



# Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament

Petra Ahrens  
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

**KOSMOS-Workshop "Gendering the European Parliament:  
Structures, Policies and Practices",  
February 29 to March 2, 2016, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin**

# Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament – the Puzzle

- EP as the only Parliament that adopted gender mainstreaming.
- EP as one of the only institutions still adopting formal texts on gender mainstreaming.
- soft law self-obligation to implement gender mainstreaming in its own institution
- Why important: possible impact far beyond supranational level due to possible trickle down effect to member states

# EP Gender Mainstreaming Resolutions

- European Parliament resolution on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament (2002/2025(INI)), (adopted 2003)
- European Parliament resolution on gender mainstreaming in the work of the committees (2005/2149(INI)), (adopted 2006)
- European Parliament resolution of 22 April 2009 on gender mainstreaming in the work of its committees and delegations (2008/2245(INI)), (adopted 2009)
- European Parliament resolution of 17 November 2011 on gender mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament (2011/2151(INI)), (adopted 2011)
- Draft report adopted February 18, 2016 in FEMM committee: Gender mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament.

## Research Question(s)

- How are gender mainstreaming resolutions set up in the EP?
- What are similarities and differences over time?
- Which frames are used to justify gender mainstreaming in the EP? How did they change over time?
- Which role does the FEMM committee play – for the resolutions and gender mainstreaming?
- How can changes over time be explained?
- Are parliamentary resolutions an effective tool of gender mainstreaming implementation?

# Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament – Methods and Methodology

- Critical frame analysis - a discursive approach to policy analysis
- Frames reveal how actors understand the policy field, how they fit its content into the broader context of their institution.
- Parliamentary texts: signifier of different ideas and cultures and a field where ideas, norms, and cultures are embodied and visible → textual form that cannot be changed after publication.
- Political actors use frames to transport their ideas norms and connect them with a broader (institutional) context.
- Which frames can be distinguished in the EP resolutions justifying gender mainstreaming implementation and which frames appeared and changed over time?

# Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament – Methods and Methodology

(Not-extensive) keyword analysis mid-2015 on EP website

gender mainstreaming

- Two hits: Resolution International Roma Day; EU strategy for equality post-2015

gender, women, male, equal

- committee welcomes on their website

- rules of procedure

- Legislative Observatory

- on-going activities of the FEMM committee

- Existence of equality bodies? High Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity

# General features of EP resolutions

Gender mainstreaming in:

- Committee work
- Delegations
- Bureau
- Secretariat
- EP staff policies

Structure of resolutions:

- References to treaties, conventions, resolutions
- Arguments why resolution is necessary (data)
- Main steps to be taken for GM implementation
- Explanatory statement

## EP GM resolutions – uniting aspects

- Resolutions are based on own-initiative reports
- Own-initiative reports assigned by Conference of Presidents
- Only the first was accompanied by an opinion from another committee, the Legal Affairs and Internal Market
- First resolution paved the way for follow-up resolutions by introducing reporting obligation
- FEMM committee as “competent committee” assigned for reports and resolutions
- Usually drafted by chairperson

The more institutionalised the quicker the process?

- 52 weeks, first resolution
- 29 weeks, second & third resolution
- 16 weeks, fourth resolution

But: also more contested over time in plenary vote



# EP Gender Mainstreaming Resolutions

- European Parliament resolution on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament (2002/2025(INI)), (adopted 2003)
- European Parliament resolution on gender mainstreaming in the work of the committees (2005/2149(INI)), (adopted 2006)
- European Parliament resolution of 22 April 2009 on gender mainstreaming in the work of its committees and delegations (2008/2245(INI)), (adopted 2009)
- European Parliament resolution of 17 November 2011 on gender mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament (2011/2151(INI)), (adopted 2011)
- Draft report adopted February 18, 2016 in FEMM committee: Gender mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament.

## Frames in the resolutions

- Gender mainstreaming implementation frame
- Descriptive representation frame
- Democracy frame
- Vanguard frame
- Reconciliation frame
- Human rights and fundamental rights frame
- Economic frame
- Demography frame

## Changes over time

- Quicker but more contested
- Descriptive representation frame dominant
- Explanatory statement is the FEMM evaluation and that changed considerably over time from mothering (2006) to naming and shaming (2009) to accepting dissatisfaction (2011)
- Until 2011 (2009) goal of GM implementation, then resignation (?) and switch to GM Amendments

## The role of the FEMM committee

- the FEMM committee is indispensable for the implementation of gender mainstreaming even though it is not the only institutional actor responsible.
- the FEMM has initiated almost all relevant EP resolutions and actions regarding gender mainstreaming
- Simultaneously the role of the FEMM committee is ambiguous: the current responsibilities contradict the idea of a transformative strategy and rather show an integrative approach or toolkit approach.
- without the FEMM there would probably be not any gender mainstreaming in the EP
- AND gender mainstreaming in the EP has become the life insurance for the FEMM committee

## Conclusion

- As a parliamentary body, the EP presents a special case as regards gender mainstreaming
- Gender mainstreaming became institutionalized in the form of recurring resolutions on GM that shift between motivating and naming/blaming
- The FEMM is almost the only subunit implementing GM in the EP and the other committees fail to fulfill their duties
- With the growing power of the EP and the growing number of anti-EU and very conservative political groups, the commitment to promote gender equality deteriorated