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Framing Gender Equality in the European Union Political Discourse

Abstract

In the last decade, the European Union (EU) approach to gender equality has broadened to new concepts, such as gender mainstreaming, and new issues, such as "family policies", "domestic violence", and "gender inequality in politics". However, the frame analysis of policy documents in these new areas shows, first, that each issue has developed its own particular features, and, secondly, that the broadening of the EU-political discourse on gender equality has not led to a deeper framing of the issues in terms of gender equality. The lack of EU competence in these areas, the status of the policy documents, and differences in the actors having a voice and being referred to in the documents are proposed as possible explanations for its framing.

Introduction

The evolution of the European Union (EU) gender equality policy in the last decade reveals a shift both in concepts and agendas. The former appears from the progressive emergence of the

concepts of equal opportunities, positive action, and gender mainstreaming in EU-policy documents on gender equality. The latter is related to the concept of gender mainstreaming and is evident in the broadening of the EU-gender equality agenda to new issues, as compared to the usual employment-related ones, such as "family policies", "domestic violence", and the position of men and women in political decision-making. But what does a "broader" approach mean? Is this broadening also deepening the gender equality focus? How gendered are the new EU-gender equality issues: do they approach the equality of women in relation to changes in the position, status, and behavior of men, or do they merely focus on women? The latter reflects a broader approach through the logic of equal opportunities in new EU-gender equality issues, whereas the former represents a deeper reading of gender equality which tackles the structural relations between the sexes.

In this article, we assess the framing of gender equality in EU-political discourse from 1995. Issues of "family policies", "domestic violence", and "gender inequality in politics" were selected to provide an opportunity to study the extent to which they reflect not only a broadened EU approach to gender equality but also a deeper one. To assess what is hidden behind the label of a broader approach to gender equality, we employ the methodology of frame analysis as theorized by the literature on social movements (McAdam et al. 1996; Snow and Benford 1988; Snow et al. 1986; Tarrow 1998), and further elaborated by the MAGEEQ project, where research for this contribution has been carried out.[1] This methodology is particularly suited to grasp the meaning of gender equality in policy discourses as we discuss below.

By applying frame analysis to a selection of EU-official policy documents on "family policies", "domestic violence", and "gender inequality in politics", we have been able to detect how the three issues are framed: what are the problems and solutions, to what extent are they gendered, what roles do they attribute to their subjects, where are the problems and solutions located—in the organization of labor, intimacy, or citizenship—and who has a voice in speaking or in being spoken about in the policy texts. The findings on the different dimensions of a policy frame indicate that, while the EU approach has broadened to these new areas, the development of the latter has been rather uneven. It shows a proportionate decrease in the gendering of issues from "domestic violence" to gender inequality and "family policies". Our argument is that, in general, the broadening of EU-political discourse on gender equality to these new areas has not necessarily led to a deeper framing of the issues in terms of gender equality. Shifts from gender equality to other goals,

such as the labor market or public health, have contributed to the narrowing of the issues and lack a deeper reading of gender equality. The lack of EU competence in areas beyond the labor market, the official status of the various policy documents dealing with the issue of gender equality, and differences of voice and reference in the documents are hypothesized as possible explanations for the encountered framing. This argument is developed in five sections. The first presents the evolution of EU-gender equality policy concepts in the last decade. The second explains the methodology of frame analysis that was applied to the study of the three policy areas. The third follows the evolution of the EU-equality agenda in the issues of "family policies", "domestic violence", and "gender inequality in politics". The fourth discusses the EU framing of gender equality in these policy issues. Finally, the fifth section includes an assessment of the broadening and deepening of the EU approach to gender equality policy that draws implications of the analysis, leading to the conclusion.

EU-Gender Equality Policy: Shifting Concepts

Although EU-gender policy has been predominantly based on the concept of equal opportunities in the labor market, in the nineties, and partly also in the eighties, other types of political strategies such as positive action measures and gender mainstreaming emerged to complement the equal opportunities approach. The latter was enshrined in Article 119 EC (now 141) on equal pay for equal work and in a number of legally binding Directives in the areas of equal pay, equal treatment in employment and working conditions, and equal treatment in social security,[2] that were approved thanks to both the supranational and domestic "pincers" pressuring unwilling member states to legislate on gender equality (van der Vleuten 2007), and to women's political activism inside and outside the European institutions (Hoskyns 1996; Reinalda 1997). This has guaranteed the creation of a legal framework on equality at work that member states must implement and to which European women can refer in case of violation of their rights.

The debate on the limits of the concept of equal opportunities in bringing about equality of outcome and, ultimately, on the legitimacy of positive action measures[3] entered in the EU arena as a result of litigation in the European Court of Justice on the principle of equal treatment between men and women in employment and working conditions established in the Directive 76/207/EEC, through the Kalanke[4] and the Marschall[5] cases. The result of debates that followed the two sentences was the approval of a

Communication on positive actions,[6] a Commission proposal for amending Directive 76/207/CEE,[7] and for including a new provision in the Amsterdam Treaty, i.e., Article 141.4. This sets the goal of equality of outcome and allows member states to introduce positive actions not only when one sex is under-represented but also as a compensatory or preventive measure, thus recognizing the discrimination women must face as a collective in the labor market. Unlike the principle of equal opportunities, however, positive actions have not been given the legally binding form of a Directive (yet).

The trend towards the adoption on the part of the EU of "soft" measures to address the problem of gender inequality increases even more with gender mainstreaming, that is commonly defined as: "the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making" (Council of Europe 1998, 15). This refers to the introduction by governments and EU-institutional actors of a gender perspective into all policies and programs, in order not only to analyze their effects on women and men before decisions are taken, but also to implement, evaluate, and review policies and political processes taking gender into account. It was introduced in the new articles 2 and 3.2 of the Amsterdam Treaty, the latter stating that in *all* its activities "the Community shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women". This shift towards an EU competence on gender equality in "all areas" can also be found in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, that in its Article II-23 states that: "equality between women and men must be ensured in *all areas*, including employment, work and pay".

EU discourse on broadening gender equality to all areas, represents a progress compared to an *acquis communautaire* mainly centered on equality at work, as it may enable EU action on areas of inequality that go beyond employment and the labor market. However, the rhetoric on gender mainstreaming has not been supported by legally binding measures such as Directives, it has rather privileged soft law instruments such as the Commission's Action Programmes for Equal Opportunities between women and men (Third 1991–95, Fourth 1996–2000, and Fifth 2001–2005), and the Commission Communication 96/67 on "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities".[8] In spite of the general claims included in these documents, there are no concrete objectives, no allocation of economic and human resources (Stratigaki 2005), no timetable for action,

no specific measures for implementing gender mainstreaming, monitoring its application, and sanctioning incompliant actors. The Open Method of Coordination, through which the EU sets targets to achieve and the member states are left to implement the policies and annually report on their developments, is the main instrument employed to monitor the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Furthermore, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Amsterdam Treaty, refers to the broadening of a gender equality perspective but does not necessarily contribute to its deepening. It lacks a clear definition of what has to be understood by the elimination of inequalities and the ensuring of equality between the sexes. Also, equality merely has to be promoted, not necessarily achieved. Gender mainstreaming can be associated with the incorporation of equal opportunities for women and men into EU policies instead of a deeper reading of gender equality that includes calling into question male standards, norms, and behavior. The 1996 Communication on gender mainstreaming explicitly underlines the incorporation of an equal opportunities perspective. Scholars agree on the lack of effective implementation of gender mainstreaming in the EU policy-making process (Verloo 2001 and 2005; Walby 2005), although some tend to underline positive efforts (Hafner-Burton and Pollack 2000).

Frame Analysis

Frame analysis is the method we employ to explore what is the meaning of gender equality in the EU that lies underneath the label of a supposedly broader approach to gender. This methodology enables us to identify the ways in which gender equality policies are framed, and, in particular, to grasp the nuances of a policy frame through an in-depth, detailed analysis of the different dimensions of a specific frame. Drawing on the literature on social movements (McAdam et al. 1996; Snow and Benford 1988; Snow et al. 1986; Tarrow 1998), the MAGEEQ project has interpreted the concept of policy frame as an "organising principle that transforms fragmentary or incidental information into a structured and meaningful problem, in which a solution is implicitly or explicitly included" (Verloo 2005).

A policy problem usually includes a diagnosis (what is the problem) and a prognosis (solution/s) of the issue at stake, which can both be interpreted in many different ways. Within the dimensions of diagnosis and prognosis, there emerge implicit or explicit representations of who is deemed to have the problem, who caused it and who should solve it, to what extent gender and

intersectionality (i.e., gender intersections with race, class, sexual orientation, ability, ethnic origin, religion, ideology) are involved in both problem and solution, and where the problem and its solution are located—in the organization of citizenship, labor, or intimacy. The typology of gender structures of labor, intimacy, and citizenship was elaborated by the MAGEEQ project on the basis of the work of Walby (1990), Connell (1987), and the Dutch Gender Impact Assessment theorized by Verloo and Roggeband (1996). In the *organization of labor* the existing divisions between labor and care, and paid and unpaid work are based on a hierarchy between men and women that places women in a subordinate position. In the *organization of intimacy*, the norms, values, institutions, and organizations regulating sexuality, reproduction, private, and family life reflect traditional notions of masculinity and femininity that result in unequal positions of men and women in private life. In the current *organization of citizenship*, there exists a hierarchy between women and men as concerns the enjoyment of the main civil, political, and social rights. When analyzing policy frames in gender equality policies it is also relevant to identify who has a voice in defining problem and solution to see which actors are included or excluded.[9]

With respect to the question of whether the broader reading of gender equality as a consequence of gender mainstreaming entails a deeper reading, we ask whether and how the issue of gender (in)equality is tackled. Is there a focus on women, on men, on their relation and in what respect? How far are the standards, norms, and behavior of women and/or of men questioned? And when is this the case: in the diagnosis of a problem or in the prognosis, i.e., in formulating solutions to solve the problem? How does the diagnosis tackle the problem of gender inequality? How does the policy discourse in the various policy areas tackle the issue of gender equality in the prognosis? What form of gender inequality should finally be addressed and how? By employing gender equality as a general term, EU policies meant to foster the equality of women and men. However, by a deeper understanding of gender equality we mean one that challenges gender power mechanisms and the norms and practices associated with it from a gender perspective.

In the article, we analyze a selection of EU policy texts that include primarily official documents declaring policies on gender equality elaborated by the main political institutions (i.e., Council resolutions and recommendations, decisions, communications and reports of the Commission and the EU Presidency, resolutions, and reports of the European Parliament, particularly by the Committee on Women's Rights, speeches, press declarations, research or information reports written and published by the European institutions).

We included, though to a lesser extent, texts originating within the feminist movement and by gender experts, as a contrast for the analysis.[10] Policy documents are analyzed on the basis of the "sensitising questions" by assigning codes to each dimension of the text.[11] Diagnosis, prognosis, and the other dimensions of policy documents are organized around the structure of the "sensitising questions" in a systematic and detailed summary that has been called "supertext" (see Annex 1). A "supertext", diametrically opposed to the concept of a "subtext", enables the hidden significance of a text to be made explicit according to the dimensions listed in the "sensitising questions". Selected documents, thus, undergo an in-depth analysis whose results disclose the different dimensions of a policy frame according to the criteria established in the "sensitising questions". Some of the frames found occurred more frequently in the texts or were more comprehensive than others in incorporating many aspects of the problem, thus they appeared as major frames in comparison with other more minor ones.[12] Frames can sometimes be competing among each others, with the result that one frame takes over another, as in the case of family policies where the idea of "sharing tasks between the sexes" is diluted into that of "women reconciling work and family" due to pressing policy priorities concerning employment and competitiveness (Stratigaki 2004).

We analyze the framing of gender equality in EU-policy documents from 1995 to 2004, taking the UN Beijing Conference on Women in 1995 as the starting point for the launching of a broader concept of gender equality such as that implied by the gender mainstreaming strategy. Earlier policy discourses are sketched whenever necessary. "Family policies", "domestic violence", and "gender inequality in politics" are the selected policy areas for observing what concepts of gender equality are employed and to what extent they reflect a deeper reading of gender equality.

The evolution of the EU-gender equality agenda: "family policies", "domestic violence", and "gender inequality in politics"[13]

In the last decade, and prior to 1995, the European Union launched a series of activities in the gender equality issues of "family policies", "domestic violence" and "gender inequality in politics". With respect to *family related matters*, EU institutions such as the Parliament or the Commission issued resolutions, communications, studies, and created tools meant to undertake action where EU institutions could not act themselves, such as the European Observatory on 'National Family policies' set up by the Commission in 1989 and

which served until 2004. The scope of the European Observatory was on demographic trends, a dominant focus in EU "family policies" initiatives (Duncan 2002). Family issues were equal to questions of fertility, relations between generations, the impact of immigration, the health system, and social change, although it was also meant to monitor socio-economic and political changes with impact on families. Actually, its 1999 annual seminar was on gender and generations, but limited attention was paid to gender issues, narrowing them down to women's participation in the labor market and reconciliation problems.

Although family related matters were also interwoven with labor market issues in EU-policy discourse, the initial stimulus to promote "family policies" in the EU was a concern to promote gender equality. Discussions on work were preceded by reference to the unequal gender division of tasks within the family, the need to share being a condition for equal opportunities for women in the labor market, as can be found in the 1992 Council Recommendation on childcare.

As Stratigaki (2004) argues, these debates were later incorporated in the European employment strategies of the 1990s, where they gradually shifted meaning from the goal of sharing to that of reconciling work and family life, as evident in the Council directives on parental leave (1996) and on part-time work (1997). The concept of reconciliation addressed mainly the gendered division of labor, and less that of intimacy. This emphasis on the organization of labor represents a shift that has allowed accommodation to a growing policy priority on employment creation and competitiveness. It moved from an objective with feminist potential to a purely market-oriented objective, involving the reproduction and consolidation of women's roles and responsibilities as primary care givers. Due to the lack of competence in "family policies", the labor market agenda created an opening for dealing with certain family related matters. But the same labor market agenda blocked gender equality goals. While it was mainly femocrats who tried to further a feminist reading of family-related matters such as the household division of labor, they were but marginal actors, as for instance in the 1999 Resolution on the protection of families and children. And within policy programs and annual progress reports on gender equality the issue of family policies was relatively minor. Formally, important players were the European Parliament and Commission, but in the end it has been the social partners, rather than the member states, who negotiated the Council Directives on parental leave and part time work. Except for the latter, the policy tools employed by the EU in "family policies" are mainly soft law ones: resolutions, communications, and research reports.

First EU activities to promote *gender equality in politics* can be found in the late 1980s, with the European Parliament's 1988 first resolution on women in decision-making, following on a report by the Committee of Women's Rights. EU activities intensify from the 1990s onwards, and experience a number of peaks both before and after the dates of the European Parliament elections of 1999 and 2004, and in correspondence with initiatives by the Committee of Women's Rights, the Commission, or the European Network of Experts "Women in Decision-making" (particularly in 1996 with respect to the Charter of Rome). The focus is mainly on the problem of women's under-representation in political decision-making (sometimes extending to areas other than politics) and the achievement of a gender balance. The main actors initiating policies on the issue appear to be members of the European Parliament from the Committee of Women's Rights, women politicians, women ministers, the European Commission (DG on Employment and Social Affairs), the European Expert Network Women in Decision-making, and the European Women's Lobby (EWL).

Throughout the 1990s, the labor market approach of the Union has "widened to the progressive recognition of equality between women and men as a fundamental principle of democracy for the whole European Union." (Hubert 2001, 145), and the principle of equality has been enshrined as "a general competence" in fundamental documents (Vogel-Polsky 2000). Even though this shift implies the promotion of gender equality in political decision-making as a matter of democracy, to this date the principle of gender equality in politics is neither explicitly enounced nor supported in the EU by any concrete and legally binding provision (Meier and Paantjens 2004).

EU activities on "domestic violence" were reflected in a first European Parliament resolution on violence against women (July 1986), again following on a report by the Committee of Women's Rights.[14] In spite of a slow start of these activities (the resolution being the only initiative throughout the 1990s, with the exception of initiatives regarding sexual harassment in the workplace), from 1999 onwards the issue has progressively been legitimized as a public policy concern of the EU. It has entered the EU-policy agenda at times as human rights (e.g., in the 2000 Brochure "Breaking the silence" or in the 1997 Resolution to launch the "Zero tolerance" campaign), other times as a public health problem (e.g., in the 2000 Daphne Programme). The lack of legal basis has been determinant in shifting the focus from human rights to public health, thus limiting the approach to the problem. Among the main actors initiating and developing policies on violence against women in the EU are the

European Commission through the Daphne Programmes, the European Parliament (particularly through the Committee on Women's Rights' reports and declarations), the Council through expert meetings held by the different EU Presidencies, individual EU officers from the Commission and the Parliament, and European level NGOs such as the EWL and Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE). In common with gender inequality in politics, the EWL has been very active in the field of domestic violence. In 1997, the EWL Policy Action Centre on Violence Against Women set up an Observatory on this issue. As in the case of 'gender inequality in politics', in the area of 'domestic violence' the EU only acts through soft law measures.

"Violence against women", along with "gender inequality in politics" and "family policy", does not directly fall under EU remit. Thus, the EU-gender equality agenda has broadened, but has not provided the binding measures necessary for an enforcement of the policy on "domestic violence", family matters or gender equality in politics in the member states. The broadening of the EU-gender equality agenda is also relative. All three policy fields under consideration witness initiatives meant to promote gender equality prior to the gender mainstreaming strategy launched in Beijing in 1995. However, these initiatives were less numerous than those undertaken since the mid or the end of the 1990s. In this respect, the gender mainstreaming strategy coincides with a broadening of EU-political discourse on gender equality. But as we will see later on, the earlier initiatives sometimes reflect a deeper reading of gender equality than the ones undertaken after the adoption of a gender mainstreaming approach.

Framing Gender Equality in the European Union[15]

The above account of the evolution in the EU agenda seems to indicate the progressive broadening of the approach to tackle the problem of gender inequality. But what actually lies behind a "broader" approach? How "deep" is the understanding of gender equality that emerges from the frame analysis of the EU-political discourse?

From the mid-1990s onwards, "family policies" are mainly framed in EU-policy discourses as a problem of reconciliation and of women's access to the labor market. Co-occurrences are less frequent frames on the persistence of gender inequality, the occurrence of changes at the demographic level and in the composition of families, and the fact that "family policies" fail to solve the problems mentioned. A minor frame found only in one text deals with

poverty. Except for the last two, all frames found in diagnosis have a matching frame in prognosis, with a strong dominance of framing the solution of the problem as an issue of reconciliation. Labor market and gender equality issues are less prevalent in the framing of the solutions, and even more minor in EU "family policy" documents are solutions which are framed in terms of demographic changes. Problem and solution tend to be located in the organization of labor: reconciliation is represented as a labor market need and changes mainly concern the organization of the labor market. The main voices speaking in the analyzed texts are policy-makers, from the European Parliament and the Commission, mainly female members, and the social partners, i.e., trade unions and employers' organizations. Feminist voices seem to be less present than in the other policy areas. The 1999 EP Resolution on the protection of families and children does for instance not address the issue of gender equality, while, in the other policy areas, resolutions from the European Parliament seem to contain more feminist voices than policy texts from other European institutions.

The major framing of the problem of "gender inequality in politics" in the EU-policy texts is that of women's numerical political representation, where the problem is conceived as one of excessively small numbers of women in political institutions. This way of framing the issue is sometimes linked to a debate on the lack of institutional responses to the problem. Other times "gender inequality in politics" is framed as a problem related to structural inequalities and sources of discrimination mainly located in the labor market. Minor alternative frames express broader questions of gender inequality, such as the existence of male domination and patriarchy hindering women's political representation. The major framing of solutions to the problem is also related to the need to solve the problem of women's quantitative under-representation in politics through measures such as quotas for women in politics, changed electoral rules, changes in the traditional sexual division of labor, and monitoring progress on women in politics. Minor framing of the solutions propose the creation of "velvet triangles" between femocrats and feminist activists that would empower women's political action (see Lycklama à Nijeholt et al. 1998; Woodward 2004), and the introduction of gender mainstreaming. However, no solutions are offered to the problem of male domination. Both problem and solution tend to be located in the organization of citizenship, thus referring to institutional changes necessary to facilitate a more equal exercise of citizenship rights. By contrast, changes in the organization of intimacy and labor are much less present in the analyzed documents. Voices in the texts are those of policy-makers', mostly

women, from the European Parliament and Commission. Gender experts and the women's movement rarely appear in official texts, but when they author, or are referred to in documents, they tend to articulate a framing that provides a deeper reading of gender issues. While most policy texts do not go further than the problem of the low number of women in politics, the 1997 study on the "Differential Impact of Electoral Systems on Female Political Representation" and brochure on "How to Create a Gender Balance in Political Decision-Making" focus on underlying structural factors such as electoral systems and the dynamics associated with the recruitment, selection, and election of women. Both documents are authored by gender experts known to be feminists.

The main framing of "domestic violence" in the EU analyzed documents is presented either as a gender inequality or as a public health problem. In the first case, it is framed as a problem of gender inequality and violation of human rights, as in the examples of the 1997 "Zero tolerance campaign" Resolution and brochure on "Breaking the silence". The causes of violence are thus explained in structural gender equality terms. Gender equality sensitive solutions to the problem are generally proposed accordingly, and only in rare cases are framed in gender neutral terms. Along the traditional human rights grounding of the gender equality agenda, the EU has also framed the problem of "domestic violence" as a public health issue, a ploy which has created the opportunity for the EU to act in an area in which it has no competence. Solutions emphasize the need for coordinated multi-stakeholders' action and for promoting and monitoring research on "domestic violence" as part of prevention, and early intervention strategies. Both problem and solutions tend to be located in the organization of citizenship and, though to a lesser extent, intimacy, thus framing the issue as a matter of citizenship rights and gender roles. The introduction of the Daphne programme (2000) is a good example of domestic violence being framed as a public health problem. With this a gender-sensitive analysis of the problem disappears. Policy-makers, gender experts (mainly women), and NGOs from WAVE and the EWL are the main actors speaking in the texts on "domestic violence".

To better grasp how present the goal of gender equality is in this broader approach to equality, it is interesting to see both *why* "family policies", "domestic violence", and "gender inequality in politics" are understood as problems in the EU texts we analyzed, and *how gendered* the three policy issues are. With respect to the former, "gender inequality in politics" is considered problematic in the documents because it is a problem for democracy and equality. First, women's under-representation is deemed as a problem because

it is a sign of the poor quality of democracy and lack of legitimacy of EU-political institutions. Second, under-representation is a problem because a more balanced participation is perceived as a condition for, or a founding principle of, equality, and in its turn, equality between the sexes is a founding principle of EU legislation.

In "family policies", reconciliation problems are mainly addressed as a shortage of affordable childcare. This shortage and the ineffective reconciliation of work and care are not seen as a problem in themselves but as an obstacle to women's increased participation in the labor market. Lack of childcare is seen as an obstacle for women's equality in employment, but the problem of reconciliation is also mentioned as having an impact on the sustainability of labor supply. The labor market frame is particularly concerned with the supply side problem of the need for sufficient labor of the right sort.

"Domestic violence" is perceived to be a problem because of the economic costs it incurs for society and, in terms of "gender inequality in politics", the threat it represents for democracy. In the texts, the economic dimension centers predominantly on "domestic violence" as a problem of public health for the individual because it affects their ability to contribute to society. The threat-to-democracy argument is frequently conceptualized by gender equality sensitive approaches by reference to the damage sustained by "domestic violence" to the self-esteem of women and, as a consequence, the political representation of women.

The issue of "gender inequality in politics" is gendered in all the documents analyzed. However, the concept of representation mainly focuses on (lack of) the presence of women. The focus of diagnosis and prognosis is on women only, not on gender as an inter-relational category of men and women. With some exceptions of policy documents articulating feminist positions, women's under-representation is not related to men's positions and roles in politics. In "family policies", too, the focus is on women. It is women who face a problem of reconciliation, leading to other problems such as the demographic deficit, a lack of labor force supply, and changes at the level of family life and functioning. While the issue is, thus, gendered, the problem, again, is not approached from a gender perspective, in the sense that reconciliation might be a problem for *all* parents, both men and women. Even more, reconciliation is a problem of a lack of infrastructure, not of the gendered distribution of tasks in the sphere of intimacy. Men and the gendered relations between men and women are no part of the diagnosis. The documents lack references to men and how their positions and roles interfere with those of women. Whenever men are addressed, they are said to have the problem of being disadvantaged, facing a disadvantage when it

comes to participating in the family (2000 Resolution on the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life). But women's amount of care work is not explicitly addressed as being intrinsically related to that of men. Furthermore, prevailing gender roles are not put into question but tend to be confirmed by a focus on how women could better reconcile work and care. In this respect, major frames on "gender inequality in politics" and "family policies" do not tend to address the concept of gender, they rather limit diagnosis and prognosis to a primary focus on women as a homogenous social category, with almost no reference to how gender intersects race, class, ability, sexual preference, ethnicity, and other structural inequalities.

The case of "family policies" started out differently. The first two Medium-Term Action Programs on Equal Opportunities define sharing as a precondition for the equal treatment of both sexes, and the 1992 Council recommendation on childcare referred to the sharing of employment and family responsibilities between men and women. The goal of gender equality had—amongst others—to be achieved by changes in the behavior of men, picking up female caring responsibilities, and not merely by women catching up. The 2000 Council resolution on a balanced participation of men and women in family and working life also refers to the idea of sharing, but is marginal in this. In the case of "family policies", some of the few initiatives on gender equality developed before the mid-1990s clearly showed a deeper reading of gender equality than most of the latter ones which predominantly reflect the acceptance of male standards (see Lewis 2006).

Most EU analyzed texts treat "domestic violence" as a gender equality related issue. The issue is gendered, and, unlike the case of "gender inequality in politics" and "family policies", it tends to refer not only to women but also to men. There are some texts that present the problem as an exclusive women's problem rather than in terms of gender relations, but the major frame on gender inequality suggests a more structural treatment of the concept of "gender" than it is for the other two cases. However, not all texts pay attention to gender or even sex. For instance, the Daphne Programmes tend to limit their attention to women and children. The 2000 brochure "Breaking the silence" goes further and argues that violence against women is caused by and feeds the imbalance in power relations between the sexes. A similar argument can be found in the 2005 report of the European Parliament on the current situation in combating violence against women (Final A6-0404/2005), or in former Zero Tolerance campaigns. Also in contrast to the other two issues, "domestic violence" texts present some evidence of consideration of

intersectionality, particularly through references to age, race, nationality, ethnicity, asylum, immigration, and class.

The gendering described above is also reflected in the *roles* that are attributed to subjects in the policy texts. "Gender inequality in politics" contains a dominant framing of women as the main problem-holders with men implicitly or explicitly as the norm. Women are the ones who must achieve men's numbers in politics in order to be equal. A strong frame about men causing or even holding the problem of "gender inequality in politics" does not exist, nor are men ever treated as the target group of measures to solve the problem, e.g., through the sharing of power (positions). Women are problematized in "family policies" too, but with less of a framing of men as the norm. They are simply left out of the picture. As with the diagnosis, prognosis focuses mainly on women. Measures in "family policies" are targeted at women, enabling them to reconcile work and care. Men are addressed only to a limited extent and vaguely: they are encouraged to take up care tasks (1996 Council Directive on parental leave) or to move towards some unspecified goal of greater balance in family and working life (Resolution 2000/C 218/02 of the Council and of the Ministers for Employment and Social Policy). Part of the political discourse on "domestic violence" also tends to leave men out of the picture. They do not appear as victims, or in any other role. But insofar as men are considered, they are portrayed as perpetrators. Similarly, victims tend to be associated with women (and also with children). In this respect role attribution takes a stereotype form. Most of the documents analyzed did not attribute the responsibility for "domestic violence" to anyone, apart from the state in not being able to protect citizens or society in general. Solutions are mainly geared towards victim support. In addition, measures suggested for the elimination of domestic violence are primarily aimed at raising awareness of the problem. However, going beyond the predominantly soft-measured approach, the criminalizing of "domestic violence" and the need for sanctions are also proposed. In the light of the lack of EU competence in this field, it is member states who are called upon to act in this area.

EU-Gender Equality Policies: Broadening without Deepening?

Considering the EU framing of the three equality issues, "domestic violence" is the one where public debates seem to have most placed the matter within the realm of gender equality. This happens, to a lesser extent, also for "gender inequality in politics", where problem and solution have to do with gender inequality, although

they are mainly expressed in quantitative rather than structural terms. This occurs much less in the case of "family policies", that makes labor market and reconciliation the focus of its problem representation, at least from the 1990s onwards. This conclusion can be drawn not only from the way problems and solutions are framed, but also from other dimensions of the policy frame. For instance, the reasons for considering a specific topic as a problem are equality and democracy for the issues of "domestic violence" and "gender inequality in politics", and labor market needs for "family policies". The issues of "gender inequality in politics" and "domestic violence" tend to be located in the organization of citizenship, and treated as problems of access and enjoyment of citizenship rights, and, only for "domestic violence", as also a problem of gender inequality in the sphere of intimacy. By contrast, the location of the problem and solution of "family policies" is predominantly the labor market.

While a deeper gender focus appears in the issue of "domestic violence" as compared to the other two, a rather similar trend emerges across issues that, in general, avoids addressing men's responsibility for changing their behavior. In relation to the gendering of the issues in the EU-selected texts, "family policies", and "gender inequality in politics" have a clear focus on women, while "domestic violence" combines an emphasis on women with references to men and gender relations. Also, while neither "family policies" nor "gender inequality in politics" consider intersectionality, the latter is to some extent present in the framing of "domestic violence". The three issues are presented as problems for which women have responsibility, but without much attention to the relevance of the interrelational character of the category of gender. Some differences exist in the way men are referred to: as the norm for women's attainments in texts on "gender inequality in politics"; as absent in "family policies", and only present in "domestic violence" as perpetrators.

Frame analysis allows us to detect also the emergence of minor frames or shifts in frames that stand at a distance from the major framing, and these sometimes reveal a deeper gender equality approach. In "family policies", minor frames concern the problem of gender inequality and of demographic and family changes. The framing of the issue has shifted from a demographic and equality concern to a predominantly labor market problem that has been consolidated through the legally binding Directives on parental leave and part-time work. The issue of "domestic violence" constantly shifts from a major frame on gender inequality as a breach of human rights to another major frame on violence as a problem of

public health, which enables to circumvent the constraint of a lack of EU competence on the area, but does not specifically target gender inequality as a problem. "Gender inequality in politics" is the policy area that shows more continuity in its major framing of the problem as women's political under-representation with a range of institutional solutions, with minor frames adopting more structural approaches to the problem.

In spite of the differences in the framing of the three issues, that show a proportionally decreasing gendering trend from "domestic violence" to "gender inequality in politics" and "family policies", overall, the broadening of the EU approach to these new areas has not necessarily led to a deeper framing of them as gender equality problems, but rather to an uneven development of their goals, diagnosis, and solutions. And when problems are solved through legally binding measures, as it occurs in some cases with "family policies", the gender equality approach shifts to the narrower labor market one. This is, for instance, the case with Directives 96/34/EC and 97/81/EC agreed by the social partners, which are firmly located within the labor market and reflect an interest in agreeing lower common denominator solutions that are less costly for reluctant member states to implement (van der Vleuten 2007).

Examples of "strategic framing" of the issue, in order to place it on the EU agenda, can be found in both "domestic violence" and "family policies". The issue of "domestic violence" manages to fall under the EU remit when it is framed as a public health problem, and measures on "family policies" acquire a legally binding nature when they are framed as market related. However, the side-effects of this type of strategic rhetoric are to de-gender the issue, in the case of "domestic violence", and to narrow it to the confines of the labor market, as in the case of "family policies".

The EU "broadening-without-deepening" approach to gender equality policy is clearly affected by the Union labor market constraints. The Amsterdam Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights suggest a shift in EU-gender equality policy from the usual labor-related agenda to all other areas, at least at the rhetorical level. This shift, fostered by the strategy of gender mainstreaming, could mean that the EU concept of gender equality broadens to include not only the area of employment but also family, politics, sexuality, culture, and violence, that are all the areas of patriarchy in which we encounter gender inequality and discrimination (Walby 1990). In practice, however, it means that the concept of equality can apply to all EU activities, which, as stated in Article 3 of the Amsterdam Treaty, are predominantly market and employment-related. The emerging of new issues such as

"family policies", "domestic violence" (Walby 2004), and "gender inequality in politics" must then be understood in the context of a shifting EU agenda in this area, but with the limitation of an EU competence that is still essentially market-related. None of the three mentioned policy areas specifically falls under the EU remit, which means that most EU actions in these fields are inevitably of a "soft law" nature, although the EU has more powers in those aspects of "family policies" that are more employment related, such as issues of maternity and parental leave.

The nature of the actors who speak or who are referred to in the texts partly explains some of the differences in the framing of the three issues. While the main actors speaking in the documents analyzed in the three issues are female policy-makers from the European Parliament and Commission, the issue that is more gender focused, i.e., "domestic violence", also shows the voice of feminist activists from WAVE and EWL, who are also referred to in official texts. In decreasing order, the other issue that shows a deeper gender equality approach is "gender inequality in politics", in which the European Parliament's Committee of Women's Rights was a leading actor in EU debate, and where the selection of texts also presents documents authored by gender experts and feminist NGOs such as the EWL, though they are rarely mentioned in official documents. The issue that appeared less gendered in the analysis, "family policies", is also the one in which the actors speaking in the texts are European policy-makers and the social partners, while no gender experts and feminist activists appear in the selection of texts or are cited in the official documents analyzed. Among the experts in family matters, no gender experts and feminist activists were to be found. This does not necessarily imply that family policies in the strict sense of the word are no issue for gender experts and feminist activists. The EWL has for instance dealt with the issue of reconciliation. But family policies at EU level seem to be dominated by other actors.

Conclusions

The period from 1995 until 2004 reflects an evolution in EU discourse on gender equality through the emergence both of different concepts of equality, from equal opportunities, to positive actions and gender mainstreaming, and, related to the latter, of a broader agenda that begun to cover gender policy areas beyond the labor market. The analysis of EU policy-making activity on gender equality confirms a broadening of approach in terms of concepts and agenda. However, a closer analysis of policy frames in a selection of EU policy documents in the emerging equality areas of "family

policies", "domestic violence", and "gender inequality in politics" shows that the development has been uneven and not always especially gender focused. In particular, while "domestic violence" is, of the three issues, the one that presents a deeper gender focus, and "gender inequality in politics" follows but with less attention for structural diagnosis and solutions, "family policies" shows a much narrower focus on the labor market and women's position in it—notwithstanding the fact that earlier policy discourses reflected a deeper reading of gender equality. In this respect, the broadening of EU-gender equality policy discourse did not entail its deepening. The broadening fostered by gender mainstreaming entails the introduction of an equal opportunities perspective in a broader range of policy areas and discourses but no challege to gender relations or gendered practices of inequality. In this respect EU-gender equality policy discourse joins the 1996 Communication in pleading for the incorporation of an equal opportunities perspective in all policy areas.

With respect to the legal status of proposed measures in the emerging policy areas, in general, this broader EU-gender equality agenda has not provided the binding measures necessary for a more effective enforcement of the new equality policy areas, except for the two directives on "family policies" agreed by the social partners. But the scope of these measures with regard to fostering gender equality is limited, too. The lack in the *acquis* of a proper legal basis on gender equality in all areas beyond employment can limit the framing of the issue to a labor market concern that also limits the solution, as in "family policies". It can also steer the focus of the policy towards goals that do not necessarily coincide with the achievement of gender equality, as in the case of "domestic violence" that is sometimes framed as a problem of public health rather than of gender equality. By promoting a "de-gendering" of issues (that involves a weakening of the gender equality component) and by prioritizing the focus on the labor market, the underlying EU discourse proves resistant to the articulation of gender equality as a policy issue both in broader and in deeper terms.

EU main labor market competence is indeed a major constraint on a broader and deeper gender equality approach, but it is not the only factor to explain the different gender focus of the three issues. Although more studies are needed to test the hypothesis, a first approximation to explaining the different framing of the three EU-equality issues with respect to their gendered character could be the extent to which gender experts and feminist activists speak or are spoken of in official policy documents. If this is confirmed, it would come to no surprise that the issue of "domestic violence", that shows a deeper gender focus, is also the one to which feminist

activists seem to have contributed most, followed by the one on "gender inequality in politics".

NOTES

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1. The MAGEEQ (Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Europe) Project on "Policy frames and implementation problems: the case of gender mainstreaming" (www.mageeq.net) was funded under the Fifth Framework Programme of the European Commission. The MAGEEQ team coordinated by Mieke Verloo has developed the theoretical and methodological framework as well as the research data.

2. See Council Directive 75/117/EEC, *OJ* L 45, 19.02.1975; Council Directive 76/207/EEC, *OJ* L 39, 14.02.1976 amended by the recent Directive 2002/73/EC, *OJ* L269/15, 05.10.2002; Council Directive 79/7/EEC, *OJ* L 6, 10.01.1979; Council Directive 86/613/EEC, *OJ* L 359, 19.12.1986; Council Directive 86/378/EEC, *OJ* L 225, 12.08.1986 amended by Council Directive 96/97/EC, *OJ* L 46, 17.02.1997; Council Directive 92/85/EEC, *OJ* L 348, 28.11.1992; Council Directive 96/34/EC, *OJ* L 145, 19.06.1996; Council Directive 97/80/EEC, *OJ* L 14, 20.01.1998; Council Directive 97/81/EC, *OJ* L 14, 20.01.1998; Council Directive 2004/113/EC, *OJ* L 373/37 21.12.2004; Council Directive 2006/54/EC, *OJ* L 204/23 26.07.2006.

3. Positive actions try to correct the initial disadvantage of women, taking gender into account in establishing the criteria for employment, promotions, and participation in decision-making institutions. In all of these situations, the application of a compensatory measure means favoring, in cases of equal merit, a woman over a man.

4. Case C-450/93 *Eckhard Kalanke v. Freie Hansestadt Bremen* [1995] ECR 1995.

5. Case C-409/95 *Hellmut Marschall v. Land Nordrhein-Westfalen* [1997] ECR I-6363.

6. COM(96)88 final.

7. *OJ* C 179, 22.06.1996, p. 8.

8. COM(96)67final.

9. The frame analysis developed by the MAGEEQ-project also related the analysis of diagnosis and prognosis to the mechanisms considered to reproduce or overcome the problem, and the norms and balance present in policy documents. For the entire set of questions see Annex 1 and for a more comprehensive discussion of them see Verloo (2005).

10. The smaller number of feminist and expert texts selected within MAGEEQ was due to the decision of focusing the research on the analysis of official documents presenting the position of political institutions on gender inequality.

11. Frame analysis employs elements from grounded theory, a methodology that includes the analysis of words and sentences regularly repeated

along the text, of words in their context, of dimensions of ideas implicit in the texts, and of how ideas are organized in different positions within these dimensions (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

12. The selection of documents was based on the construction of a time-line identifying key moments of debates among different socio-political actors in each of the selected issues throughout the period of study. Texts were added to the selection until all substantial aspects of a debate were covered.

13. This section draws on the following MAGEEQ research reports: Meier and Paantjens 2004; van Beveren, Verloo, and Meier 2004; Paantjens 2004.

14. Doc A2-44/86.

15. This section draws on the following MAGEEQ research reports: Lombardo et al. 2005; Meier and Paantjens 2004; van Beveren, Verloo, and Meier 2004; Meier et al. 2005; Bustelo et al. 2005; Paantjens 2004.

Acknowledgments

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Annex 1: List of Sensitizing Questions that Structure a "supertext"

Full title (in English and in original language)
Country / Place
Issue (main issue, detail if necessary)
Date
Type/status of document
Actor(s) and gender of actor(s) if applicable
Audience
Event / reason / occasion of appearance
Parts of text eliminated

Voice
SUMMARY
Voice(s) speaking
Perspective
References: words/ concepts (and where they come from)
References: actors

References: documents

Other references: events etc.

Form (argumentation / style / conviction techniques / dichotomies / metaphors / contrasts)

Diagnosis

SUMMARY

What is represented as the problem? To what extent is gender part of it?

Why is it seen as a problem?

Causality (what is seen as a cause of what?)

Dimensions of gender (social categories / identity / behavior / norms and symbols / institutions/other)

Intersectionality (class, ethnicity, race, age, sexual preference, etc.)

Mechanisms (resources /norms & interpretations / legitimization of violence; gendered/de-gendered?)

Location (organization of labor / organization of intimacy / organization of citizenship)

Attribution of roles in diagnosis

SUMMARY

Who is seen as responsible for causing the problem?

Problem holders (whose problem is it seen to be? Active/passive roles, perpetrators/victims, etc.?)

Normativity (what is a norm group if there is a problem group?)

Legitimization of non-problem(s)

Prognosis

SUMMARY

What to do? Which action is deemed necessary and why?

Hierarchy / priority in goals.

How to achieve goals (strategy / means / instruments)?

Dimensions of gender (social categories / identity / behavior / norms & symbols / institutions)

Intersectionality (class, ethnicity, race, age, sexual preference, etc)

Mechanisms (resources / norms and interpretations / violence)

Location (organization of labor / intimacy / citizenship)

Attribution of roles in prognosis

SUMMARY

Call for action

Call for non-action

Who is acted upon? (target groups)

Boundaries set to action and legitimization of non-action

Normativity
SUMMARY
What is seen as ideal/preferred (institution/state of affairs/way of doing things/persons)?
What is seen as bad/detrimental, whether institution, state of affairs, way of doing things or persons?
Location of norms in the text (diagnosis / prognosis / elsewhere)

Balance
SUMMARY
Emphasis on different dimensions / elements
Frictions or contradictions within dimensions / elements

Comments

Annex 2: List of Analyzed Texts

EU documents on gender inequality in politics

1. Speech by Padraig Flynn, European Commissioner for Social Affairs and Employment, 23 March 1995

2. Council Resolution of 27 March 1995 on the balanced participation of men and women in decision-making, *OJ C168 4.7.1995*

3. Charter of Rome on "women for the renewal of politics and society", 17 May 1996

4. Garcia Munoz, Victoria and Emily Carey (1997) Differential Impact of Electoral Systems on Female Political Representation. Women's Rights Series 10. European Parliament: Luxemburg

5. Leyenaar, Monique (1997) How to Create a Gender Balance in Political Decision-Making. Luxembourg: OOPEC

6. European Election Brochure "Europe for women, women for Europe", European Commission DGV and European Parliament's Women's Rights Committee, 25 February 1999

7. EWL Newsletter July 1999, special edition: New European Parliament, A new Commission—How much will women benefit?

8. Finnish Presidency report to the Council on "Women in the decision-making process" in the Member States and the European Institutions, 22 October 1999

9. European Parliament resolution on women in decision-making, 2 March 2000 B5-0180/2000 *OJ C346/82*

10. European Women Lobby recommendation on "Women in decision-making", 22 May 2000

11. Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee on the implementation of Council recommendation 96/694 on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process *OJ L391*, COM(2000)120

12. Communication from the Commission of 7 July 2000 addressed to Member States on the Commission Decision relating to a gender balance within the committees and expert groups established by it

13. European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities' report on the Commission report on the implementation of Council Recommendation 96/694 on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process (COM(2000) 120 – C5-0210/2000 – 2000/2117(COS)

14. European Parliament plenary debate on balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process (COM(2000) 120 – C5-0210/2000 – 2000/2117(COS))

15. EWL Lobbying Kit European Elections 2004. Have we got the balance right?, July 2003

16. European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities' report on Election 2004: How to ensure balanced representation of women and men A5-0333/2003, 7 October 2003

EU documents on family policies

1. Council recommendation on childcare (31 March 1992)

2. Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union (1996)

3. Council Directive 96/34/EC on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC (3 June 1996)

4. Council Directive 97/81/EC concerning the Framework Agreement on part-time work concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC (15 December 1997)

5. Resolution on the protection of families and children (A4-0004/1999)

6. Resolution of the Council and Ministers for Employment and Social Policy on the balanced participation of women and men in family and working life (29 June 2000)

7. Council Decision December 2000 establishing a Program relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001–2005)

8. Low fertility, families and public policies, Synthesis Report, Annual Seminar, Seville, Spain (15–16 September 2000)

9. Young People and Children in EU Policies. Anna Diamantopoulou. Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, Speech for the seminar on Family Forms and the Young generation in Europe, Milan, Italy (20–22 September 2001)

10. Family Benefits and Family Policies in Europe (European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs, Unit E.2), (June 2002)

11. Family life in Europe, results of surveys on Quality of Life in Europe, speech of Hubert Krieger (13–14 May 2004)

EU documents on domestic violence

Campaign Zero Tolerance:

1. Resolution on the need to establish a European Union wide campaign for zero tolerance of violence against women (1997)

2. EU-ministerial Conference campaign against violence towards women (Cologne 19 March 1999)

3. Brochure "Breaking the Silence" for the European Campaign "zero tolerance of violence against women" (2000)

Daphne:

4. Amended Proposal for a European Parliament and Council Decision adopting a Programme of Community action (the Daphne Programme) (2000–2004) on measures aimed to prevent and protect against violence against children, young persons, and women (1999)

5. Parliamentary debate Violence against Women (8 March 1999)

6. Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the "communication from the Commission on violence against children, young persons and women" and on the "Amended proposal for a European Parliament and Council Decision adopting a programme of community action (the Daphne Programme) (2000–2004) on measures aimed to prevent violence against children, young persons and women (11 March 1999)

7. Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on the Amended proposal for a European parliament and Council decision adopting a programme of community action (the Daphne Programme) (2000–2004) on measures aimed to prevent violence against children, young persons and women (28 April 1999)

8. Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council adopting a program of community action (the Daphne Programme) (2000–2004) on preventive measures to fight

violence against children, young persons and women (24 January 2000)

9. Daphne. External Evaluators" Report on the Daphne Programme year 2000 (November 2002)

Other Texts Domestic Violence:

10. Anna Diamantopoulou speaks out against domestic violence (4 May 2000)

11. Anna Diamantopoulou speech on Tackling Domestic Violence and trafficking in human beings—the role of the European Union, member states and civil society (30 May 2003)

12. 13) EWL. Resource papers. "Capacity building for gender equality in view of European Union enlargement" and "Violence against women and women's human rights in EU" (April 2003)

14. EWL observatiore. Devoiler les données de la violence domestique dans l'Union Européenne (27 January 2000)

15. Speech by MEP Maj Britt Theorin held at the meeting on Violence against women—zero tolerance in Portugal (May 2000)

16. WAVE. Good Practices and Training Programme (15 November 2000)

17. Report by the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities on the proposal for a European Parliament and Council decision establishing a second phase of the Daphne Programme (24 July 2003)