

COMPARATIVE WOMEN STUDIES IN CULTURE AND POLITICS
MASTER THESIS

The definition(s) of Gender Mainstreaming :

From International Organizations to the Belgian Federal State

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1. Introduction

Gender Mainstreaming (GM) is a relatively new concept. GM was first, officially introduced but not mentioned in 1985 at the third World Conference on Women of the United Nations in Nairobi. The emergence of the term was linked to the debate about women's role in developing countries within the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (Council of Europe, 1998: 11). Gender mainstreaming was perceived by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and women's movements as a response to the perceived 'failure' of women's incorporation in development policies and the persistence of inequalities between men and women everywhere in the world. From then on, a change in tactics seemed necessary. Transnational movements theorized in sociology as "transnational advocacy network" (Hafner-Burton & Pollack, 2002: 287) includes women's movements, NGO's and entrepreneurial actors such as governments and supranational institutions.

In September 1995, when a gender mainstreaming approach was officially promoted at the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the transnational advocacy networks advocated for a stronger integration of women and equality between men and women via an incorporation of gender in all policies and in all mainstream institutions instead of delegating it only to specialist Women's Units (Payne, 2011: 518). The result of their pressure was the adoption of GM in an UN resolution: the Beijing declaration, completed with the Platform for Action (Dauphin & Sénac-Slawinski, 2008: 5). Since then, GM has become a commitment for the UN's Member States and international organizations ratifying it: such as the Member States of the European Union, the European Union itself, the UN, the Council of Europe, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization (Payne, 2011: 517).

It is within this context of complying with the commitment taken at the Beijing Conference that the Belgian federal government has adopted gender mainstreaming, translated into French as 'integrated approach of equality' (*approche intégrée de l'égalité*)¹. A first law called 'Law of 6 March 1996 covering checks of the application of the resolutions of the World Conference of Women, which took place in Beijing from the 4 to the 14 September 1995' was adopted by the Belgian federal Parliament (Wuiame, 2011: 3). A second federal law has been adopted in 2007 to better fulfill the commitment of Belgium to the Beijing Act: 'Law of 12 January 2007 comprising checks of the application of the resolutions of the World Conference on Women which took place in Beijing in September 1995 and the integration of the gender dimension in all federal policy lines'. In parallel, since 1996, gender mainstreaming initiatives have been undertaken by subnational levels: the Flemish government made the Beijing report

compulsory in 1996, the French-speaking community and Walloon government both adopted it in 2002 and the Brussels region took the leap in 2006 (Meier & Celis, 2011: 477-478).

Despite its wide adoption, gender mainstreaming's definition varies from country to country and from international organization to international organization ranging from the equation with the concept equal opportunities - continuation of previous policies (like affirmative action, equal treatment, equal participation) - to reform of the government... (Verloo, 2005: 2). According to Verloo, the various understandings of GM create a chameleon's definitions, which are adapted to each social and political context (Verloo, 2005: 355).

This context of rapid international engagements to adopt gender mainstreaming and coexistence of different definitions led me to question the homogeneity of gender mainstreaming's definitions. To put in practice my interrogation, I chose to study a specific case: the Belgium's federal definitions of gender mainstreaming. The manner GM is defined and adopted on a federal level in Belgium will be compared to international organizations' definitions and adoption. Comparison will also be made with definitions and adoption issued by feminist scholars' reflections on GM. Focus will also be pointed on the evolution and factors having influenced the Belgium's federal definitions and especially those issued from international or academic levels. The research question will be: which factors can explain the evolution of gender mainstreaming's definition in the federal official documents of Belgium since 1996?

My subject can be seen as socially relevant by its commitment to understand the conception of power structures and male bias in politics via the definition of a concept in a European country. It will reflect, by analyzing texts produced by the Belgian federal State and International organizations, the values and definitions attributed to gender mainstreaming as well as the forces influencing the definition (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007: 229). The way gender mainstreaming is defined is part of a broader analysis aiming to better understand the success or failure in the implementation of gender mainstreaming. Having the Belgian nationality and no literature having analyzed the Belgium's definitions, I found interesting to make a comparison with international organizations' and feminist's definitions.

My hypotheses are:

- The different definitions of gender mainstreaming and their evolution in supranational documents since 1996 - compulsory or recommended - as those from the European

Union, the Council of Europe and the United Nations have an impact and influence on the modification of the Belgian's official definition of gender mainstreaming.

- Experts and academics reflections on GM have been influential in the elaboration of the 2007 law as well as in the elaboration of gender mainstreaming's definitions in official documents.
- The definition of gender mainstreaming in the 2007 law, circular and royal decree have been determinant in the elaboration of Belgian's federal documents. Their adoption by the federal parliament giving strength of law.

Due to the constraints of time and space inherent to this master thesis, focus will be put on research on gender mainstreaming at the federal level of Belgium through French documents only (no knowledge of Dutch). Only a part of the documents issued on the subject by the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Belgium's ministries will be analyzed due to the length determined of my thesis. The selected documents will be subject to criteria mentioned in the methodology part of this introduction.

1.1. Methods

The method-concept gender mainstreaming implies a shift in policies-making with the integration of a gender dimension in all policies. Gender mainstreaming is part of the category public policies. In theory, a public policy is an attempt to answer a problem. A policy problem needs a definition of the problem and an identification of its solutions; these processes are submitted to different interpretations about the problem's causes and the best solutions to solve it, it creates implicit or explicit representations of who is deemed to hold the problem, the causes and actors who will solve it (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 154-155). In theory, the prognosis (solutions) should correspond to diagnosis (identification). This process is called, in political science theory, the framing process or the "policy frame"; it is "a way of selecting, organizing, interpreting and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analyzing, persuading and acting" (Rein & Schön, 1993: 146 quoted by Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2002: 287).

Elements having an impact on the definition of GM at the UN, Council of Europe, EU and Federal Belgium State will be analyzed as well indirectly the equality's definition. Under the period 1996 – 2014, focus will be set on the terminology used, the involved actors and their influences exercised on each other's definition (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2011: 435).

In addition to the identification of the framing process, a method ‘content analysis’ will be used to answer my research question. Content analysis can be defined as “a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meaning” (Leedy & Ormrod, Neuendorf, quoted by Berg, 2007: 303-304). A qualitative content analysis will also take place with an interpretative approach. “The focus of this technique is on the formation of theory from the observation of messages and the coding of those messages. With its roots in social scientific inquiry, it involves theoretical sampling; analytical categories; cumulative, comparative analysis; and the formulation of types or conceptual categories.” (Neuendorf, 2002: 6).

Berg, a sociologist, has identified the following phases in conducting a content analysis in politics:

- Collect data and made them into text
- Transform codes into categorical labels or themes
- Identify categories, similarities and differences
- Isolate meaningful patterns and processes
- Cross the interpretations with previous theories and produce a small set of generalizations (Berg, 2007: 305-306).

Two types of content will be analyzed: written content from documents produced by the Belgian State and international organizations and content from semi-constructed interviews. Each time, the analysis of gender mainstreaming definitions will be completed with the study of gender equality’s definition in politics, due to their intrinsic link. In fact, in the majority of definitions analyzed, equality between men and women is presented as the main goal of gender mainstreaming. Nevertheless, gender inequality or equality is also subject to different interpretations: it can be understood as either ‘women lagging behind men’ or as ‘men dominating power positions and excluding women’ (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 154-155).

My criteria for selecting the documents implementing gender mainstreaming in Belgium produced by the federal State will be their official status: law, decrees, circular as well as the documents published by the Institute for Equality between Women and Men, this latter being in charge of its implementation. The first category concerns documents published by the government and parliament with force of law and the second category is related to documents

published by the authorities in charge of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in all the administrations and ministries: the Institute for Equality between Men and Women.

To compare the Belgian documents, a selection of documents from supranational bodies has been chosen for analysis. The selection criteria for the UN, Council of Europe and EU were the foundational nature of the documents and their mention in scientific literature. Concerning the UN, the resolution adopted in 1995 and the reports of its implementation will be studied and completed with the resolutions adopted by the ECOSOC and the Secretary General since 1996. Regarding the Council of Europe, the definition expressed in the 1998 is the main document defining the approach. I will focus for the EU analysis on the documents referred as “the general framework” for gender mainstreaming (Europa).

My analysis will be completed with 2 semi constructed interviews with experts in gender mainstreaming in Belgium and in the European Union like Petra Meier and Nathalie Wuiame. The purpose of these interviews was mainly to fill the gap between the adoption of the first law in 1996 in Belgium and the second one in 2007. Only a few documents regarding this period are existing and are difficult to consult or acquire. Some problems were also encountered in establishing contacts with relevant persons despite calls and e-mails.

A semi-constructed or semi standardized interview involves the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and special topics. These questions are submitted to each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewers are allowed freedom to digress’ (Berg, 2007: 95). I suggested to realize the interview in French or in English.

Following the approach of Donna Haraway (1998), I will also reflect on my position and situate myself. It seems necessary, especially before and during the interview that I reflect on myself as a French speaking Belgian student in gender studies, with probably is a bias in favor of a feminist conception of gender mainstreaming. I chose to study gender mainstreaming when I discovered the concept during my internship at ATGENDER. I was immediately attracted by its large conception of gender equality and its aim to include a gender dimension in all politics. Due to my master, I developed a critical reflection on the gender representation in gender mainstreaming documents as well as a bias in favor of the inclusion of an intersectionality approach in gender mainstreaming. I included these reflections in my questionnaire but might have unconsciously oriented or showed my discontentment with some of the current definitions of gender mainstreaming during the interviews. Moreover, my position regarding the subject as well as my academic knowledge and at the same time, my

ignorance of the vocabulary used in Belgian's administration and the organization of the Belgium's administration can also have influenced indirectly the interviewees and/or handicapped me (Hesse Biber & Leavy, 2007: 202).

In the first part of my thesis, a summary of the feminist literature about gender mainstreaming definitions will be established as well as a comparison between the feminist reflections with the evolution of gender mainstreaming's definitions and equality between men and women within the UN, the Council of Europe and the UE. For each organization, identification will analyze the manner of realization of the framing process. In a second part, I will enter the Belgian's definition of gender mainstreaming with a focus on the law adopted in 1996, in 2007 and documents published since. I will compare the framing process of GM and content of GM's definitions in Belgium with the international and feminist definitions. The research question and hypotheses will be answered in the conclusion.

2. Defining gender mainstreaming?

2.1 Feminist definitions of gender mainstreaming

In this part, reflections developed by scholars and feminist movements on the definition of gender mainstreaming will be presented. Gender mainstreaming remains an "essentially contested concept and practice" (Walby, 2005: 321) among politicians, feminist activists and scholars. Lombardo and Meier have identified five shifts in the policy making process expressing "a feminist reading of gender mainstreaming" (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 153). The analysis of GM will be oriented around these five shifts summarizing many feminist debates issued in literature and offering a clear comprehension of gender mainstreaming.

The first shift expresses the belonging of gender mainstreaming to a broader concept: gender equality. The authors explain that gender equality has to explicitly target patriarchy and the interconnected causes creating unequal relations between sexes. Both concepts require then a focus on gender and not only on women (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 153). They need to take into account the individual life of women and men and studies the impact of a measure on their life (Squires, 2008: 76). Then, gender mainstreaming is not a goal in itself but a radical strategy for achieving gender equality as well as change within the State (True & Mintrom, 2001: 33). This aim is often forgotten and gender equality is presented as instrumental, as a mean to development (Moser & Moser, 2005: 14). The question about the conceptualization of gender mainstreaming is central to our content analysis: is it a concept (an abstract and

general idea of an object), a strategy (coordination of actions to attain an aim), a tool (intermediary object by which a result is obtained) or a method (principles, rules and steps orderly logically to form a mean to an end)? According to Dauphin and Sénac-Slawinski, gender mainstreaming is a concept-method by making the link between theory, a new approach of equality and practice and the need of technical tools for the actors to transcribe their objectives into practice of public policies (Sénac-Slawinski, 2006: 7). For others, such as Verloo, GM is a process, a strategy and a concept to attain gender equality. In summary, for feminist scholars, GM is a concept coupled with a method or a strategy to achieve an aim. A tool would be considered as too reductive.

Jahan distinguishes two types of gender mainstreaming policy: 'agenda-setting' including a 'shift in policy-paradigms, objectives and strategies elaborated by the State in order to challenge the gendered roles'. The second type is 'integrationist approach', introducing gender without 'challenging the existing policy paradigm' (quoted by Daly, 2005: 444). Although the second approach is less likely to be rejected, it is also less likely to produce a substantial impact on policies (Walby, 2005: 324).

Then, gender equality and by derivation gender mainstreaming target the patriarchy within the State. For Rees, organizations are gendered. She claims that existing structures are not gender neutral and are sources of policy injustice reproducing inequalities between men and women (Woodward, 2003: 66). Verloo reproaches the definitions of gender mainstreaming, among which the Council of Europe, avoiding this revolutionary approach. In fact, it is presented in many States as a win-win situation, a harmonious process with a conceptualization of the State as 'friendly'. It makes gender mainstreaming less threatening to integrate and allow the exclusion of feminists opposing radical voices. Then, if gender inequality is conceived by scholars within the concepts power and struggle, gender mainstreaming should be about abolishing privileges and gender bias including those reproduced by the State (Verloo, 2005: 359-360). Gender mainstreaming wants to change the power relations within the State. Power is understood in a Foucauldian's approach, meaning that power enables and has constraining effects at the same time: it is also called biopower or micro-power (Verloo, 2005: 360). Power, for Foucault, is linked to knowledge: the production and legitimation of knowledge creates power relations produced by these systems of knowledge. In that sense, power is omnipresent, productive and internalized by subjects having internalized hierarchies (Nousiainen & ali., 2013: 47-48). And so, gender mainstreaming aims to challenge these

internalized knowledge in subjects about gender equality in order to change the internalized hierarchies present within the State.

These last remarks about the State lead to the second shift concerning the incorporation of a gender perspective into the mainstream political agenda. All policy areas should be concerned by gender issues and be concerned by the limitation of ‘differential impact of provisions on women and men’. It should be reoriented and rearticulated in order to incorporate a gender perspective as one of its major objectives (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 153). The aim is to work on prevention in order to avoid unequal processes (Dauphin & Sénac-Slawinski, 2006: 9). Some authors, such as Nedelmann or Inhetveen, see in gender mainstreaming a possibility of ‘institutional innovation’, meaning that it can lead to a broadly reconsideration of the impact of policy on gender relations (Woodward, 2003: 66). Then, gender mainstreaming gives the capacity to overcome the policy ghetto in which social movements and women questions were imprisoned. The woman questions are shifted from vertical special issues to a horizontal general concern (Woodward, 2003: 68).

The realization of the second shift is linked to the third one. It concerns the equal political representation of women and men to ensure that each category will be part of the mainstream process. In that sense, it challenges ‘the unequal distribution of resources in administration and political hierarchy’. This shift is not simply an increase of the number of women in the political system but rather ‘a change in existing male norms and values that defines the political priorities’ (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 153). Gender mainstreaming puts into question the norm to which women are judged and compared to, and the neutrality of the decision making process in administration (Squires, 2008: 76). As said before, it is seen to avoid the continuous reproduction of male norms in policy making processes and address the genderedness of organizations: it means that organizational systems, norms and identities shaped and are shaped by material and discursive constructions of masculinity and femininity (Benschop & Verloo, 2006: 19). The incorporation and participation of women in the process raised debate about representation such as: who speaks for whom and the question of agency (Moser & Moser, 2005: 19).

The fourth shift identified by Lombardo & Meier regards ‘the institutional and organization cultures of political decision-making’. It is the institutionalization of gender concerns within the organization. It includes a change in the policy-process, mechanisms and actors by

including new policy tools, trainings, gender expertise in order to avoid reproducing the traditional organizational cultures and gender inequality (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 154).

The fifth shift requires both ‘displacement’ and ‘empowerment’ (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 154). The strategy of displacement will challenge the dichotomy equality/difference, theorizing in the ‘Wollstonecraft dilemma’, that can be resumed by, on one hand the fact that women claim they are ‘equal’ (but not the same) as men and on the other hand, there is concerns about the openness of gender specificity (Woodward, 2008: 290). Then, gender mainstreaming is embedded and presented as a solution to the feminist debate between difference, universalism and particularism. It is commonly argued that women are essentially different from men and that it called for a revaluation of women’s values, their life experiences... But the dilemma consists in how to recognize differences and avoid the trap of essentialism (Walby, 2005: 326). This is the reason why some authors claim that differences among women are crucial and that an attention to the particularities in context is needed (Benschop & Verloo, 2006: 31). Gender mainstreaming by its attention to specific situation of women and men before the adoption and implementation of a policy, can be seen as overcoming these debates by studying specific situations without generalizing them and by trying to develop separate gender norms/standards (Walby, 2005: 326).

Empowerment, also called ‘mainstreaming diversity’, means that it takes into account intersectionality: the different experiences of a subject and its identities leading to inequalities cannot be separated from other form of inequalities such as race, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, class... (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 154-158). Nonetheless, this last shift raises debate among feminist scholars and associations, many are afraid of the disappearance of gender mainstreaming in a “larger whole of diversity policy, wherein the specificity of gender will scarcely be accounted for, if at all” (Van Roemberg & Spee, 2004: 65 quoted by Woodward, 2008: 295).

But feminist and women’s movements are also afraid that gender mainstreaming will work against women by bypassing concerns regarding more centered women approaches to gender equality with the integration of men into projects. Gender mainstreaming has been developed, in some countries, as functional ‘checkbox equality’ or ‘toolkit’. It means that GM is normalized in a technical and apolitical project in order ease the adoption by administrations. It de-radicalizes the transformative part of GM (Lombardo, Meier & Verloo, 2012: 19). Woodward has identified rational elements and irrational elements in the concept of gender

mainstreaming, rational being instruments developed so far, the ‘toolkit’ and irrational elements are the transformative part within organizations defended by feminist theory (Daly 2005: 446). Woodward asks if these two strands are irreconcilable.

The technocratic approach of gender mainstreaming or integrationist approach, identified by Verloo, Woodward and Jahan, is reducing the engagement to women’s empowerment and affirmative action programmes for women (Lang, 2009: 338). It is seen as a way to ‘deradicalize feminist demands’ (Lang, 2009: 340). This explains why many authors are in favor of a combination of gender mainstreaming with specific action in favor of women and women’s empowerment. They also want the promotion of women’s participation in decision making process and the creation of a space to speak up as well as power to bring issues at the agenda (Moser & Moser, 2005: 12). It explains the reason why many feminists have to criticize the top-down approach put in place to implement and define gender mainstreaming, in the EU. In many organizations, the debates are state-centered without invitation and participation of the civil society. It creates resistance amongst women’s organizations about gender mainstreaming (Lang, 2009: 339). Gender mainstreaming sits in the middle of the debate between expertise and democracy, GM is presented as a process aiming to develop a more inclusive democracy and democratic practices but on the other hand, the process is carried by normal policy actors with a special toolkit and with some interventions of feminist scholars (Walby, 2005: 331).

Thus, displacement and empowerment involve a space for expression of feminist struggles via the participation of civil society and a shift in the actors involved in the elaboration of gender mainstreaming (Verloo, 2005: 347). The participation of the civil society is described by Lang as a process that “engenders governance, increase public awareness of gender inequalities and commits more actors to the goal of gender equality” (Lang, 2009: 331). Women’s NGOs are one of these external actors in charge of bringing gender mainstreaming on the public agenda and creating debates (Lang, 2009: 332). This conception should bring societal changes (Daly, 2005: 449).

These shifts synthesize and regroup some concerns and debates among feminist scholars and feminist activists about the conception and definition of gender mainstreaming (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 154). In the next part, we will present the adoption of gender mainstreaming and its definitions in three international organisms: the UN, the Council of Europe and the EU.

2.2 Gender mainstreaming within the United Nations

The United Nations has played a key role in the adoption and legitimation of gender mainstreaming (Sénac-Slawinski, 2008: 30). I will, first, present the adoption of gender mainstreaming at the Fourth World Conference of Women (1995). Second, I will identify the evolution of GM's definitions in documents from the ECOSOC and the Secretary-General.

2.2.1 The definition at World Conference of Women

Gender mainstreaming within the UN is part of a process started on this level in 1975 concerning the advancement of women empowerment and gender equality. The followed Conferences and Convention are all part of this process - the first UN Conference of the International Women's Year was held in 1975, the second and third Conference in Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985) and the adoption of a Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979.

During the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, in 1995, the strategy of gender mainstreaming was endorsed by 189 countries as well as by the UN through the signature of the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Global Platform for Action. The Platform for Action (PfA) consists in a programme for equality between men and women and women's empowerment in twelve critical topic areas². These countries' signatures of PfA made compulsory the development of gender mainstreaming in their national strategies (GenderKompetenzZentrum, 2010). Over 4, 000 NGO representatives attended the Conference and 30, 000 attended the parallel NGO forum, most of them with the background idea to promote gender mainstreaming (Crawford School of Public Policy, 2004: 55). These NGO reps together with some governments and international organizations played a key role in the adoption by the UN and in the appliances of societal pressures for changes at domestic level to obtain the same result (True & Mintrom, 2001: 38).

Despite the fact that the Beijing declaration does not mention the term 'gender mainstreaming', the Platform for Action mentions it and offers a draft of definition. At the end of the description of each twelve critical topic areas, it is recommended for each specific domain that "*governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective, inter alia, in the monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects for women and men, respectively*" (United Nations, 1995: §79-105-123-141-164-189-202-229-238-252-273-292).

The first remark regarding this definition is the designated actors: *governments and others*. The designation of the governments and their administrations is quite expected but the denomination ‘other actors’ can be surprising. It refers to NGOs, associations, international and regional organizations as well as international companies such as banks... In the traditional conception of public policies, these actors are not always integrated in the elaboration of public policies or are not mentioned, but we can attribute their presence due to their strong involvement in gender mainstreaming’s adoption within the UN as well as the domination of the liberal perspective of international relations among the UN³ (Nau, 2012: 489).

With the sequence “*an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective*” the idea expressed is, first, the identification of gender mainstreaming as a policy and secondly that it should be advertised and spread within the government and outside, in civil society, notably via the governments but also via other actors.

Third, gender mainstreaming should be promoted in “*the monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes*”. In terms of elaboration of public policies, it means that it has to be taken into account at all phases of the policy cycle: definition of the problem/identification of solutions – programming/selection of policy options – implementation – evaluation (My translation; see also annex 1, Knoepfel, Larrue and Varone, 2006: 10). The report insists on the systematic implementation of this perspective in all areas in a preventive way as well as in the evaluation part of the policies (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2011: 435). Gender mainstreaming is then a transversal approach of politics, not reserved, as is traditionally the case, to some administration or minister in charge of gender equality or equal opportunity.

Fourth, the implicit aim is to attain equality between men and women with the analysis of the effects of the policy or programme on both of them (Payne, 2011: 518). The definition does not explain which ‘effects’ but we can suppose it concerns the evaluation of the effects on their life. Further in the document, equality between men and women is designed as “*a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace*” (UN, 1995: §1). So the UN emphasis equality as a strong aim to attain better governance in the world by the reorganization of policy-making structures, changing actors’ mentalities and the content of framing policies (Daly, 2005: 447). This posture makes echo to the first and second shift of Lombardo and

Meier's definition recommending that GM be a part of gender equality and the incorporation of a feminist perspective in the political agenda (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 153).

The quotes do not mention by which tools the gender perspective should be implemented: *“The national machinery facilitates the formulation and implementation of government policies on equality between women and men, develops appropriate strategies and methodologies, and promotes coordination and cooperation within the central Government in order to ensure mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policy-making processes”* (UN, 1995: §205 (a)). It leaves the actors in charge of its implementation quite embarrassed in front of which methods or strategy to use to implement GM. However, gender mainstreaming in this paragraph is presented as a complement to specific action in favor of equality between men and women. Both are required to achieve equality between men and women.

A possible misunderstanding in the PfA is the confusion of the notion gender mainstreaming with other specific actions in favor of the empowerment of women. The distinction between the two is not clear, moreover when paragraph 1 claims that: *“the Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment”* (UN, 1995: §1). In fact, the platform for Action is specifically designed for empowering women and reducing inequalities between men and women, it is inscribed in the actions taken since 1975 to empower women and to address women inequalities. So, despite the mention of 'men' in its definition, gender mainstreaming can be mistaken for a new approach in favor of women, addressing women's rights and needs (Payne, 2011: 519). It can hide the underlying gender relations of power by looking only at women and be less able to challenge them (Payne, 2011: 522).

At the end of the report, the Secretary-General is declared in charge of monitoring and implementing the mainstreaming of *‘a system wide gender in all activities of the UN’* (UN, 1995: §326). The Secretary-General is helped in his tasks by The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in charge of monitoring the commissions and the subsidiary bodies and of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. We will address their conception of gender mainstreaming in the following part.

2.2.2 Follow up of the Beijing Report

In fact, since 1997, a yearly resolution has been published by the ECOSOC regarding the implementation of gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. These resolutions are completed by yearly reports published by the UN Secretary-General, evaluating the advancement and problems faced in the implementation

process. These documents also reaffirm the role of the UN in the support and guidance for Member States.

Due to the lack of consensus and understanding of the term gender mainstreaming from the Platform for Action (Crawford School of Public Policy, 2004: 15), in 1997, the ECOSOC gave a more complete definition of gender mainstreaming: *“the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality”* (UN, 1997: 3). This definition has become the reference for many documents published since by the UN and for its Member States.

In this definition, the actors in charge of the implementation are not mentioned but we can suppose that it refers to governments and its administration. The definition, like the previous one, mentions the transversal approach of gender mainstreaming at all stages of the organism apparatus and in all areas of competency. In opposition to the previous one, the aim to achieve ‘gender equality’ is clearly mentioned and defined. The spheres of intervention are quoted: political, economic and societal spheres. The approach to reach that goal, is to suppress inequality by studying women’s and men’s concerns and experiences, which is a dimension to be taken into account at all phases of the policy process (see annex 1). This definition recognizes the differences between women and men: displacement which is part of the fifth shift presented by Lombardo and Meier. In opposition to the first definition studied, this time all the phases of the policy cycle are mentioned. Nonetheless gender equality is carrying a misunderstanding with the reduction of the term gender to women and men.

The resolutions and reports from 1997 to 2002 do not define gender mainstreaming, they only mention *“Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system”* (UN, 1997: 1, UN, 1998: 2, UN, 2001: 2). It is reduced to some characteristics already seen before such as all policies and programmes and the systematic incorporation of a gender perspective. No aim is identified and no actors in charge are mentioned.

A change occurred in 2005, when the yearly ECOSOC’s reports mentions a definition: *“the Economic and Social Council defined gender mainstreaming as a strategy for making*

women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, with the ultimate goal of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women" (UN, 2010: 3). This definition is largely inspired by the 1997's one (in bold: the same sentences). This is the third definition in which, GM is presented as a strategy, a process. Regarding the feminist definitions, it lacks a reference to a concept: a general idea of what is gender mainstreaming. A second change mentioned is the aim 'women's empowerment', as written in the Beijing Action Platform, gender equality or equality between women and men is not the only goal of gender mainstreaming. For feminists, it is essential to keep in mind this other goal to help reduce structural inequalities within institutions. In all reports and resolutions studied, gender mainstreaming is aiming to pursue 'gender equality' or equality between women and men (UN, 1997: 4, UN, 1998: 3).

Nonetheless, these definitions and reaffirmation of goals do not prevent, in some reports' conclusion, from identifying different conceptions of gender equality. It is either defined by some commissions as a "*means towards goals pursued by them*" or as "*means towards gender equality*" (UN, 2004: 12). Firstly, it should be stressed that the undifferentiated utilization of the terms gender equality and equality between women and men as synonyms. Secondly, it appears that the purposes of the definition of the gender equality and the means to attain it, are not clear for many UN's agencies.

Like in the UN Platform for Action, gender mainstreaming is presented as one side of the coin: GM and specific actions are complementary approaches to attain gender equality. In each reports from the ECOSOC: "*Acknowledging that enhancing women's opportunities, potential and activities requires a dual focus, namely, programmes aimed at meeting the basic and specific needs of women for capacity-building, organizational development and empowerment, together with gender mainstreaming in all programmes formulation and implementation activities*" (ECOSOC, 2006: 1).

In the report from 2007, the comprehension of GM from the Platform for Action is stated vigorously. It is affirmed that gender mainstreaming is a transformative tool requiring strong changes and commitment. Moreover, these changes should also come from information provided from "below", meaning field actors like NGO's and associations. The traditional approach top-down (the high level civil servants of the UN are in charge of the implementation) promoted since the 1997's definition is changed to a bottom-up approach

“Successful gender mainstreaming cannot be achieved by adding marginal programmes for women to United Nations activities. Rather, it requires change in all mainstream policies, programmes and resource allocations to reflect the interests of women as well as men. To achieve this goal, an enabling environment is essential. Such an environment should generate changes that are influenced to a far greater extent than they are now by information coming from below, rather than from above” (UN, 2007: 16). This ECOSOC report was the only document mentioning this shift and the next documents came back to the traditional implementation with a top-down approach. This definition makes a quite transformative statement. Firstly, GM is depicted as an ‘agenda-setting’ approach within a transformation of the environment, source of failure and reproduction of the inequalities. Secondly, the insistence upon ‘from below’ is insisting on the fact that change will come from outside, with incorporation of external actors and marginalized actors in the well-established institution. The two remarks make linked with the second and third shift of feminist definitions.

We have identified, between the definition in the Platform for Action and the documents published since by the ECOSOC and the Secretary-General, some divergences: some present a transformative/agenda setting approach with the aim to address the genderness of the UN and others lay on an integrationist approach with no questioning of the bases of the institution. The definition from the Platform for Action has a stronger commitment to change with the involvement of external actors of the government and a bottom-up approach. It can be attributed to the pressures of transnational advocacy networks during the 1995 Conference. In contrast, the 2007 document, amongst the 30 documents reviewed, is the only one to promote the same approach. This approach can be seen as a reinforcement of a more democracy within and outside the UN. At the beginning, GM in the UN policies was largely concentrated on the rights and needs of women rather than on gender inequality. It has evolved since the ECOSOC definition in 1997 (Payne, 2011: 519). From then on, the two aims gender equality and women’s empowerment are frequently mentioned as complementary.

2.3 The Council of Europe’s definition

In 1995, a Group of Specialists on gender mainstreaming (EG-S-MS) was set up by the Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men, one of the intergovernmental expert committee belonging to the Council of Europe. Created in 1949 and based in Strasbourg, the Council of Europe should not be confused with the European Union. Composed of 46 Member States from West, Central and Eastern Europe, its purposes are to promote and protect human rights (Verloo, 2005: 349). The group EG-S-MS carried out the task to work on the implementation of

the Beijing Platform and to initiate concrete actions regarding gender mainstreaming in the member States: prepare a conceptual framework, a methodology and present good practices (Verloo, 2005: 349). In 1998, a report based on policy documents, working papers, knowledge gathered from centers of Women's studies and specialists was released (Council of Europe, 1998: 7).

The definition of gender mainstreaming, in this report, is the most widely quoted in national and international documents (Meier & Celis, 2010: 169). Gender mainstreaming is 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).

Firstly, this definition positions gender mainstreaming as a process, a process aiming to change the way traditional policy is conducted to obtain gender equality. Then, the assumption is that all policies are gendered. The definition quotes the stages of the policy cycle necessary in order to implement gender mainstreaming: *reorganization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes*, which can be translated by reorganization before, during and after the adoption of policies and the political agenda. In that perspective, gender mainstreaming is a systematic and transversal approach analyzing the effects of all future policies in order to adapt the latter if considered as creating or reinforcing inequalities between men and women (Meier & Celis, 2010: 171).

Secondly, this definition mentions the political and technical implications of the gender mainstreaming process. It implies that organizational and institutional structures need to change in order to obtain gender equality as institutions are socially engendered and reproducing gender inequality (Verloo, 2005: 350). Then, for the Council of Europe, GM is an ‘agenda-setting’ approach, aiming to change the power relations of a structure and referring therefore potentially to the second shift: the incorporation of GM as a major objective of the politics.

At last, the definition identifies *objects* and *subjects* of gender mainstreaming. The object is all policies and the subjects are all the actors normally involved in policy making (Verloo, 2005: 350-351). The accent is put on the know-how, formation and gender expertise of traditional actors involved in policy making rather than on political representation, on the inclusion of ‘a feminist perspective about gender mainstreaming, or on the participation of counter public voices’ (Verloo, 2005: 351). An exception is made for feminist academics, due

to their gender expertise. They are part of these actors and their participation is accepted providing that their knowledge is considered as 'objective' (Verloo, 2005: 353). From that perspective, like the 1997 ECOSOC's definition, gender mainstreaming is presented as a technocratic process rather than as a space for debates and opposition of political ideas on feminism and on gender equality (Verloo, 2005: 352).

Like the UN's definitions, the Council of Europe identifies *gender equality* as the goal to achieve. The definition of gender equality in the report is "*gender equality means an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. Gender equality is the opposite of gender inequality, not of gender difference, and aims to promote the full participation of women and men in society*" (Council of Europe, 1998: 8). This definition recognizes the differences of living conditions between men and women and the differences between genders. It does not aim to offer them sameness but intends instead to suppress any negative impact on their living conditions due to their gender in both spheres: public and private. Differences then, are not an essential obstacle to equality. Gender equality can be achieved through the recognition of differences but also sameness of women and men in function of the domain evaluated (Walby, 2005: 327-328). Gender in the report is defined as a socially constructed definition of women and men (Benschop & Verloo, 2006: 21).

According to the report, political and institutional structures play a role in shaping these life conditions producing unconsciously discrimination and unequal power relationships and norms between genders (Council of Europe, 1998: 8). The report insists on this 'unintentionally', 'unconsciously' reproduction of gender inequality in decisional structures but does not address the notion of hierarchy between gender: with men higher placed than women. In the same way, there is no reflection on the origins and reproduction of gender dichotomy and social categories (Verloo, 2005: 352). Traditional actors reproducing these biases are never blamed and GM is presented as favoring their own goals. GM will produce better quality policies and good governance (Verloo, 2001: 9). The answer to these problems is presented by an increasing participation of women and men in public and private life (Council of Europe, 1998: 9). In conclusion, the causes of inequalities are not well-identified and do not prevent from associating gender mainstreaming to a women's problem. The causes of inequalities also tend to associate solutions with the increase participation of women in public life.

Further in the document, an intersectional analysis is added to gender differences by including class, political opinion, religion, ethnicity, race or sexual orientation as future possible steps. In the report, gender mainstreaming is presented as a broader and more comprehensive definition of gender equality by recognizing and giving space to differences and diversity.

Then, the explicit aim of gender mainstreaming in this definition is gender equality and implicitly. Gender equality is understood as leading to better government, improving the lives of women and men (Verloo, 2001: 9). The conceptualization of gender equality regroups elements of equality of rights, justice with references to differences in the lives and experiences of men and women and the incorporation of diversity theory (Verloo, 2005: 354). But contrary to the Platform for Action, women's empowerment is not identified as a goal of gender mainstreaming. But as in the UN's understanding of gender mainstreaming, specific policies of equality are required before the adoption of gender mainstreaming (Sénac-Slawinski, 1998: 34).

Verloo reproaches to the small definition, identified at the beginning of this section, to be widely quoted without being developed with the other ideas in the document. It creates, according to her, a chameleon's definition, which can be adapted to each social and political context (Verloo, 2005: 355). Like the ECOSOC's definition, the Council of Europe's definition focuses on procedural changes and fails to address the broadest question of gender equality perspective (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 152). To summarize, this definition is dual. On one hand, the goal is too ambivalent and the definition presents technocratic tendencies (implementation by actors from the government and emphasis on mechanisms). It fails to contribute to empower mechanisms as well as to include space for oppositional voices such as feminist movements and feminist's ideas on gender equality (Verloo, 2005: 361). But on the other hand, it proposes a transformative approach with the possibility to open it to diversity mainstreaming and its recognition of the male bias in the organization reproducing inequalities.

2.4 European Union

To explain the rise of gender mainstreaming within the UE, we need to indicate the favorable factors emerging in the 1990's. Firstly, one of the primary advocates for a more forceful EU policy on women's issues: the European Parliament received more power with the coming into force of the Maastricht Treaty, in 1993 (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2011: 436). The Maastricht Treaty also provided regular institutional spaces for transnational advocacy

networks pushing for the adoption of the UN agenda within the UE (Lang, 2009:328). Secondly, in 1995, the enlargement of the European Union to three States: Sweden, Austria and Finland brought three countries strongly committed to equal opportunities and with an experience in mainstreaming gender in their country (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2011: 435-436). Thirdly, the adoption of the concept by the UN, following the 1995 Beijing Conference, pushed the Commission, the parliament and the Committee on Women's Rights to adopt and implement an 'integrated' approach in their policies (CARDOC, 2013: 56). Within the European Union, both the Commission and the Standing Committee on Women's Rights⁴ have been in charge of the GM's definition and its implementation (CARDOC, 2013: 56).

Historically, gender mainstreaming is part of a chronological process that Rees distinguishes by three ideal-typical approaches to achieving gender equality: equal treatment, positive action and gender mainstreaming (see Annex 2 for a summary by Verloo).

Equal treatment is presented as a political goal since the creation of the European Community. It was one of the objectives of the European Economic Community in 1957 (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2011: 435). According to Rees, 'equal treatment' is also called 'tinkering': it "implies that no individual should have fewer human rights or opportunities than any other" (1998: 29). But despite its importance in equal opportunities policy, Rees argues that this approach is flawed by 'focusing only on formal rights on women as workers and therefore fails to address fundamental causes of inequality' between men and women (Rees, 1998: 32).

The second approach to gender equality is 'positive action' or 'tailoring'. It appeared in the 1980's and was implemented in the 1990's. Its "emphasis shifts from equality of access to creating conditions more likely to result in equality of outcome" (1998: 34). Then, it involves 'the adoption of specific actions on behalf of women' in order to obtain real equality instead of formal equality (Rees, 1998: 37).

The third approach refers to 'gender mainstreaming' or 'transforming', it calls for 'the systematic incorporation of gender issues throughout all governmental institutions and policies'. According to Rees, it overcomes the debate between formal equality and compensatory measures for a specific group to achieve equality (Rees, 1998: 38). Among these three approaches, gender mainstreaming is understood as the next step and not the substitute of the previous approaches (Sénac-Slawinski, 2006: 34).

Thus, gender mainstreaming in the European Union is part of the concept of ‘equality policy’ and emerges as a dominant policy frame for the EU’s equal opportunities policy in the 1990’s (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2011: 435). Such as in the UN’s case, European texts highlight that gender mainstreaming’s notion was created after noticing that specific equality policies were insufficient to constitute a gender equality society. Moreover, gender mainstreaming is qualified as community asset; it is part of the common scientific focus due to the fact that equality between women and men, as a transversal approach, is considered as a value and a principle of action in the European administrations (Sénac-Slawinski, 2006: 30).

Until 1996, no clear definition of gender mainstreaming had been formulated. For example, the Third Community Action programme for equal opportunities for women and men (1991-1995) realized by the EC, proposed two definitions: *‘to take into account an equal opportunities dimension and the particular problems encountered by women in all relevant policies’* or *‘to integrate equality into the general mainstream policy’*. They range from ‘specific actions targeted to women in non-equality policies’ to ‘upgrading equality policy to a mainstreaming policy’ (Stratigaki, 2005: 167). The second definition refers more to ‘gender’ as a component of GM but ignores the structural aspect of the term. Nonetheless in the title, GM is identified as a problem of *‘differences in opportunities’* (Stratigaki, 2005: 170). Advancement in GM, comparing to the previous documents regarding gender equality, is the mention of men in the title’s document. In fact, before 1996, the documents’ title only referred to women. With this document, the EC mainly prepared the Beijing Conference, where it endorsed the principle on behalf of the EU (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2011:435).

The same year, 1996, the European Commission issued a mainstreaming communication, called ‘Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities’ in which gender mainstreaming means that *“This involved not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilizing all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situations of men and women’* (European Commission, 1996: 96-97, emphasis in the document). This definition calls for the systematic incorporation of gender issues in all institutions and EU policies and its adoption, by deduction, by all actors involved in the policy process (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2011: 434). The communication identified as aim the incorporation of equal opportunities in all policy areas without mentioning instruments, objectives or strategy for implementing it. This communication does not mention any

connection between GM and women's participation in the decision-making process, contrary to the ones published before 1995. The rest of the text insists on the participation of as many actors as possible in the process instead of expressing the transformative approach of GM regarding policies. Stratigaki states that GM lost its strategic sense to achieve gender equality in this communication and became an interchangeable principle with 'principle of equality' (Stratigaki, 2005: 174-175). She explains the adoption of this weak definition by the existence of opposition to GM within the EU.

The Standing Committee on Women's Rights reacted to the weakness of this definition the same year with the publication of a resolution, inspired by the Council of Europe's definition. Gender mainstreaming is "*the full integration of the gender perspective in all policy areas by giving equal consideration to the values and needs of both sexes*". This resolution expresses the complementary approach between GM and specific positive actions, the cultural and structural obstacles preventing gender equality and reproducing inequalities. It insists on the importance of a gender dimension in all policy areas (Stratigaki, 2005: 175-176).

The next important step in matter of equality policy in the EU is the Amsterdam Treaty, adopted in 1997 and coming into force on 1 May 1999. It is the first Treaty-based commitment to gender mainstreaming via its articles 2 and 3⁵ (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2000: 437). Before its entry into force, gender mainstreaming was developed via legislative changes and judicial activism (Shaw, 2002: 216). The Amsterdam Treaty undermines the necessity to abolish inequalities between men and women and to promote their equality (Meier & Celis, 2010: 170).

The Commission proposes the Fourth Community Action Programme (1996-2000), adopted by the European Council as well as the Standing Committee on Women's Rights. The programme suggests that "methods aimed at integrating an equal opportunities dimension into all policies and activities" be developed and adopted by member states (Booth & Bennett, 2002: 439). Gender mainstreaming is presented as the principal axis of gender equality. The powers of the European Commission in matter of gender mainstreaming are enlarged to national, regional and local levels (CARDOC, 2013: 56).

The 5th Action Programme on Gender Equality for 2001-2005 is adopted to provide assistance and support on gender equality for the Community framework strategy. As usual, it insists on the adoption of GM as a horizontal strategy in all policy areas of the EU and departments. The

aim is to support the implementation of transnational activities in the fields of gender equality (Genderkompetenz, 2010).

In the Commission's Draft Memorandum on Approaches to European Governance: For Democratic European Governance of March 2001, gender mainstreaming is presented as concerning "the whole society" because 'it can encourage progress and be a token of democracy and pluralism'. It is linked to good governance, namely 'openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence in order to overcome the perceived legitimacy gap' of the EU and its institutions (Shaw, 2002: 225-226). It shows signs of GM reinforcing democracy and participation of its citizens. This argument dovetails neatly with the works of some feminists on democracy presented in the section: feminist definitions.

Published by the Commission, "A roadmap for equality between women and men" for the period 2005-2010, presents the objectives of the Commission to achieve gender equality. A shift has been made between equal opportunity and gender equality, gender equality offers a de facto equality instead of a de jure (Stratigaki, 2008: 56-57). Gender equality is presented as "*a fundamental right, a common value of the EU, and a necessary condition for the achievement of the EU objectives of growth, employment and social cohesion*" (COM, 2002: 2). The aim is to "*integrate an equality objective in all policies that have a direct impact on women's lives*". Here, the aim: gender equality is clearly formulated, despite the attention brought only to women (Stratigaki, 2008: 57). Nonetheless, gender equality is not defined; its causes are not stated. It also confirms the adoption of the double strategy gender mainstreaming and specific equality actions (Meier & Celis, 2010: 170).

In the document "Strategy for equality between women and men" for 2010-2015, published by the commission, the insistence upon the dual approach: GM and specific action is reaffirmed. Gender mainstreaming is a tool to achieve gender equality and "*will be implemented as an integral part of the Commission's policymaking, including via the impact assessment and evaluation processes*" (COM, 2010: 12).

A first remark regarding these definitions is the link between GM and equal opportunities and equality between men and women. It brings confusion with the aims of GM, equal opportunities recognizes equality *de jure* and rest on the idea that women should have the same access to resources as men. The notion of gender equality recognizes the difference between men and women and focus on equality *de jure* and *de facto*. Woodward proposes an historical explanation to this confusion: originally the EC needed to couple it to the labor

market due to the absence of legal foundation such as the Amsterdam Treaty and is still using this approach to convince departments to adopt GM (Woodward, 2003: 67).

A second remark is that GM is understood as a long term approach that sustains gender equality in the whole policy process (Woodward, 2008: 290). But the efforts to define, advocate and defend it are not continuous. For example, in February 2010, a resolution from the European Parliament called for the incorporation of gender mainstreaming in the Lisbon Strategy, the Standing Committee on Women's rights considered it as "basically non-existent" (European Commission, 2010: §7). The Lisbon Treaty made a commitment to eradicate different discriminations with the category sex being one of them (Woodward, 2008: 296). Another example was the resistance to include gender equality among EU values in the Constitutional Treaty (Stratigaki, 2005: 182).

Some justify the weaknesses of many definitions by the absence of feminist movements in the framing processes (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 160). Woodward explains the importance of the 'velvet triangle' (feminist bureaucrats, feminist scholars and women's movements) in the development and conception of gender mainstreaming in the EU (Walby, 2005: 334). Sometimes, the EU refers to it as a strategy, sometimes as a set of tools or a method that leads to confusion in terms of policy formulation and implementation. Some authors argue that gender equality has been formulated within the economic context of the UE only (Booth & Bennett, 2002: 441).

All these approaches are top-down approaches in their definitions and attempt to harmonize the European gender cultures of the EU institutions (Verloo, 2004: 2). The Council of Europe's definition has led to the conceptualization of gender mainstreaming for the EC (Booth & Bennett, 2002: 431). For example, the notion of good governance is mentioned in the documents issued by those two organizations.

The second frame presents GM as an alternative to equality tool (Stratigaki, 2005: 165-166). At the European level, gender mainstreaming is understood as one strand of the approach to realize gender equality (Mergaert, 2012: 17). It is part of a double strategy using at the same time gender mainstreaming and more traditional gender equality policies to achieve gender equality (Sénac-Slawinski, 2006: 16). The strategic framing of gender mainstreaming depends mainly on whom defines it: from an organ committed to equality with strong advocates within its members or from a general organ, such as the Commission which has not taken into account the remarks of the previous one (Stratigaki, 2005: 181).

Nonetheless, within the European Commission, gender mainstreaming is defined as an effective means to an end rather than a challenge of the power structures and patriarchy. The actors in charge as well as phases of the policy cycle and instruments to implement gender mainstreaming are not usually stated in the definitions reviewed. GM is defined as an integrationist approach, integrating women and gender issues into policies rather than reconceptualizing fundamental aims of the European Union from a gender perspective (Verloo, 2005: 358). In conclusion, few of the shifts identified by feminist scholars have been integrated in the European Union approach of GM. This conception of GM, according to Pollack and Hafner-Burton, results from the strategies of mainstreaming advocates. They have framed gender mainstreaming as an effective means to achieve policy-makers goals in order to facilitate the adoption of GM (Pollack & Hafner-Burton, 2000: 453).

2.5 Conclusion

Until now, a glimpse has been given into the nature of gender mainstreaming in different international organizations through the feminist conception of GM. Now, similarities and differences between the different international organizations' definitions are going to be expanded.

We have seen so far that GM is a macro-level strategy, adopted first by international organizations with the necessity to be adapted at national contexts and to its specific policies (Payne, 2011: 526). Hafner-Burton and Pollack apply the sociological concept "institutional isomorphism" to gender mainstreaming. This concept means that the adoption of a norm in a particular institutional setting will be diffused widely and adopted by other institutions on the base that the members accept the legitimacy of that norm. In our case, gender mainstreaming has been discussed around the same time by each institution, starting in the 90's with the implementation of working groups. Its adoption and the commitment of the UN in 1995 and the Beijing report have accelerated it (Hafner-Burton & Pollack, 2002: 286). Another example is the quotation within the EU's definitions of the Council of Europe's definition.

Nonetheless, it does not mean that the rhetorical acceptance of gender mainstreaming means that they all have adopted the same definition. In practice, the organizations adapt gender mainstreaming definitions to their institutional cultures depending on who introduced gender mainstreaming, the historical context, the evolution of their organization or the presence of opposition... (Woodward, 2003: 67). Gender mainstreaming is an open signifier that can be influenced by feminist or non-feminist interpretations (Lombardo & Meier, 2006: 161).

Verloo speaks of a 'stretch' concept, with the ability to mean gender equality, equal opportunities, gender impact assessment or attention to diversity issue... For her, this stretching can explain its success in adoption (Verloo, 2002: 4).

In matters of introduction, many NGO's and associations have played a key role in the adoption and definition of gender mainstreaming within the UN. We find also the presence of specialists in the elaboration of gender mainstreaming such as for the Council of Europe. These two categories of actors generally emphasize the importance of specific actions as complementary to gender mainstreaming, the goal of women's empowerment, the participation of civil society and the clear identification of gender equality as the aim of gender mainstreaming (Sénac-Slawinsky, 2008: 30-31). This can be put in contrast with the UE's definitions, mostly defined by internal actors with in some cases, few motivations to implement gender mainstreaming as a transformative approach and the absence of these ideas.

With this demonstration of different meanings of gender mainstreaming, it appears as a highly inclusive term (Crawford School of Public Policy, 2004: 15) contributing to the difficulty of understanding: "The sheer diversity of mainstreaming, possibly attributable to its rapid ascendancy and 'lack of ownership'... renders the concept somewhat vague in practice (Squires, 2005: 368) making the identification of the aims like gender equality difficult to catch (UN, 2010: 17).

The first shift identified by Lombardo and Meier states that GM is part of gender equality. The terms gender equality and equality between men and women are exchangeable in these international documents, the assumption could be that the category gender is subsumed to men and women⁶. All the definitions show a way to approach the problem in the matter of equality between men and women, except sometimes for the EU. They indicate the importance of an intervention in all domains of politics in order to fight against inequality (Meier & Celis, 2010: 171). The international organizations present inequalities between men and women as reproduced unconsciously. The definition of equality between men and women varies between these organizations. If the European Commission and the UN defines it formally, stressing the presence of a gender perspective and in favor of equality, the Council of Europe defines a more categorical form of equality, underlying the results rather than the process (Meier & Celis, 2010: 171).

The second shift: incorporation of a feminist perspective in the mainstream political agenda is expressed by everyone with the mention of the policy cycle but sometimes not clearly

detailed. Only, the definition from the Council of Europe identifies GM as a major political objective. The third and fourth shifts: representation of women as actors, tools and strategies to implement gender mainstreaming are not detailed in many definitions.

Regarding the last shift: displacement and empowerment. Diversity mainstreaming has been quoted by the Council of Europe and by the EU meanwhile recognition of GM as bringing more democracy and recognizing differences is stated in the some UN's definitions (Platform for Action and the 2007 ECOSOC report) and the Council of Europe. In Squires views a distinction between a participatory and technocratic form of gender mainstreaming is necessary (2005: 368). The first one emphasizes the participation, presence and empowerment of women via the participation and consultation of civil society's organization; meanwhile the second turns to the experts, administrative rules and focus on the decision-making process (Squires, 2008: 76). With the exception of the UN, gender mainstreaming has been mainly defined and influenced by institutional actors rather than by the civil society (Dauphin & Sénac-Slawinski, 2006: 9).

These remarks lead to the conclusion that GM, in international organizations, is mainly an 'integrationist approach' than an 'agenda-setting'. It means that GM is integrated into the organization's existing framework rather than being a challenge to the organization masculine structure (Hafner-Burton & Pollack, 2002: 297). This interpretation prevails in all the organizations studied with preponderance in the EU and its liberal view of gender mainstreaming. Then, remains after browsing these three organizations the question of the signification of gender mainstreaming: for the Council of Europe and the UN, it is mainly a strategy, a process and for the EU, it is sometimes presented as a strategy, sometimes presented as a tool or as a method.

In conclusion, we have identified that definitions adopted by international organizations have been weakly influenced by feminist scholars and activists reflections. Regarding the scholars' reflections from the section 2.1, the light impact is probably due to their little incorporation in the framing process. Though when they participate, the definitions reveal a feminist sensitive approach to GM. We are going now to expand on the definition of gender mainstreaming at the federal level of Belgium since its adoption in 1996 based on official documents and interviews.

3 The definition of gender mainstreaming in Belgium

Gender mainstreaming, in Belgium, is part of the equality policies developed since 1985 promoting gender equality as well as equal opportunities policies (Wuiame, 2011: 3). Gender mainstreaming is guaranteed by articles 10 and 11 bis of the Belgian Constitution guaranteeing equality between women and men and equal exercise of their rights and freedoms (Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des homes (IEFH), 2008: 17).

An expansion of the definitions proposed between the adoption of the first law regarding gender mainstreaming in 1996 and the second law, adopted in 2007 with the aim to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming at the federal level of Belgium is going to be developed. In a second part, focus will be set on the documents published by the Institute for the Equality between Men and Women and finally, end with the evaluation report of the end of legislature on politics conducted in conformity with the objectives of the Fourth World Conference on Women, hold in Beijing in 1995. This report was published in April 2014. My analysis will be completed by the two realized interviews.

3.2 In the 1996 Law and reports

The law adopted in 1996 is the first step of the Belgian federal government to adopt and implement gender mainstreaming. The parliament approved a bill on the application of the UN Beijing Platform for Action consisting in requiring from the government an annual report about the progress made in the application of the Beijing platform (Meier & Celis, 2011: 478). These compulsory reports had to be presented to the parliament (Wuiame, 2011: 3). The adoption process was proceeding smoothly with few debates and the support of women's Belgian platforms (Meier, 2014).

Regarding a definition of gender mainstreaming, nothing is mentioned in the law. No references to an 'integrated approach of equality' or gender equality, underlying problems or goals to achieve is made (Meier & Celis, 2011: 478). Nonetheless, the law refers to the article 78 of the Belgian Constitution, the Beijing Conference and the conclusion of the Forum of NGO's held at the same time of the Conference. So, the definition from the Beijing Platform for Action can replace the definition of gender mainstreaming in Belgium.

Thus, this law privileged technical objectives over content: no reference is made to underlying problems, goals to achieve or target groups. It was an integrationist approach of GM from the UN without any adaptation to the Belgium's political context or institutional designs (Meier & Celis, 2010: 174 & 179). It is a procedural policy tool meaning the focus is set on

procedures and instruments such as the publication of a report to fight gender inequalities (Meier & Celis, 2011: 478).

In practice only three reports, made compulsory by the law, were published in 1999, 2002-2003 and 2004-2005. In the last two reports, GM advancement was limited to an exhaustive list of action taken in favor of gender equality and no definition of GM or gender equality was formulated. The evaluations of the policy were an end in themselves rather than a means to change existing social relations, no a priori discussions of the integration of a gender dimension in policies were conducted (Wuiame, 2011: 5).

Contrary to the two last reports, the governmental report published in 1999 to analyze the progress of Belgium in the implementation of the resolution from the World Conference in Beijing (Beijing +5) defined GM. In this report, GM is « *The postulate at the basis of this initiative is the recognition of the transversal character of the gender dimension. It is, to realize equality, the systematic integration of the situations, the priorities and the respective needs for women and men at every level of the social, political, economic and cultural dimensions.*

Such an approach is in rupture with the anti-discrimination logic and specific actions which prevailed until now and which aimed at correcting, a posteriori, the discriminant effects in the policies implementation. We are situated in a forward-looking logic, and thus preventive, which wants to introduce the gender perspective into the design, the implementation and the evaluation of the policies and in the whole of plans and mechanisms which they arouse so that the principle of equality between the women and the men is guaranteed and realized in fact.

This approach that aims to lead to a truly integrated approach under the angle of gender has been defined during the World Conference in Beijing and is supported by the European Union where it is well known under the name “gender mainstreaming”” (Federal Government of Belgium, 1999: 2, my translation).

In this definition, the transversal character of the gender dimension is reaffirmed. GM is defined as an approach. The aim is clearly identified; to achieve gender equality by taking into account the situations, priorities and needs of both sexes. So, GM aims to take into account the inequalities identified by the State but also the opinions and priorities of both sexes. Therefore, GM takes into account their voices in all dimensions of life: social, economic, political and cultural fields. These dimensions seem to belong to the public sphere

and not the private one. Moreover, no explanation is given about the cause or reproduction of the inequalities: discriminant effects came from the implementation of policies but equality is guaranteed in theory – *de jure*- but not in fact –*de facto*-. In interpreting the formulation of inequalities between men and women, the report seems to attribute them to an unconscious mechanism and to a lack of attention to a gender perspective from the actors. This interpretation illustrates some characteristics seen in some definitions from the UN and the EU.

The rupture announced with equal treatment measures and specific actions resonates with the European Union conception of gender mainstreaming and Rees' theory. Some of the EU's definitions and this Belgian's definition differ, however only in a few notable regards. The Belgian's definition does not mention that specific actions and GM are necessary for the implementation of the latter. Moreover, it forgets to introduce their complementarity, such as reminded by the UN, the Council of Europe and the EU. GM and specific actions are presented as opposed categories with the use of adjectives: a posteriori and preventive, reproduction of inequalities, suppression of them. Like in the definitions from International organization, the policy-cycle is quoted as well as its phases. Regarding the actors, they imply that GM will be implemented by traditional actors involved in the policy-making process. Finally, they conclude this definition with the reaffirmation of the link between GM and international organizations. The insistence upon the 'angle gender' can suggest that they know or are open to a potential incorporation of diversity mainstreaming.

In 2001, due to the lack of advancement in the implementation of gender mainstreaming, a Gender Mainstreaming Unit, composed of academics, external experts, was formed at the initiative of the Ministry of Equality and Opportunities. Its goal was to provide advices by offering their gender mainstreaming expertise to cabinets and public administrations which had formerly adopted one politics to implement GM (Meier, 2014). Originally with a one year mandate, they should have been renewed for a second year in 2002 after the Ministry for Equality and Opportunities realized that their objectives were not met. The project was stopped in 2003, before the federal elections, without realizing all its objectives. One of them was to formulate clear objectives and a plan to implement and meet them in every ministry. They clearly identified gender mainstreaming as the main approach to gender equality (Wuiame, 2011: 3). Due to lack of resources, time and formal obligation from administrations and cabinets to comply with the Unit as well as the absence of evaluation, this gender mainstreaming initiative remained mostly formalistic (Meier and Celis, 2011: 481).

Many of the objectives identified by Ministries were rather belonging to specific equality actions than to GM actions (Meier, 2014). Nonetheless, this unit based its approach to gender mainstreaming on the definitions from the Council of Europe and the European Commission (Meier & Celis, 2010: 176). They published an academic report recapitulating their actions and explaining gender mainstreaming, the tools to implement it and its framework (Meier, 2014).

At the same time the GM Unit was created. The Minister of Employment in charge of equal opportunity created the Institute for the Equality for Women and Men, a semi-governmental federal public service in charge of gender issues (Wuiame, 2011: 4). In 2003, the theme diversity was adopted in the Federal equal opportunities policy, mentioning gender as one criteria of discrimination amongst others (Woodward, 2008: 295). For example, the Institute is dependent on the Minister of Equal Opportunities encompassing also, amongst other attributions: race and ethnicity discrimination (Celis & Meier, 2011: 59).

In 2007, a document related to Beijing +10 contained a resume of all the conferences organized in Belgium on gender mainstreaming. GM is defined at the end of the document in the glossary. The well-known definition of the Council of Europe is mentioned, including the few sentences referring to *“this definition puts forward gender mainstreaming as a strategy allowing to reach gender equality and fixes besides that actors normally part of the decision process have to apply this principle to all policy and to decisional process. It implies that the Department or the Ministry of gender equality or equality of opportunities is not responsible for the results, but that responsibilities are spread between all actors involved. Gender mainstreaming concerns as well men as women”* (IEFH, 2007: 70-71, my translation).

Contrary to the previous definitions seen previously, this one identifies GM as a strategy and not as an approach. The use of the term ‘strategy’ seems to make the commitment to GM more attainable, in opposition to the term ‘approach’ being too vague. As mentioned in the Council of Europe’s definition, gender equality is the goal to attain. This definition insists on the actors, by identifying those who are normally part of the decision process as in the definition by the Council of Europe and the EU. The transversal approach is reaffirmed by ‘all policy’ and all stages of the ‘decisional process’. It insists on the share of responsibilities between all actors, insisting that the Ministry of gender equality is not the only one in charge. This can make echoes to feminist fears regarding the dilution of responsibilities between all actors and the weakening of specific gender equality institutions but on the other hand it

reaffirms the transversal character of GM concerning the need of its implementation everywhere to fight gender inequalities.

In the same document, a definition of gender equality is proposed: *“Gender equality implies that everyone is free to develop its personal gifts/talents and to make its own choices without being limited by role models based on sex and strictly defined, and that different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are recognized, valued and promoted the same way.*

Equality of right indicates the fact that women and men have the same rights. Equality of fact indicates that women and men are on an equal footing in concrete realizations (equality of results) and not only at the level of equality of right.” (IEFH, 2007: 70, my translation).

This definition of gender equality is closer to the feminist interpretation of GM than the previous one in 1999. It recognizes the personal talents and freedom of choice. It avoids the distinction between public and private life. It also recognizes the existence of role models based on gender restraining women and men and especially among women’s values, aspirations should be promoted the same way as men’s ones. So, it is quite a transformative proposition of gender equality recognizing differences between men and women and valuing these differences. Still this definition does not mention the origins and the manner of their reproduction. Like in the previous documents, a distinction between equality of rights and equality of facts is made but the second need equality needs to be achieved.

In conclusion, the adoption of gender mainstreaming at the federal level can be seen, first, as a coercive adoption due to the Belgian commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action as well as the presence of Belgium in the EU (Payne, 2011: 528). We can argue the adoption of gender mainstreaming in 1996 ensued from the ‘world system’ pressures. It means that through participation in multilateral organizations, the State is socialized in norms prescribing its behavior in the international realm. In fact, the domestic conduct of the State is influenced by the global norms (True & Mintrom, 2001: 40). But it does not mean the State is proactive in the implementation of the global norm. GM, at the federal level, seems to be implemented in that perspective due to the lack of definition in the 1996’s law and the three reports published to measure the implementation process. Nonetheless, in the reports Beijing +5 and +10, clear definitions are made, clearly more influenced by International Organizations, especially the EU and the Council of Europe, as well as by feminist reflections such as the recognition that GM is part of gender equality (shift one) The second shift, the incorporation of GM as an major objective of the political agenda is partly emphasized with the insistence

on equality of fact and the spread of GM outside a specific ministry. The third shift, incorporation of equal representation of women and men in the political system, is not mentioned. The displacement, recognition of differences has been made as well as an opening to diversity mainstreaming.

In conclusion, from 1996 to 2007, no clear definition of gender mainstreaming has been elaborated, except in the reports Beijing +5 and 10. Moreover, these documents are not compulsory, therefore engagement of the government is not required to read or understand what GM is (and its conception in Belgium. – je supprimerais cette partie “and its conception in Belgium car ce n’est pas clair) !)

3.3 In the 2007 Law and documents with force of Law

Partly inspired by the conclusions of the pilot project written by the Institute, the federal government adopted, on the 12 January 2007, a new law to implement gender mainstreaming (Meier, 2014). This law is the transposition of the article one from the 2002/73 directive, adopted, in December 2002, by the European Parliament and the European Council. It is part of a body of three Belgian’s laws, adopted in 2007, addressing anti-discrimination legislation: the racism law, the general anti-discrimination law and the gender law (gender mainstreaming) (Verloo et ali., 2012: 520-521) (see annex 3 for the institutional structure). According to Meier, the adoption of this law is a ‘miracle’ due to its strong commitment to implement gender mainstreaming. She pursues by saying this commitment was a surprise for the women’s movements and feminist scholars, particularly as Belgium was always behind many European countries in international charts in matters of equality policies (Meier, 2014). The pressures exercised by the European Union on its member states to adopt GM explain only partly this adoption (Meier, 2014).

The definition mentioned in the 2007 Law is *‘the government watches the implementation of the objectives of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, and more particularly in the integration of the gender dimension across all polity lines, measures, budget preparations and campaigns and this with a view to avoid or correct potential inequalities between women and men’* (Federal Government of Belgium, 2007: art.2, §1, my translation). GM is not mentioned as such.

Compared to the non-definition of 1996 Law, the one issued in 2007 offers a draft of explanation of gender mainstreaming. Like the 1996, the law mentions the commitment of the

government to implement the Beijing Platform for Action but includes concrete measures in favor of gender mainstreaming (Meier & Celis, 2011: 482).

It is the first time in this 2007 law, a definition is expressed in a document with force of law at the federal level of Belgium. This new law identifies the government as the authority in charge of the implementation of gender mainstreaming. By deduction, it can be said that the definition includes in the term 'government' all the ministers as well as administrations and actors in charge of the policy process (Meier & Celis, 2010: 177-178-179). Still the predominance in the selection of actors of international influences such as the Council of Europe and the EU is clearly appearing (IEFH, 2008: 9-10).

Instruments of application are mentioned: all policy lines, budget, measures, campaigns... The federal government aims to integrate gender mainstreaming in every action in charge of: policy lines and measures which can be understood as the adoption of gender mainstreaming in all the phases of the elaboration and evaluation of a public policy. It makes explicit mention of resources by the mention of 'budget preparations', also known as 'gender budgeting' having been identified as a success factor to implement gender mainstreaming (IEFH, 2007: 34). 'Campaigns' make reference to communication inside the Federal level, but also can be understood for promotion outside in the society. Idea promoted by some feminist scholars and the Council of Europe.

Third, the definition mentions the aim of GM (equality between men and women) and refers to the different realities between men's and women's life. So, implicitly, differences between both categories are recognized as well as the different values and experiences such as promoted in the first shift of feminist's definitions. It insists on the adoption of a particular 'view' to avoid or correct them. Contrary to other specific actions in equality policy, gender mainstreaming has a preventive, prospective and posteriori part by the mention of '*avoiding or correcting*'. Nonetheless, its commitment to avoidance and correction is not specifically leading to a proactive politics in favor of gender equality. With these specific terms, it seems to avoid or correct unconscious patterns reproducing inequalities (Meier & Celis, 2010: 178). The a priori part of the law enlarges the scope of policy subjects with potential inequalities between men and women to every subject treated by the federal government. However, this definition does not address the male bias in the political structure and organization.

This definition includes a horizontal strategy to be adopted and put in place by all actors involved in the policy-process as well as a transversal strategy referring to all subjects related

to gender dimensions or inequalities between women and men at all steps of the policy process. (IEFH, 2008: 9-10). In comparison with the feminist reflections developed in part 2, this definition of gender mainstreaming enters the category integrationist approach rather than agenda-setting, a transformative approach of the politics, the organization and the incorporation of new actors.

Two other documents with force of law were programmed in the 2007 Law to implement gender budgeting and the The Interdepartmental Group of Coordination. The royal decree regarding the creation of the latter was published the 26 January 2010 and the gender budgeting circular was adopted in 2009. Both their adoptions are perceived as late by feminist scholars regarding their scheduling in 2007. Meier regards it as the backlash of the 2007 miracle, the government did not realize how the 2007 law was revolutionary and how the objectives were compelled to reach (Meier, interview).

In the royal decree, the gender integrated approach is defined as: *“An approach which consists of the (re)organization, the improvement, the evolution and the evaluation of the processes of decision-making, in the purposes to incorporate the equality perspective between women and men to all domains and at every level, by the actors generally involved in the implementation of the politics”* (Federal Government of Belgium, 2010: §4, my translation). Some common elements with the 1999 report can be found. In both texts, GM is an approach. Both refers to gender integrated approach instead of GM. They identify, as many definitions, the change in the traditional way of conducting policies with a preventive and a posteriori study of their impacts. It quotes the policy cycle to explain the changes. The mention of ‘(re)organization’ can be seen as a transformative GM, with a possibility to put into question the neutral foundations of the policy making process. The aim is clearly identified: the equality perspective between men and women. This formulation seems obscure and engages that the actors specifying the distinction between equality in right and fact are the same as the ones implementing gender mainstreaming.

The circular ‘gender budgeting’ defines gender mainstreaming as: *“This approach which aims at concretizing the equality of men and women, concerns all domains and all phases of the political decision’s process (Analysis - Definition - Implementation - Evaluation). In this frame, it contributes to strengthen the principle of "good governance" by objectifying decision-making.”* (Federal Government of Belgium, 2009: 1, my translation). This definition is almost the same as the royal decree with the mention of ‘approach’, ‘all domains and

phases'. The policy-cycle is well identified. The aim of equality between men and women is more committed with the mention 'concretizing' being seen as a reference to equality of facts. A new mention is the "good governance". Even though it is not well defined, it will help in 'objectifying decision-making'. It presupposes that it was not the case before the adoption of GM. The link between good governance and GM was already presented in the Council of Europe and on EU documents. And later in the circular, the definition of gender mainstreaming by the Council of Europe is quoted as a reference in part 2: "definitions".

In conclusion, thanks to these three documents with force of law expanded since 2007, the scope of gender mainstreaming has been extended, for example to good governance. These definitions are very similar in their objectives and in the vocabulary used. It was already seen in the 1996 law part with the definition from the Council of Europe, as well as, to a lesser extent the key role played by the EU in defining gender mainstreaming at the federal level of Belgium.

The 2007 law designates the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men as responsible for the monitoring and implementation of the gender dimension into public policies and programmes (Wuïame, 2011: 6). We will review some of the documents issued explaining GM in the third part.

3.4 In official documents

In 2010, the Institute for equality for women and men wrote a manual destined for the Belgian's federal administrations. The first part of this manual is dedicated to explain gender, mainstreaming and GM. GM "*indicates then an integration process of gender in all the themes being the object of a political concern. Gender mainstreaming thus involves that we take into account the socially constructed differences between men and women, as well as their potential impact, in all the domains and in every stage of the political process – elaboration, implementation, follow-up and evaluation. The political decisions are always applied to women and men and often it occurs that a masculine perception of things implicitly influences political decisions. In other words, each political decision contains a gender dimension of which impact it is necessary to evaluate in positive or negative terms, so that decisions are taken with full knowledge of the facts*" (IEFH, 2008: 16, my translation). The transversal approach is reaffirmed; GM is a process applied to all political concerns. Equality between women and men is not mentioned but the reason for implementing a gender perspective is explained. The constructed differences of the two groups and their impacts on

the political process and policy cycle are recognized. However, the discriminations are unconsciously and implicitly reproduced. The bias can be solved with the 'knowledge' of the definition of a gender dimension. This comprehension of gender inequalities has already been met in previous documents issued in Belgium but also in the Council of Europe's report. Like for the Council of Europe, gender mainstreaming in Belgium is part of gender equality measures. Both recognize the displacement part of GM: a shift from sameness to difference such as presented in the 'Wollstonecraft dilemma'.

The actors, not directly mentioned in this definition, are enumerated later; it concerns '*all the actors concerned by the definition, the implementation and evaluation of politics*'. The document mentions civil servants, ministers, trade unions and the working partners, due to their missions with public services such as associations, scholars... (IEFH, 2010: 24, my translation). For the first time, actors are defined giving space to women's movements and feminist scholars having links with the policy process and so, considered by the government as interlocutors. The manual, taking example of the EU strategy in GM identifies that GM and specific actions are complementary approaches (IEFH, 2010: 25). 'Good governance' is also mentioned as a goal of GM because: "*By stopping considering the population as homogeneous group to whom politics apply uniformly and by taking better into accounts the needs and expectations of citizens, gender mainstreaming contributes, in fact, to reinforce the efficacy and efficiency of politics*" (IEFH, 2010: 20, my translation). This same argument has been used in some documents of the EU to convince the more reluctant regarding GM. GM is presented as a way to improve work and achieve efficiency.

The Institute of Equality between Men and Women also developed administrative and political forms intended to administrations, enumerating different procedures with blank spaces in order to allow them to detail their actions. Gender mainstreaming is defined by the same text in both documents such as: "*Gender mainstreaming (compulsory depiction by the 12 January 2007 Law) is a **transversal and preventive** strategy which concerns all domains of competences and aim to avoid that public policies create or reinforce inequalities between men and women. **Then, gender mainstreaming aims at integrating the gender dimension in all public policies. This strategy must not be confused with specific actions in equality men-women matters that are limited to a particular domain and aim to reduce the noticed disparities (i.e. the establishment of quotas to reduce a sub-representation). This strategy concerns the content of public policies, not the management of human resources.***" (IEFH, 1, bold in the text, my translation).

“We identify the gender dimension of a politics on the basis of existing differences between the respective situations of women and men and more particularly on the basis of consequences of these differences on the access of women and men to resources (income, work, responsibility, health/well-being, security, knowledge, mobility...) or on their exercise of fundamental rights (civil rights, social or political). (IEFH, 2010: 1, underlines in the text, my translation).

This definition sums up specificities already seen in previous definitions: transversal and preventive strategy, all public policies, existing differences between men and women and unconscious reproduction. Though, in this definition GM is a strategy and not an approach. It emphasizes the difference with specific actions and insists on the link with all public policies and access of women and men to different kinds of resources. One example of specific actions concerns the law binding political parties to reserve places for women on their electoral lists. These insistences should correct frequent mistakes in the interpretation of gender mainstreaming within the government’s organization. It gives example of access to resources women and men should have as well as mention to their fundamental rights. Indirectly equality of right and facts is again mentioned.

All these definitions are very similar and reaffirm the transversal, preventive approach of gender mainstreaming. For example, the political and administrative forms to prepare the reports for the end of the legislature, define gender mainstreaming by quoting the definition of the 2007 law. The only difference is, sometimes, GM is described as an approach or a strategy/process. The emphasis is on the structural approach. Gender mainstreaming is present in all ‘the policy cycle’ and aims to achieve equality between women and men as well as good governance.

3.5 The report for the end of the legislature 2014

Another example of the similitude of these definitions appears in the last report published in 2014. *“Gender mainstreaming is then an approach that aims to reinforce equality between men and women in society by integrating a gender dimension in the content of public policies, namely by ensuring that public policies are established in taking into account differences which exist between the respective situation of men and women and in function of their potential impact on the equality between men and women.*

This approach is based on the knowledge of the situation of people concerned by public policies and on the evaluation (ex-ante and ex-post) of the effects of public policies. It

contributes then to reinforce the efficacy and efficiency and inscribe itself in a view to reinforce good governance” (IEFH, 2014: 5, my translation).

Gender mainstreaming is then again seen as a transversal, preventive and structural approach linked to good governance with the aim to attain equality between men and women based on knowledge. There is no mention of the actors responsible for the implementation, except the mention of “public policies”. Deduction can be made they speak about traditional actors involved in the elaboration of public policies.

Further in the conclusion of the report, a definition of gender mainstreaming is developed in order to explain the difficulties encountered by the federal administrations and ministers in the implementation “*Gender mainstreaming is a transversal approach aiming to constrain actors involved in the decision-making process of politics to think and take structurally into account the potential impact of their decisions on women’ and men’s situation and more widely on equality between men and women. It is thus about an approach which concerns all the domains of competence and which involves actors whose priorities concern at first and above all their own fields of expertise. The gender mainstreaming in the public policies, which rests on their evaluation and aims at strengthening the equality between men and women is not obvious”* (IEFH, 2014: 121, my translation). This definition insists on the novelties of gender mainstreaming compared to traditional equality policies: “all domains”, “traditional actors”, “structurally”... For the first time, the difficulty to understand GM is presented as due to its novelty. The insistence on the novelty in the definitions is also used later in this report as a justification of some misunderstandings from the actors leading to the difficulty in applying correctly gender mainstreaming and a gender dimension in their work. This argument about the difficulty surrounding gender mainstreaming has been expressed by many feminist scholars such as Verloo, Meier and Wuiame.

As seen in many documents, gender inequality is defined by the name “difference of situations between men and women”. The report defines that gender mainstreaming should identify inequalities of treatment in policies between men and women. The vocabulary used in the report is “problematic differences”. A problematic difference is “*we considered a difference of situation between men and women problematic in terms of equality when it limits the access to resources or to the exercise of fundamental rights of people from one of the two sexes. These resources must be understood in a wide sense as being what people need to live in “good” conditions within society (income, work, responsibility, security, health,*

mobility...). *If in a domain of political intervention, differences between men and women tend to globally limit the women or men access to these resources, it is considered as problematic and must be taken into account during the elaboration of one or several political projects”* (IEFH, 2014: 123, my translation). The differences between equality of rights and equality of fact are emphasis and a clear definition of the necessary resources that both gender need to obtain, is made. Such as in most of the international organizations ‘definitions reviewed, no explanation of the inequalities’ origins and the manner of how they are reproduced are given.

To sum up, the definition of gender mainstreaming from 1996 to 2007 was analyzed in the part 2.3, then the analysis was pursued on the definitions promoted in documents with force of law and non-binding documents published by the Institute since 2007. The next part of the document will highlight the trends identified since 1996 in GM’s definitions in Belgium.

3.6 Conclusion on the Belgian’s definitions

In Belgium, legislation and documents about gender mainstreaming clearly mention the influence of supranational obligation, by quoting the definition of gender mainstreaming from the Council of Europe, and by making a reference in their titles to the Beijing report or referencing to directive and legislation from the European Union (Woodward, 2008: 291). Woodward goes further and says that, in Belgium, all legislations on gender equality find their origins in supranational obligations (Woodward, 2008: 291). In general the Council of Europe’s definition is juxtaposed with other definitions ‘as if the multiplication of definitions will multiply the chances of understanding’ (Verloo, 2005: 354). If the EU plays a preponderant role in the adoption of gender mainstreaming by Belgium in 2007, it is mainly due to the definition from the Council of Europe taken as example for the conception of GM in Belgium.

Comparing to the fifth shift mentioned by Lombardo and Meier concerning link between GM and more democracy and participation of women’s movements, few references to participation of women’s movements are appearing in the analyzed documents. The explanation can be found in the fact that definition and implementation of gender mainstreaming, at the federal level of Belgium, are mainly done by the Institute and by the government, women’s movements being reduced to a limited role despite the fact that they support the GM’s implementation process in Belgium and are sometimes mentioned as actors involved in its elaboration. Nonetheless, when they are present, they always insist on the dual

strategy to achieve gender equality: GM and specific actions but without promoting a transformative approach of GM (Meier, 2014).

GM is significantly advanced due to the presence of epistemic communities (groups of experts with shared ideals and perceived as authoritative knowledge by policy-makers) in the formulation of the definitions since 2007, thanks to the Institute for equality of men and women (Payne, 2011: 530). All the documents are mainly written by the Institute for women and men with few interventions from outside or feminist scholars. So, a specific institute specialized in gender equality is in charge of defining GM. It can explain the homogeneity found in the analyzed definitions using the same vocabulary, same notions. This way of doing led to some interrogations from the feminist scholars especially concerning the 007 law found very binding and advanced contrary to the previous law (interview Meier). It is obvious that the commitment of a specific gender organism and its staff can play a key role in the evolution of the adoption of advance gender equality legislations, such as the role played by the Standing Committee on Women's Rights at the European Union level. In Belgium, gender mainstreaming concept and definition are decided by few people aiming to achieve equality rather than developing potentials being part of a deliberative democracy and taking into account the diversity of the society (Sénac-Slawinski, 1998: 43).

The definitions of gender mainstreaming in federal documents are following the same lines since 2007 (Meier, 2014). Clear references to the same ideas 'equality between women and men', public policy, good governance, equality *de jure* and *de facto*, preventive, structural approach are made. Regarding the first shift, recognized unequal relations between 'sexes' are considered as being the result of social construction and structural barriers affecting both men and women and should be analyzed by a lens studying both sexes (Woodward, 2008: 201). Gender inequalities are not presented as a structural problem but as an unconscious reproduction or lack of knowledge; probably influenced by the conception of the Council of Europe and the UE (Daly, 2005: 440). Wuiame, in her interview insists on the absence of common understanding behind the term gender equality, as already seen in international organizations, the multiple comprehensions of gender equality blurred its objective and ultimately impact the definition and implementation of GM (Wuiame, 2014). So, the first shift identified by Lombardo and Meier is partially realized such as the second one. The definitions emphasizes the incorporation of gender mainstreaming at all stages of the policy cycle but do not insist on its adoption as one of the main objective of the political system. The inclusion of

regular actors in the definition and implementation of gender mainstreaming make it difficult to break the genderedness of organizations (Benschop & Verloo, 2006: 31).

Daly has argued that Gender mainstreaming is a symbol of modernity which should show the look of modern gender equality (Daly, 2005: 441). If GM is implemented in a feminist approach, it could be this revolutionary symbol that Daly mentioned. GM can be a new revolutionary approach due to its difference with traditional equality approach. This could explain the difficulty to be understood by the government's administrations.

However, Petra Meier is very negative about the future of GM, at the federal level of Belgium. The Institute, one of the key actors in GM, is frequently threatened to be incorporated in the Centre in order to centralize all the treatments of discrimination and inequalities in one organism (Verloo et al., 2012: 524). Hence, the five shifts empowerment conducting to diversity mainstreaming could be realized in the future for Belgium. Nonetheless, the two interviewees were afraid of this eventuality and explained that the absence of an organism strongly committed to gender mainstreaming, could weaken the Belgian's commitment to gender mainstreaming. If the fear is not to be integrated in another center, the Institute is threatened to see its competencies transferred to regions and communities of Belgium. Meier thinks that if this scenario takes places, the absence of actors at the federal level pushing and defining a gender mainstreaming approach, could lead to an empty gender mainstreaming. To make it clearer, the official commitment to GM would still be claimed but the impact on the ministries and administrations would be reduced with no one in charge of explaining and defending it (Meier, 2014).

4 Conclusion

We should now come back to my research question and hypotheses presented in the introduction. My research question was: which factors can explain the evolution of gender mainstreaming's definition in the federal official documents of Belgium since 1996? In order to answer it, we have analyzed in a first part, the definition of gender mainstreaming and its evolution by feminist scholars, at the UN, the Council of Europe, the European Union. The impact of feminist scholars on international definitions was analyzed in the conclusion of this first part in order to determine their links in the adoption of gender mainstreaming. In a second part, we have analyzed and identified Belgium's federal definitions of GM since 1996 and also identified which actors have influenced these definitions. This last part of our thesis

was completed with interviews of feminist scholars working on gender mainstreaming in Belgium.

The first hypothesis was that different definitions of gender mainstreaming and their evolution in supranational documents since 1996 - compulsory or recommended could influence and change Belgium's definitions. We have identified that the definitions from three international organisms have an impact on the Belgian's federal definitions with a broader influence from the UE and the 1997 Council of Europe's short definitions. Either through the direct quotation of the definitions or references to official documents published by them but also in the vocabulary used, the definition of gender equality and the aim of gender mainstreaming (Celis & Karen, 2011: 67). Gender mainstreaming's definition seems to migrate without problem from supranational level to national another (Meier & Celis, 2010: 169). It can be explained partly by the sociological concept 'institutional isomorphism developed by Hafner-Burton and pollack. Regarding the UN's definitions, federal Belgium's definitions mentioned them but do not address the most transformative part of it as the inclusion of external actors and women's empowerment.

One explanation to the absence of definition in the 1996 law is that more than being a coercive adoption, it can be explained by the absence of spread of a clear definition around the world. The UN's Platform for Action was very vague in its description, the Council of Europe was working as the European Union on a definition. Most of the literature from feminist scholars appears after 1996 (Wuiame, 2014).

In the analyzed institutions and in Belgium, we have seen that gender mainstreaming is adopted as a macro-level strategy and that some of their definition lack detailed policies or a means to evaluate the progress towards the goal mentioned, such as promoted in the third shift of Lombardo & Meier (Payne, 2011: 526). It is also frequent that definitions of gender mainstreaming do not mention the aim (gender equality) or not define gender mainstreaming or gender equality properly. In that sense, it appears difficult to achieve the first and second shifts of Lombardo and Meier, namely to promote an agenda setting approach of gender mainstreaming by putting it as a main objective of the political agenda. Moreover, the absence of diffusion of definition and explanation of the concepts lead to a simplification of gender problematic and a misunderstanding of what is an equality policy. Woodward points out that the term 'mainstreaming' can be problematic in its understanding. For example, mainstreaming used to mean 'malestream' in the feminist language and be a synonym of

dominant culture (Woodward, 2003: 67). Many authors, like Wuiame, Benschop and Verloo identify this problem as the source of procedural policies without any guidance (Wuiame, 2011: 4).

Our second hypothesis about the consultation of experts and academics in the elaboration of the 2007 law and in official documents is partially confirmed. The report from the Pilot project was taken into account in the elaboration of the 2007 law but few scholars or women's associations were asked to join the Institute in the definition of GM in official documents. Moreover, we have seen few ideas and shifts identified in the second part, picked up and developed in Belgium's definitions. The transformative aspect, 'agenda-setting' approach of gender mainstreaming is abandoned; the emphasis is put on its integrationist approach in links with arguments such as good governance to increase the adoption of GM (Wuiame, 2014).

Our last hypothesis: the influence in GM's definitions of the 2007 law. The circular and royal decree as they carried strength of law was partially confirmed. It seems to be the case since 2007 but it cannot be affirmed clearly as many Belgium's definitions are homogeneous and written by the same organism: the Institute.

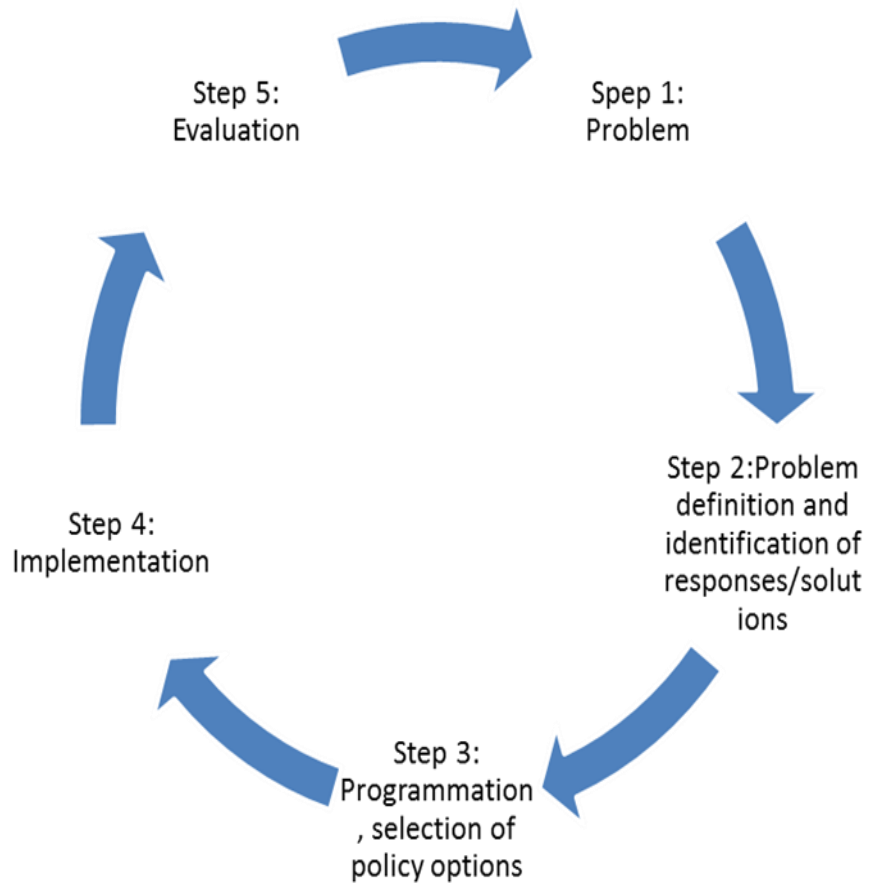
The study of the definition of gender mainstreaming has raised some questions during the redaction of this thesis. One of them is the question about the space for feminist groups in the conceptualization of gender mainstreaming. One interrogation is that the commitment to achieve equality between men and women, inherent to the gender mainstreaming definitions, could be a form of essentialism. By defining outcomes of potential policies in regards to categories women and men, these categories can be seen as homogeneous, but what about question of class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation within these categories and the permanent construction of our identity?

One answer can be that gender mainstreaming has the potential to permanently transform the language of policy, making it more inclusive and sensitive to diversity, starting with sex (Woodward, 2003: 84). The concept 'diversity mainstreaming', the incorporation of intersectionality: is having as impact the dilution of gender equality in equal opportunities for all in the European Union. Since 2006, this tendency has appeared in the European Union causing reflexion and debates among feminists since the adoption of the article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty recognizing 6 characteristics as part of the fight against discrimination: sex, race, ethnic origin, handicap, age, religion or sexual orientation (Dauphin & Sénac-Slawinski, 2006: 10). The European Union is putting pressure on its member States to adopt

the same conception and we noticed that it has already been partly adopted at the federal level. But shouldn't we first, develop and explain what are gender mainstreaming and gender equality before mixing with other discrimination categories?

If feminist academics sometimes, and the State always, take a preponderant part in the elaboration of the definition, the opening of gender mainstreaming to civil society as well as democratic discussions could be the next step into the wide diffusion and learning process of gender mainstreaming and the way our patriarchal society is reproducing inequalities.

5 Annex 1: the policy cycle



Source : Analyse et pilotage des politiques publiques from Knoepfel, Larrue and Varone (2006), adapted from Jones (1970) and Meny and Thoenig (1989).

6 Annex 2: Verloo's different approaches in gender equality policies

Strategy	Diagnosis	Attribution of Causality	Prognosis	Call for Action
	What is wrong?	Who/what is responsible for the problem?	What should be done?	Who should do something?
Equal treatment	Inequality in law, different laws/rights for men and women	Individual responsibilities	Change the laws towards formally equal rights for men and women in laws	Legislators
Specific equality policies	Unequal starting position between men and women. Women as a group disadvantage with specific problems that are not addressed.	Diverse, both at individual level and structural level	Design and fund specific projects to address the problems of (specific groups of) women	Gender equality agencies, sometimes with established institutions
Gender mainstreaming	Gender bias in regular policies and social institutions resulting in gender inequality	Policy makers (unintentionally)	(Re)organize policy processes to incorporate a gender equality perspective in all policies	Government/ traditional actors involved in policy making

Sources: Verloo, 2001: 4.

7 Annex 3 : Interviews

I realized two interviews: the first one with Nathalie Wuiame the 28 May 2014 at her office in Brussels; it lasted 38 minutes. The second interview took place in Antwerpen, at Petra Meier's office, the 6 June 2014, it lasted 33 minutes. Both interviews were conducted in French.

Questionnaire:

1. Presentation

- a. Could you please introduce yourself and explain how your work is related to gender mainstreaming?

2. Actors involved in the Belgian's gender mainstreaming definitions

a. 1996 law:

- i. Was there a reflection about the adoption of the 1996 law at the parliament or government?
- ii. Do you know who was in charge of the redaction of this law?
- iii. In your opinion, was the law a transposition of the Belgium's commitment to the Beijing Platform? Or did the legislator take this opportunity to adopt other objectives?

b. Pilot project from 2000-2003:

- i. Who were the members of this pilot project?
- ii. Were actors from the civil society, such as NGO's and women's movements, involved in the project?
- iii. According to you, were conclusions drawn in the report made by the pilot project, on gender mainstreaming's definitions in Belgium? Especially on the absence of definition in the 1996 law?

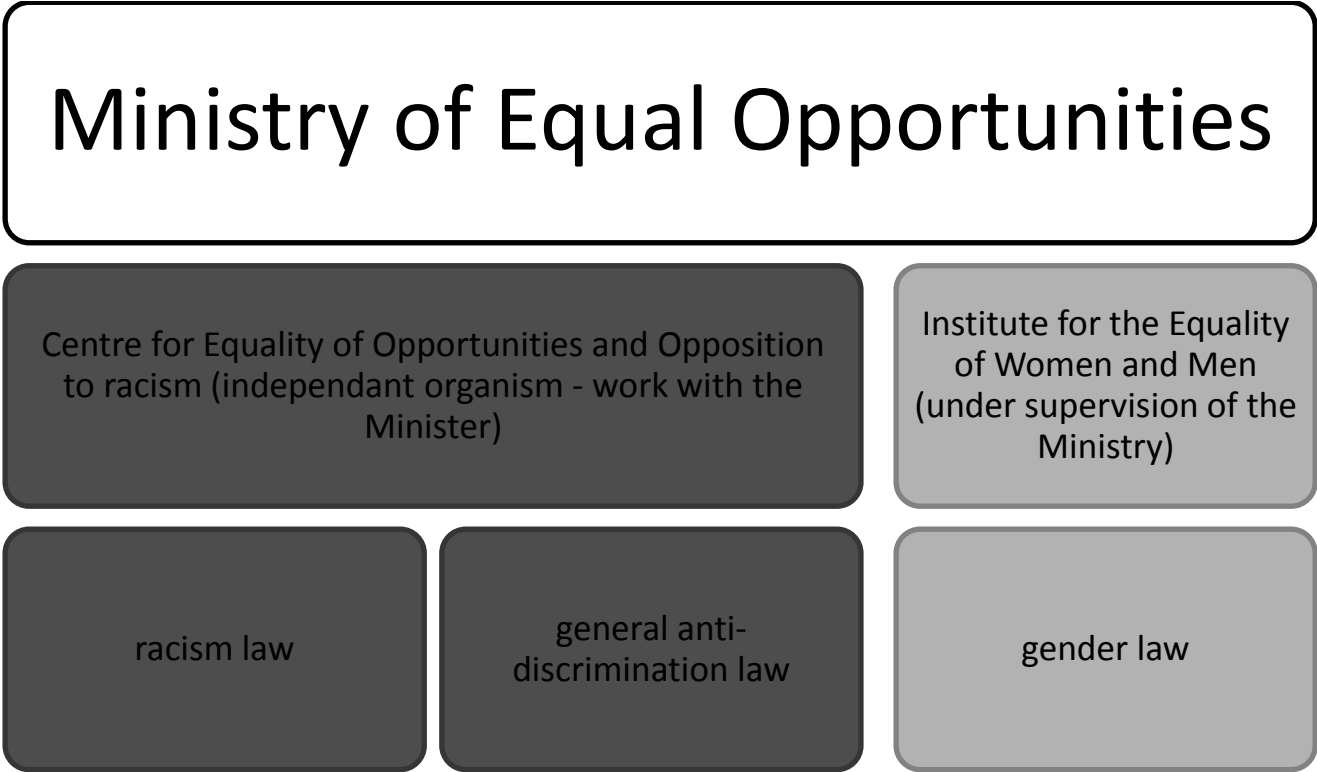
c. 2007 law:

- i. Who did write the law?
- ii. Did the members of the Pilot project take part in the elaboration of the 2007 law?
- iii. Did external experts take part in the elaboration of the 2007 law?
- iv. According to you, were the conclusions from the Pilot Project's report taken into account in the elaboration of the 2007 law?

3. According to you, did any parliamentary debates take place during the adoption of gender mainstreaming at the parliament? If yes, when did it happen?

4. How is gender mainstreaming perceived by women's movements in Belgium?
5. Who was in charge of the elaboration the documents published since 2007 regarding gender mainstreaming? Was it the Institute for equality of men and women? Were external experts taking part to the redaction process? Were actors from the civil society taking part of the redaction process?
6. Defining gender mainstreaming:
 - a. In your opinion, do you think gender mainstreaming has evolved since its adoption in 1996?
 - b. What do you think about the link between gender mainstreaming and good governance?
 - c. Do you think the link with good governance was implied since 1996 or was present in the UN, EU or Council of Europe's documents?
 - d. In general, would you say that feminist scholars or women's movements were integrated or took part in the gender mainstreaming process in Belgium? And especially in the elaboration of gender mainstreaming's definitions?
 - e. Are attempts existing from civil society to redefine gender mainstreaming in Belgium?
7. Future
 - a. How do you think gender mainstreaming will evolve in Belgium?
 - b. Do you think the definition of gender mainstreaming will evolve to include diversity mainstreaming?
 - c. Do you think the transformative part of gender mainstreaming might be developed in the future?

8 Annex 4: Anti-discrimination structure at the federal level since 2007



Based on Verloo et al., 2012, p. 523.

9 Endnotes

¹ The translation of ‘gender mainstreaming’ in French raised many debates. They use ‘integrated approach of equality’ to highlight the sociocultural differences between sexes. But many scholars, such as Wuïame do not find this translation satisfactory (Dauphin & Sénac-Slawinski, 2008: 8).

² The twelve critical topic areas are: Women and Poverty, Education and Training of Women, Women and Health, Violence against Women, Women and Armed Conflict, Women and the Economy, Women in Power and Decision-making, Institutional Mechanism for the Avancement of Women, Human Rights of Women, Women and the Media, Women and the Environment, the Girl-child (UN, 1995)

³ The liberal perspective of international relations puts emphasis on the relationships and negotiations between institutions (States and non-state actors) to solve conflicts. It is opposed to the realist perspective which sees the world in terms of struggle for power between States (Nau, 2012: G-8 & G-11).

⁴ The Standing Committee on Women’s Rights is in charge of proposing and drafting legislation to prepare the plenary sessions of the European Parliament. It also advises the European Commission in the adoption of legislation during the co-decision procedure.

⁵⁵ Art.2: The Community shall have as its task, by establishing a common market and an economic and monetary union and by implementing common policies or activities referred to in Article 3 and 4, to promote throughout the Community (...) equality between men and women.”

Art.3: “In all the activities referred to in this Article, the Community shall aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality, between men and women in all its activities” (EC Treaty, 1997).

⁵ The question of gender reduces to the categories women and men will not be approached due to the necessary limits on a master thesis. These categories of women and men are ‘genderising’, it means they are presented as fixed set of categories, offering few space for the the complexity of gender and for example for the incorporation of transgender issues (Lombardo, Meier & Verloo, 2012: 24). A reflection can be pushed on this idea in link with Judith Butler’s concept of performativity because the construction of ‘men’ and ‘women’ do not interpret exclusively males or females bodies (Butler, 1990: 6).

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