon this research in four key directions.

10.1 Longitudinal Analysis of Discursive Evolution

This study focused on a specific window of time surrounding the passage of Law 4491/2017 in Greece and Law 4/2023 in Spain. Future research should expand this temporal scope to track the

historical shifting of language across decades. A longitudinal analysis could map how medicalized terminology (e.g., "gender dysphoria," "transsexualism") gradually recedes and is replaced by rights-based language (e.g., "self-determination," "lived identity"). Understanding the velocity of this semantic shift could help predict when a political environment is ripe for legislative reform.

10.2 Mechanisms of International Discursive Diffusion

The fight for LGR is increasingly globalized. A valuable next step would be to integrate international discourse into the dataset to measure the permeability of national debates. For instance, to what extent does advocacy rhetoric in Spain influence the discourse in Latin American nations, or how do debates in the UK impact the framing of arguments in Greece? Quantifying this cross-border influence would illuminate how minority rights concepts travel between different legal systems and linguistic spheres.

10.3 Legislative Novelty vs. Iteration

This thesis compared two specific laws, but future scholarship should control for the distinction between "foundational legislation" and "legislative revision." It is hypothesized that the discourse surrounding a country's first LGR law acts differently than the discourse surrounding a revision of an existing law. First-time laws may necessitate more conservative, consensus-building language to break the legislative seal, whereas revisions (such as the Spanish Law 4/2023) may allow for more radical, precise, and empowering language. Testing this hypothesis would refine our understanding of how legislative maturity affects political rhetoric.

10.4 Comparative Computational Linguistics and Model Bias

Finally, from a methodological standpoint, future studies should test the robustness of these findings by employing a wider array of Large Language Models (LLMs). Different models, trained on different corpora, may exhibit varying sensitivities to political nuance. Investigating whether an English-centric model fine-tuned on Greek text detects different sentiment patterns than a native Greek model is crucial for ensuring that NLP tools remain unbiased observers of political phenomena.

11 Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate the divergent paths taken by Greece and Spain regarding LGR. While both nations share a Southern European context and a recent history of democratization, they arrived at fundamentally different legislative outcomes: Greece's ascriptive model (Law 4491/2017), which retained judicial gatekeeping, and Spain's elective model (Law 4/2023), which fully embraced self-determination. By combining qualitative context with NLP methods, this thesis identifies which actors were most closely aligned with the final laws and how that alignment appears in their discourse.

The comparative analysis reveals that the transition from ascriptive to elective models is not merely a legal evolution, but is associated with patterns of the average sentiment and semantic proximity between the state and civil society. In Spain, the high correlation between the discourse of advocacy groups, political parties, and the final law, as well as generally higher sentiment scores among supportive actors, indicates a legislative process of co-creation. In contrast, the Greek case exhibits a higher "discursive gap," where the law, while progressive in removing medical requirements, remained semantically tethered to the procedural concerns of the judiciary and a higher influence by anti-trans advocacy groups rather than the lived reality of the transgender community.

Furthermore, the application of computational metrics offered unique insights into the nature of political opposition. The analysis exposed the "polite obstructionism" of groups such as the Communist Party of Greece and the Spanish group *Contra el Borrado de las Mujeres*, proving that positive sentiment framed around protection can mask negative political intent. Conversely, the "combative negativity", such as the one exhibited by the Spanish pro-trans advocacy group *Chrysallis*, demonstrated that the defense of minority rights often requires confrontational discourse to withstand reactionary pressure. Finally, the structural analysis highlights that smaller, ideologically distinct parties often make clearer use of rights-based language, while larger parties dilute this language to maintain broad electoral coalitions.

Methodologically, this thesis shows how NLP can be used as a tool for analyzing political discourse in a more systematic way. By decoupling sentiment (tone) from similarity (substance), researchers can pierce the veil of parliamentary rhetoric to reveal the true alignment of political actors. Nonetheless, NLP's efficacy can be challenged by specific methods of framing used by political actors, signifying the need for improved fine-tuning of language models for political textual analysis.

Politically, the findings suggest a clear imperative for future policymaking. The data confirms that the most empowering legislation is that which semantically mirrors the minority it serves. Therefore, the "elective" model is not just a legal mechanism; it is the result of a political process where the minority is allowed to speak for itself, and the state listens without translation. As nations continue to debate the rights of transgender individuals, this study serves as evidence that true legal recognition requires more than just benevolent intentions from the state; instead, it requires the structural inclusion of the voices seeking recognition.

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13 Appendix

13.1 Appendix A: Sources for Statements

The following table provides information regarding the sources used from each political party and advocacy group. For each organization, the type of source, the length extracted, and the date of the announcement, is presented.

Table 1: Information on selected statements from Greece.

Organization	Type of Source	Length Extracted	Date
Communist Party of Greece	Parliamentary Speech	2240 words	Oct 9th, 2017
Golden Dawn	Parliamentary Speech	2194 words	Oct 9th, 2017
Independent Greeks	Parliamentary Speech	1444 words	Oct 9th, 2017
New Democracy	Parliamentary Speech	2289 words	Oct 9th, 2017
PASOK	Parliamentary Speech	1800 words	Oct 9th, 2017
Potami	Parliamentary Speech	1947 words	Oct 9th, 2017
SYRIZA	Parliamentary Speech	2744 words	Oct 9th, 2017
Union of Centrists	Parliamentary Speech	1900 words	Oct 9th, 2017

Organization	Type of Source	Length Extracted	Date
Colour Youth	Public Announcement	3194 words	May 22nd, 2017
Hellenic Society of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	Commentary Submitted to Greek Parliament	571 words	Oct 4th, 2017
Holy Synod of the Church of Greece	Public Announcement	422 words	Oct 9th, 2017
Transgender Support Association of Greece	Parliamentary Speech	3356 words	May 9th, 2017
Greek Law	Law	1060 words	Oct 10th, 2017

Table 2: Information on selected statements from Spain.

Organization	Type of Source	Length Extracted	Date
Ciudadanos	Parliamentary Speech	1065 words	Feb 16th, 2023
EH Bildu	Parliamentary Speech	596 words	Feb 16th, 2023
ERC	Parliamentary Speech	955 words	Feb 16th, 2023
Irene Montero (Podemos, Minister for Equality)	Parliamentary Speech	1413 words	Feb 16th, 2023
Junts per Catalunya	Parliamentary Speech	615 words	Feb 16th, 2023

Organization	Type of Source	Length Extracted	Date
Más País	Parliamentary Speech	291 words	Feb 16th, 2023
Partido Popular	Parliamentary Speech	1067 words	Feb 16th, 2023
PDeCAT	Parliamentary Speech	324 words	Feb 16th, 2023
PNV	Parliamentary Speech	568 words	Feb 16th, 2023
Podemos	Parliamentary Speech	1062 words	Feb 16th, 2023
PSOE	Parliamentary Speech	1096 words	Feb 16th, 2023
UPN	Parliamentary Speech	474 words	Feb 16th, 2023
Vox	Parliamentary Speech	1311 words	Feb 16th, 2023
Chrysallis	Public Announcement	459 words	May 10th, 2021
Conferencia Episcopal Española	Public Announcement	957 words	Oct 10th, 2022
Contra el Borrado de las Mujeres	Public Announcement	768 words	Jun 16th, 2021
FELGTBI	Public Announcement	735 words	Dec 22nd, 2022
Spanish Law	Law	2131 words	Mar 1st, 2023

13.2 Appendix B: Database for Finetuning

To prepare the training data for fine-tuning, a Python script was developed to extract and generate 300 representative sentences from each language’s corpus, yielding a total of 600 sentences. Each sentence was then manually labeled according to the sentiment it expressed toward transgender people specifically: positive (+1), neutral (0), or negative (−1). This manual classification step was essential to ensure that the model would learn to distinguish stance toward trans individuals from mere variance in tone, a distinction that sentiment tools are often not equipped to make.

With the labeled dataset prepared, an additional classification head was appended to the pre-trained `MoritzLaurer/mDeBERTa-v3-base-mnli-xnli` multilingual model. The model was then fine-tuned on the 600 labeled sentences, presented in randomized order, such that it learned to predict not whether a given sentence is linguistically positive or negative in tone, but rather whether it conveys a supportive, hostile, or neutral posture toward transgender people and their rights. The resulting fine-tuned model was subsequently deployed to perform sentiment analysis across the full corpus of texts in both countries.

Example sentences for each rank are as follows:

Example Sentence	Rank
Η αποσύνδεση της διόρθωσης του φύλου από τις ιατρικές πράξεις και βεβαιώσεις για τους ενήλικες είναι επιβεβλημένη.	1
No, señorías, esta ley, precisamente, lo que hace es permitir a todo el mundo ser quien es sin miedo, sin culpa y sin discriminación.	1
Και οι υπεραπλουστεύσεις, ξέρετε, αυτές στηρίζονται στην ιδεοληψία σας.	0
En el plazo máximo de tres meses desde la comparecencia inicial reiterando la solicitud de rectificación inicial, la persona encargada del Registro Civil deberá citar a la persona legitimada para que comparezca de nuevo y ratifique su solicitud, aseverando la persistencia de su decisión.	0
Το υπό συζήτηση νομοσχέδιο - έκτρωμα προβλέπει τη δυνατότητα αλλαγής του καταχωρισμένου γενετήσιου φύλου ατόμου.	-1
Hay una gran contradicción, considerando violación cuando los menores quieren contraer matrimonio o les someten a un matrimonio; sin embargo, esos mismos menores ahora no van a tener garantías para esta decisión.	-1

Table 3: Example sentences. For each rank as positive or negative, one Greek and one Spanish sentence were selected.