GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE EU: A PARADOX FOR WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the University of Sheffield is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is about transnational women's organisations and their interaction with the European Union institutions. The focus is on how the EU's turn to gender mainstreaming as its main approach to achieve gender equality has impacted the ability of women's groups to organise, finance themselves, and contribute to the EU policymaking process. Three transnational women's organisations that interact regularly with the EU in different policy fields were chosen as case studies.

The starting point is the paradox that the adoption of gender mainstreaming seems to have created for women's groups. Analysis of critiques to gender mainstreaming implementation in the literature brings out two scenarios: 1) By rhetorically opening up all policy areas to a consideration of gender, gender mainstreaming potentially affords opportunities for women's groups' engagement in new venues and issues; however, 2) the mal-implementation of the mechanism is widespread and may curtail not just the revolutionary potential of gender mainstreaming but can also justify the dismantling of existing women-targeting instruments and networks.

The main goal of this thesis is to map out the political opportunities for women's groups in the EU and the role of gender mainstreaming in their opening. Research proceeded in two stages: first, the implementation of gender mainstreaming in three policy areas was analysed, and second, examples of women's groups engagement in these policy areas were scrutinised. To this end, I combined feminist institutionalist insights with the literature on EU interest representation to produce a multi-level theoretical approach capable of accounting for the EU's characteristics that provide opportunities and constraints to women's groups at the structural, institutional and individual level. This framework affords analytical space for women's groups' agency in adapting to the opportunities and pro-actively shaping them through their interaction with the EU political system.

This research reveals that the political system of the EU affords opportunities and constraints for gender change and for the engagement of women's groups. These vary according to the institutional characteristics of the diverse policy venues and to the initiative of individual actors in positions of power. Framing is a crucial strategy employed by women's groups to circumvent resistance and shape political opportunities for themselves.

To my goddaughter, in the hopes that the inequalities described here become history during her lifetime.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFET – Committee on Foreign Affairs (European Parliament)

AGG – Advisory Group on Gender

BPWE – Business & Professional Women Europe

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CEWS – Centre of Excellence Women and Science

CoE – Council of Europe

CSO – civil society organisation

DG DEVCO – Directorate-General for International Development and Cooperation (European Commission)

DG ECHO – Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (European Commission)

DG EMPL – Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (European Commission)

DG ENV – Directorate-General for Environment (European Commission)

DG IPOL – Directorate-General for Internal Policies (European Parliament)

DG JUST – Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (European Commission)

DG NEAR – Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (European Commission)

DG RTD – Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (European Commission)

DG SANTE – Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (European Commission)

EC – European Commission

ECHA – European Chemical Agency

ECJ – European Court of Justice

EDC – endocrine-disrupting chemical

EEC – European Economic Community

EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality

ENoMW – European Network of Migrant Women

ENVI – Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (European Parliament)

EP – European Parliament

EPO – European Protection Order

EPWS – European Platform of Women Scientists

ERA – European Research Area

EU – European Union

EWL – European Women's Lobby

FASP – High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

FEMM – Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (European Parliament)

FGM – female genital mutilation

FI – feminist institutionalism

FP7 – Seventh Framework Plan (European Union's Research and Innovation funding programme for 2007-2013)

FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

GAP – Gender Action Plan

GDP – gross domestic product

GE – gender equality

GM – gender mainstreaming

HEAL – Health and Environmental Alliance

IC – Istanbul Convention

IMCO – Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection (European Parliament)

LIBE – Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (European Parliament)

LIFE+ - EU's financial instrument supporting environmental, nature conservation and climate action projects

MAGEEQ – Project on policy frames and implementation problems: the case of gender mainstreaming

MDG – Millennium Development Goals

MEP – member of the European Parliament

MFF – multi-financial framework

NGO – non-governmental organisation

OMC – open method of coordination

REACH – Regulation, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

TAN – transnational advocacy network

TEC – Treaty establishing the European Community

TFEU – Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

UN – United Nations

UNCSD – United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

VAW – violence against women

WAVE – Women Against Violence Europe

WECF – Women in Europe for a Common Future

WIDE – Women in Development Europe

WWF – World Wide Fund for Nature

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This is a thesis about transnational women's organisations and their interaction with the European Union (EU) institutions. The focus is on how the turn to gender mainstreaming in the mid-1990s as the EU's main approach to achieve gender equality has impacted the ability of women's groups to organise, finance themselves, and contribute to the EU policymaking process. The research sits at the crossroads where the literatures on political opportunity structures, EU interest representation, feminist political research, framing and feminist institutionalism all meet. Its main aim is to map out the political opportunities for women's groups within the EU institutions. In order to do so, an extensive analysis of the implementation of gender mainstreaming is conducted in different policy fields, with a deeper analysis of prominent policy actions enacted in those fields, with the aim of finding where these opportunities are and what they consist of.

The core of this research is formed by three transnational women's groups: Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE), the European Platform of Women Scientists (EPWS) and Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF). These topical organisations that work in justice, science and research, and sustainable development respectively, were chosen to cover a broad range of policy fields and thus to analyse the opportunities for engagement open to women's groups across the EU policy competences and institutional spaces. By focusing on these organisations, I take political opportunity structures in its dynamic sense, as openings that the political system presents but that, to be relevant, have to be looked at together with the capacity that women's groups have to take these up and even shape future opportunities.

The research problem draws from two main literatures: research on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the EU institutions and scholarship on the representation of interests in the EU policymaking process. In the next two sections I will locate the research problem by briefly exploring these two literatures.

1.1 Research on gender mainstreaming in the EU

In the mid-1990s when the EU adopted gender mainstreaming (GM) as its main approach to tackle gender inequality and formalised it in the Treaty of Amsterdam there was optimism and hope from the part of women's organisations and feminist scholars on the potential for meaningful results for gender equality. Contrary to other approaches such as equal opportunities or positive action, gender mainstreaming starts from the premise that gender inequality is a structural problem (Verloo 2005), and therefore should be tackled across all sectors in society and policy fields. The hope initially brought by GM adoption and its revolutionary potential meant that it was devoted much attention by feminist EU scholars in the last two decades since it was first inscribed in the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997. Findings on the actual implementation of the mechanism and its effective use in the policymaking process quickly became disappointing and critiques of various sorts began to mount. Among these, two types stood out: 1) critiques based on institutional challenges to the mechanism, springing often from incomprehension and uncertainty over what gender mainstreaming actually entailed or confidence about its irrelevance in that particular policy area (Cavaghan 2016; Jacquot 2010; Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000), and 2) critiques based on the structural opposition that gender mainstreaming faces, due to a clash with the dominant political aims of the EU as a whole (Laatikainen 2001; Stratigaki 2005; Weiner & MacRae 2014a). While the first set of critiques still foresees room for improvement in how the mechanism is used in practice through education and the commitment of well-placed allies, the second set of critiques renders gender mainstreaming as was adopted in the EU as unsalvageable since it cannot hope to secure gender equality as a goal in the face of competing stronger projects such as increasing the competitiveness and economic growth of the European Single Market. Moreover, some feminist scholars raising the structural challenges faced by GM also point to the risk of gender mainstreaming, adopted in a purely rhetorical and window-dressing fashion, displacing existing equal treatment guarantees (Stratigaki 2005). Two groups of critics thus seem to expect two different futures for gender mainstreaming in the EU: one where it is improved through training and expertise, the other where it is preferable for it to be overhauled.

1.2 Research on the representation of women's interests in the EU

Throughout the history of gender equality policy at the EU level, external women's rights advocates have been crucial in pushing for change by teaming up with politicians and

policymakers within the EU institutions that espoused their demands for gender equality (Mazey 2012). Sophie Locher and Elisabeth Prügl argue that 'one of the key contributions of feminist approaches to European integration has been to theorise activism, the power of framing and the "opportunity structures" for advocacy networks activism' (Locher & Prügl 2009, p. 185). Many studies have been conducted on how women's rights organisations contributed to EU action in several policy issues such as sexual harassment (Zippel 2004), violence against women (Montoya, 2008), agriculture (Locher & Prügl 2009), and in political processes such as European constitution-making (Lombardo 2005) and the Amsterdam Treaty negotiations (Helfferich & Kolb 2001). The literature also shows how women's groups were key in the process that led to the formal adoption of gender mainstreaming as an EU policy instrument (True & Mintrom 2001; Mazey 2012). So studying these women's organisations directly and their ability to access the European policymaking process seems to be an important basis in order to understand how well gender equality policy and mechanisms stand a chance of progressing.

Some EU scholars have commented on the 'additional layer of opportunities for social movements' (Zippel 2004, p. 66) that the EU adds, including for women's organisations (Kriesi et al. 1995; Roggeband & Verloo 1999; Van der Vleuten 2012). More broadly, the literature on EU interest representation is entirely built on the assumptions about the relationship of interdependence between EU institutions and interest groups in terms of access and influence, on one side, and information, expertise and legitimacy, on the other. Certainly, this interdependence faces different levels of strength depending on the interest groups in question and the EU institutional arena/unit we are examining, meaning that different interest groups will face distinct political opportunity structures in each arena. These different political opportunity structures are 'shaped by the specific norms, rules and decision-making procedures of the EU as an institution, as well as by the dominant administrative and normative cultures that prevail in its different bodies' (Locher 2012, p. 77). Nevertheless, the bottom line here is that EU institutions are often receptive venues for women's groups' advocacy and expertise and the latter enjoy some success in shaping EU gender equality policy.

1.3 Presenting the issue: the paradox of gender mainstreaming

Bearing in mind, on one hand, the two sets of critiques on gender mainstreaming in the EU that point to diverse obstacles to its full implementation and, on the other, the importance of women's groups in the EU gender equality apparatus, some lines of enquiry are brought forward for analysis. The first is that, with gender mainstreaming, there is potential for new opportunities for advocacy, resource-funding and overall access into new areas of policy not traditionally associated with gender equality, such as the environment, trade or macroeconomics. The first set of critiques identified in gender mainstreaming implementation brought to the fore the unevenness in the implementation of this mechanism across institutions and policy fields, mostly through matters of ignorance about the mechanism and unawareness of the gender relevance in certain policies. The absence of an established process to apply gender mainstreaming means it is left at the discretion of individual policymakers to implement it in practice. However, the EU institutions very often use the expertise of diverse interest groups to improve the technical detail, the legitimacy and the robustness of their legislative and policy proposals. Therefore, it would seem that there would be a demand for expertise on gender equality and gender mainstreaming from civil society groups that have it. Traditionally, the most enthusiastic interlocutors of women's groups in the EU have been the women's rights and gender equality (FEMM) committee in the European Parliament and the DG employment and social affairs in the European Commission. With the expansion of a mandatory consideration of gender to all policy areas it would seem that women's groups' expertise would now be in demand throughout all other DGs and EP committees. Thus, women's groups would now be able to advocate on a broader range of issues that would go beyond the narrow employment-related scope often criticised in the EU gender equality policy (Guerrina 2002; Lombardo & Meier 2006).

The second line of enquiry, however, leads to different expectations. If we follow the arguing behind the second set of critiques, on the structural opposition to gender mainstreaming, the picture for women's groups' political opportunities looks rather bleak. The mal-implementation, in this understanding, is not a matter of flawed design or ignorance but of conscious side-lining: the general subservience of gender equality goals to economic growth and competitiveness is translated into a half-hearted application of gender mainstreaming through tick-box exercises or downright disregard for the mechanism in the first place. Instead of making new venues receptive to the demands and expertise of women's groups the mechanism of gender mainstreaming seems to have made advocating for women's rights more difficult. Sabine Lang has

discovered that women's organisations find it now much more difficult to lobby for women's empowerment programmes or for affirmative action than before gender mainstreaming was adopted (Lang 2009, p. 338). Civil society input is only sought and listened to insofar as it uses gender-mainstreaming language. Moreover, structural critiques see the botched implementation of gender mainstreaming as destabilising the close cooperation between gender advocates and femocrats within the EU institutions that used to characterise the EU equality policy area (Jacquot 2010). This destabilisation occurred due to the opening of the gender equality field to include new policy areas and new actors.

By pursuing these two strands of enquiry simultaneously, the gender mainstreaming mechanism seems to pose a paradox for women's organisations in the EU. On the one hand, the obligation of all EU policymaking institutions to apply gender mainstreaming to all policies in consideration – even institutions not used to working with gender – seems to indicate that the expertise of women's groups is now sought on a broader range of issues in a broader range of venues. Effective implementation is thus just a matter of increasing the gender expertise available to policymakers and educating them on the topic. On the other hand, there seems to be a problem with gender mainstreaming receptiveness that runs structurally and therefore deeper. Treating gender mainstreaming as a tick-box exercise strips it of its revolutionary potential and at the same time undermines networks and sites within the EU institutions where gender equality was traditionally taken seriously. The extended mandate of gender mainstreaming to virtually every policymaking area makes it now more difficult to advocate for programmes correcting women-specific disadvantages. Summing up the paradox in a sentence, gender mainstreaming seems to have extended the scope of opportunities for women's groups while at the same time closed down their opportunities for influence in traditional equality-friendly arenas.

So the main question that this research seeks to answer is: has gender mainstreaming had a positive or negative impact on women's groups' engagement with the EU institutions? To answer this question, the research will proceed in two stages: first, it will analyse gender mainstreaming implementation in three broad policy fields: justice, science and research, and sustainable development, and in 13 specific policy initiatives within these fields; second, it will map out the political opportunities for women's organisations within these policy areas by looking at the participation of three women's

groups in the 13 policy cases mentioned above, along with the characteristics of these groups that are conducive to their successful engagement with the EU.

1.4 Theorising opportunities and resistance to gendered change and gender equality advocacy

To answer the research question and solve the paradox about the opening and closing of opportunities for women's groups with gender mainstreaming, this thesis combines features from two broad literatures: interest representation in the EU and feminist institutionalism. Feminist institutionalism, with its focus on formal and informal institutions as the main drivers in explaining political outcomes, is an extremely useful theory to explain uneven levels of implementation in different policy fields and institutional arenas. Different gendered logics of appropriateness are helpful in explaining diverse degrees of resistance to the formal requirement of gender mainstreaming. So feminist institutionalism is a useful lens through which to look at resistance to gender mainstreaming implementation and explain why it manifests in the ways and in the specific places that it does. Since the mechanisms behind resistance to GM are also anticipated to explain the lack of political opportunity structures for women's groups in certain fields, feminist institutionalism also sheds light on the receptiveness of specific arenas to women's rights and gender equality advocacy. EU interest representation theories, on their part, present helpful perspectives on why and under which circumstances policymakers are receptive to interest groups' input, based on mostly utilitarian understandings of the relationship between formal political institutions – interest groups. Its focus on the characteristics and strategies of interest groups to explain their ability to engage successfully with political institutions is important to draw attention to the agency of groups in making sense and taking advantage of the political opportunities provided by the political system.

Locher and Prügl tells us that '[t]he relationships of agency at different levels and their embedding in different opportunity structures presents a weakly explored frontier of feminist research' (Locher & Prügl 2009, p. 200). Moreover, Cavaghan argues that '[g]endered meanings and interpretations are made locally, through organisational processes and structures that constitute institutions' (Cavaghan 2016, p. 5). Individuals and institutions are both crucial in determining whether the statutory requirement for gender mainstreaming will succeed or fail in specific political arenas. Theories of EU

interest representation, on the other hand, stress the importance of the EU structural characteristics, mostly defined constitutionally, and the balance of power among the different EU institutional components – the Parliament, the Commission, the Council and the European Court of Justice (ECJ) – as determining to a considerable extent the opportunities that the system presents to certain types of advocacy demands. Context, institutions and individuals are therefore important in determining the opportunities and resistances to gender change (in the form of gender mainstreaming) and advocacy (in the form of women's groups' input). A multi-tiered framework thus seems like the appropriate way to look at resistance and opportunity, and the role of each level, macro (context), meso (institutions) and micro (individuals), in determining those. This multi-tiered approach is an original and significant contribution of this thesis to the literature. It is developed in Chapter 3, operationalised in Chapters 6-8 and assessed in Chapter 9.

It is necessary, to gauge the capacity of women's groups, to engage with these resistances and opportunities provided by the EU political system at different levels if we are to evaluate political opportunities in its most comprehensive sense. Another framework is thus developed in this thesis in order to analyse the processes of reaction of women's groups to opportunities and obstacles in the EU: how do they adapt to these? Are they able to proactively chip away at resistance and create new opportunities for themselves in the political system by their very interaction with it? These are the two main questions that the case study chapters plus the comparative chapter attempt to answer (see Chapters 6-9). Processes of adaptation and proactivism are thus analysed for three different dimensions that encompass women's groups' interaction with the EU institutions: discourse, actors and resources. Again, this framework is developed in Chapter 3, operationalised in Chapters 6-8 and assessed in Chapter 9.

Both of these frameworks give a comprehensive picture of the political opportunity structures for women's groups in the European political system by accounting for both the system's characteristics and those of the interest groups'. Although designed specifically for analysing opportunities for women's groups, they can be easily transferable to the analysis of other types of groups that interact with the EU, particularly groups advocating for public interests. The theoretical framework is thus the major contribution that this thesis seeks to make to both the EU interest representation

literature and to the literature on gender equality policy in the EU (see Chapter 10 for full list of original contributions).

1.5 Structure of thesis

This introduction (*Chapter 1*) opened the thesis by briefly discussing the literatures this research draws from and by sketching out the research problem in the form of a paradox that it intends to solve. It then introduced the theoretical approach that will be developed and used for this endeavour. The thesis will then proceed in two broader parts.

The first part will start in *Chapter 2* with the weaving of the paradox by exploring the EU gender equality and EU interest representation literatures and what they have to say on gender mainstreaming implementation and women's groups' engagement with the EU. *Chapter 3* will then dig further into theoretical considerations from theories of interest representation and feminist institutionalism to design a theoretical approach capable of assessing opportunities and obstacles for gender change (i.e. gender mainstreaming implementation) and gender advocacy (i.e. women's groups' demands) in its most comprehensive form: at different political system levels and through different processes of adaptation and proactivism on the part of women's groups. The first part closes with a methodology chapter (*Chapter 4*) describing how the theoretical approach will be operationalised and applied to the case studies under study. It also includes some reflections on methodological challenges encountered during the fieldwork stage of this research.

The second part (Chapter 5-9) relates to the empirical section of this thesis and includes the case study chapters. The case studies, along with the revision of gender mainstreaming implementation (*Chapter 5*), look at four different Directorate-Generals of the Commission in detail – their institutional structure, the strategies and instruments used to promote gender equality, and the results of gender mainstreaming implementation – and 13 specific policy instances to search for the opportunities and obstacles presented to women's rights groups in diverse arenas across the EU. The case study chapters (*Chapters 6-8*) focus on one thematic women's organisation each and are centred on each of these organisations' engagement with the relevant EU policy field. *Chapter 9* brings together findings from the case study chapters to compare how

different women's groups fare in the political opportunity structures that the EU presents for them in their specific policy areas. It also starts to unravel the wider picture of where the political opportunities and resistances are for gender mainstreaming and for women's rights advocacy in the EU as a whole. The conclusion (*Chapter 10*) further reflects on the location of these opportunities and obstacles and what they mean for women's groups' engagement in the EU policymaking process. It reflects on the paradox, on the theory used, on the methodology, describes the contributions that this research makes to the literature, and closes the thesis with a suggestion of research lines of enquiry to pursue from here.

CHAPTER 2. GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE EU: THE ROLE OF WOMEN'S GROUPS IN ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter analyses the link that there is between the adoption and implementation of gender mainstreaming in the EU and the activity of transnational women's interest groups. It asks the question of what role did women's groups play in the adoption of gender mainstreaming and what role do they play now in its implementation. I start this analysis with a brief description of how gender equality as a policy evolved in the EU from its inception until the adoption of gender mainstreaming and how women's groups have participated in this process. The following section sets out the different critiques that are levelled at the poor implementation of the gender mainstreaming mechanism in the diverse policy fields in which the EU has a mandate. The aim of this thesis is to take stock of how women's groups have fared in the gender mainstreaming era and the opportunities and obstacles afforded by the political system of the EU. The second half of the chapter thus turns to theories of interest representation in the EU to explain what the EU institutions might want from women's groups in exchange for access and which strategies women's groups apply to be successful in interacting with the EU. The chapter closes with an exposition of the paradox that seems to arise from the adoption of gender mainstreaming: women's groups seem to be afforded new widespread opportunities but at the same time face new obstacles accessing traditionally gender-sensitive policy areas.

2.1. Origins and adoption of gender mainstreaming in the EU

2.1.1. EU gender equality policy: from Article 119 to gender mainstreaming

Gender equality is often considered the most advanced social policy at the EU level (see for example Hix 2005; Jacquot 2010) and one of the best examples of the EU as a 'regulatory state' (Jacquot 2010, p. 128). It is nearly as old as the European Community itself. Born out of former Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome,[1] this policy area has

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[1] 'Each Member State shall during the first stage ensure and subsequently maintain the application of the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for equal work.

changed dramatically over the last decades from a narrow focus on equal pay legislation to considering gender equality in all policy areas of EU competence. Teresa Rees (Rees 1998) identified three different approaches to gender equality and these can be applied to classify the different ways through which the EU has tried to address inequalities between women and men: equal opportunities (or anti-discrimination), positive action, and gender mainstreaming. Much of the EU's focus has been on the equal opportunities approach that addresses inequality through the law, by eliminating obstacles or prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sex. By removing the legal barriers to equality, the aim is to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed. This approach forms the bulk of the EU binding legislation on gender equality. In positive action the emphasis is no longer only on equality of access but more on equality of outcome. It is about making sure that specific disadvantages of a group are minimised for there to be equality of outcome. In the EU positive action policies have been applied very sporadically and left mostly to the discretion of member states (e.g. soft measures to improve childcare provision in member states, training programmes targeted to women to improve their employability – particularly through structural funds). Gender mainstreaming constitutes the third and potentially the most revolutionary approach to gender equality. These three approaches do not necessarily represent different stages of gender equality policy in the EU; rather, they can be understood as approaches that have been sought in parallel (Jacquot 2017), although gender mainstreaming is the most recent of the three to be applied.

Formally adopted by the European Union in the mid-1990s and inscribed in its constitutional law with the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997, gender mainstreaming was regarded as a revolutionary mechanism to potentially transform the way gender was considered in the Union. It was regarded as a tool that could guarantee a more gender-equal polity by making it mandatory for civil servants in all policy areas to consider how policy would impact women and men's lives in different ways and to redress gender inequalities where they existed. More importantly, and in its most revolutionary understanding, gender mainstreaming was supposed to inscribe equality as the ultimate goal of the policymaking process so that policies were to be designed to ultimately

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For the purpose of this Article, "pay" means the ordinary basic it minimum wage or salary and any other consideration, whether in cash or in kind, which the worker receives, directly or indirectly, in respect of his employment from his employer.
Equal pay without discrimination based on sex means:
(a) that pay for the same work at piece rates shall be calculated on the basis of the same unit of measurement;
(b) that pay for work at time rates shall be the same for the same job.' (European Union 1957, Art. 119)

contribute to equality between women and men. This was the approach taken by the Commission in its rhetoric: gender mainstreaming would be about 'mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality' (Commission of the European Communities 1996, p. 2). It was supported by the Council of Europe and championed worldwide at the Beijing UN Women Conference in 1995. In the EU it was hailed by gender scholars (Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000; Rees 1998; Squires 2005) and women's organisations as a serious way of taking gender into account in all policy fields and thus of addressing gender inequality in all areas of political action. Women's organisations were indeed crucial actors in the lobbying for the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in the UN Women Conference in 1995 (True & Mintrom 2001), which in turn increased the pressure on the EU to implement the mechanism in its own policymaking process.

The mid-1990s saw the introduction of the gender mainstreaming mechanism in the European Union due to a favourable window of opportunity at the time that went beyond international pressure from the UN (Jacquot 2010; Mazey 2012). This window of opportunity meant that gender equality in general and gender mainstreaming in particular were welcomed in and around 1995. Three circumstances were identified as crucial for this favourable environment. Firstly, the nineties saw three new countries with high levels of institutionalisation of gender equality join the Union. Austria, Sweden and Finland brought new attention to gender inequalities in the EU and a high commitment to an encompassing approach to it that went beyond the piecemeal equal opportunities approach favoured so far. Related to this circumstance, new civil servants that came from the enlargement countries entered the EU institutions. They were familiar with gender mainstreaming already and so they ensured that the mechanism was not an entirely foreign concept to policymakers within the European institutions. The new Santer Commission appointed in 1995 had members with a strong commitment to gender equality and with an interest in professionalising it as well (Jacquot 2010, p. 123), and the proportion of women MEPs grew, with most of them being from gender-equality-committed countries with strong ties with women's organisations (Mazey 2012, p. 139). This created a favourable environment for claims to gender equality to be furthered in the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference that resulted in the Treaty of Amsterdam. A women's coalition made the successful case for the inclusion of women's rights as human rights in the new treaty, which anchored the Union's commitment to gender equality in constitutional law. Finally, and as mentioned above, the 1995 UN

Conference on Women in Beijing was a crucial propeller of the notion of gender mainstreaming as an important instrument to foster gender equality (Jacquot 2010, p. 123). Summing it up, in the mid-1990s there was an extraordinary favourable institutional setting for a renewed commitment to gender equality that was conducive to the implementation of the new gender mainstreaming mechanism in the European Union from then onwards.

2.1.2. The role of women's groups in the adoption of gender mainstreaming

Women's transnational networks are considered some of the most efficient and the most active of public interest groups since the 1980s (Silliman 1999; Moghadam 2000; 2005; Ferree & Tripp 2006; Lang 2009). In the Beijing 1995 Conference on Women, these transnational networks were extremely important in pushing for gender mainstreaming to be hailed as the most comprehensive and promising approach to achieve gender equality (True & Mintron 2001). Partly thanks to the cooperation leading up to the Beijing 1995 Conference, women's groups increased their institutionalisation and their transnational links with one another and with governments, increasing their cooperation in areas such as health and reproductive rights, the environment, violence against women and trade (Lang 2009, p. 328). The linkage between international and European networks of women's rights during the Beijing 1995 Conference was crucial in broadening the policy frame of gender equality in the EU: it linked human rights and women's rights together, virtually opening up the scope of equality to all areas of politics. This linkage made the rationale behind gender mainstreaming possible and acceptable in the EU (Mazey 2012, p. 138-9).

By their inclusion in lobbying for international recognition of gender mainstreaming and for their efficiency in cooperating transnationally, women's groups came to be seen as natural agents in the implementation of the gender mainstreaming mechanism internationally but especially at the national and local level. Women's groups are seen as external actors that, due to their knowledge and constituency base, can put pressure on governments and state machineries to keep gender mainstreaming on the agenda (Verloo 2005, p. 351; Lang 2009, p. 332). While this may translate into new potential avenues for accessing the political process, it also entails particular expectations of the role of women's groups that turn into an extra workload for organisations that are generally under-staffed and under-resourced. As Sabine Lang noted, 'women's NGOs

across Europe are facing demands to monitor gender mainstreaming, to train gender experts, and to practice and implement it when being part of EU-funded projects' (Lang 2009, p. 333). On the case of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) specifically, Sonia Mazey argued that 'mainstreaming places new demands upon the limited resources of the E.W.L. and raises difficult strategic issues' (Mazey 2002, p. 228). The difficult strategic issues that Mazey refers to are the expectations that the EWL, as the most salient transnational women's organisation in Europe and a central link point between the EU institutions and women's organisations at the local and national level, will be responsible for disseminating the gender mainstreaming mechanism, as well as taking care of the monitoring of the strategy across Europe. These expectations in fact not only create an extra workload for an under-resourced transnational NGO, but also impact on EWL's overall strategy, risking turning it from a lobbying organisation into a de-politicised monitoring body. Indeed, Sabine Lang found that several women's organisations were less than enthusiastic about gender mainstreaming since, due to their scarce resources, it often involved making a choice between monitoring the implementation of gender mainstreaming and institutional advocacy, with the latter being more effective for their success (Lang 2009, p. 343) and survival. Bearing this in mind, the main question that guides the present research is what kinds of political opportunities and what kinds of obstacles does the gender mainstreaming approach to equality raise for women's groups in the EU? Does the demand for gender expertise open up opportunities for access and influence in new policy areas? Or does it instead place undue burdens on women's groups and change their political strategies threatening their own survival?

2.2. Between ignorance and refusal: critiques of gender mainstreaming implementation

Two decades after its adoption in the EU the critiques in the literature abound regarding the way the method was implemented in the Union and there is disagreement over the potential that this instrument still holds for the creation of a more gender-equal polity. Two sets of critiques can be identified in the literature, which, although related, are distinct. Both agree that the mechanism was badly implemented but they point to different reasons as to why that was the case.

The first set of critiques is geared towards the institutional challenges that this mechanism faces. Some scholars (Jacquot 2010; Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000) argue

that gender mainstreaming has been implemented wrongly in the EU, with some directorate-generals (DGs) using this mechanism as a tick-box exercise only and not considering gender and gender relations seriously in the policies proposed. A lack of awareness of gender issues in general and how gender relates to their particular policy area is identified as one cause for bad implementation (Cavaghan 2017b), particularly in areas not traditionally associated with gender equality. Whilst there is no overt opposition to it, the fact that there is no overall mandatory process as to how to do gender mainstreaming means that some DGs have paid 'lip-service' to this mechanism (Jacquot 2010, p. 126). Rhetorical commitments to gender mainstreaming are not translated into practical steps that guide action locally (Cavaghan 2016) and so its transformative potential is severely undermined. Nevertheless, for these authors the mechanism is salvageable as long as the causes for this mal-implementation are addressed (e.g. lack of expertise or awareness on gender in certain DGs).

The second set of critiques relate to the purpose for which gender mainstreaming was implemented in the first place. Some authors (Laatikainen 2001; Stratigaki 2005; Weiner & MacRae 2014a) have pointed to a more structural opposition in the EU for embracing gender mainstreaming that, albeit not overt, is manifest in the side-lining of gender in comparison to growth and competitiveness goals (Stratigaki 2004; 2005; MacRae 2010). Although officially adopted in order to realise gender equality by expanding the scope of equality policy to sectors that so far had not considered gender seriously, scholars claim that gender mainstreaming was promoted politically but in practice is largely a symbolic policy, as it cannot secure gender equality as a goal in itself in the face of other (economic) competing goals. Moreover, some authors go further and argue that gender mainstreaming actually risks displacing existing equal treatment guarantees (Stratigaki 2005, p. 167). Its bad implementation, coupled with a non-reliance on law enforcement mechanisms, risks gender mainstreaming being used only as window dressing, to look like something is being done about gender inequality in all areas and thus to disprove the need for a dedicated policy area and administrative apparatus for gender equality. Programmes specifically aimed at addressing women's disadvantages are rendered unnecessary; equality is supposedly gauged by impact assessments and achieved through correct policy choices. For these critics, the mechanism as it stands is unsalvageable as it holds no hope for a more gender-equal polity and bears the risk of watering down the already existing gender equality policies at the EU level.

2.2.1. 'Institutionalized non-awareness of gender': institutional obstacles to the implementation of gender mainstreaming

The diverse levels of implementation of gender mainstreaming in different policy areas in the EU correspond quite well to the tradition of considering or not considering gender equality in those policy fields. Policy issues that have traditionally been associated with addressing inequalities between women and men – employment, development and the structural funds – are the ones that have made consistent efforts in implementing gender mainstreaming, while traditionally-considered gender-neutral areas such as competition and trade are where resistance to gender mainstreaming is most pronounced (Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000). Lack of knowledge thus becomes an important factor in explaining mal-implementation. Gender mainstreaming presupposes that policymakers accept two things: that gender inequality is a structural problem and that the state plays a role in it by regulating gender relations (Cavaghan 2017a). Even people that are sympathetic to the goal of gender equality can struggle to grasp these two assumptions. So incomprehension plays an important role in gender mainstreaming failures and disappointing results (Cavaghan 2017a). Often it might be a case of policymakers not knowing what the different policy interests of women and men are – or simply not caring (Schmidt 2005; Cavaghan 2017; Mergaert & Lombardo 2017). There is thus an 'institutionalized non-awareness of gender' (Cavaghan 2016, p. 11) that prevents its relevance being considered in the first place. As a consequence, resources like time, staff, training and budgetary lines are scarcely allocated to gender mainstreaming since the pertinence of this mechanism in most policy areas is highly questioned. This could be the result of the opposition of specific individuals, whose positions make them pivotal in furthering or hindering gender mainstreaming as a mechanism to be taken seriously, or there could be a more systematic opposition to gender change or systematic inaction on it that renders gender mainstreaming rhetoric void in practice (Mergaert & Lombardo 2017). The theorisation of the gendered formal and informal rules that permeate institutions offered by feminist institutionalism (see Chapter 3) is very useful to help further dissect the circumstances under which gender mainstreaming can be hoped to thrive or not. The bottom line of this set of critiques is that, regardless of the source of mal-implementation (i.e. individual or institutional) it could potentially be corrected by an influx of gender expertise and allies in strategic positions.

2.2.2. Structural challenges: economic goals vs. gender equality goals – a bad fit?

The structural challenges that gender mainstreaming face in the European Union are much less explored in the literature than the institutional challenges. The structural challenges come from the fact that the EU was created with a strong economic rationale behind it and which is still its major propeller. So gender equality policy in the EU could never have been built with a different purpose than to cater for the Single Market: 'the EU has crafted its gender equality project on top of (and out of) this arguably skewed economic edifice' and '[e]ven as the EU seeks to increase the scope and purview of its gender equality project, the focus remains on economic growth and competitiveness' (Weiner & MacRae 2014b, p. 4). Even the positive action programmes that the Union started to promote in the eighties 'were intended to fit women into a Common Market designed for men' (Weiner & MacRae 2014b, p. 4). Considering gender equality in the (public) economic sphere is just a partial way of addressing inequalities between men and women. Addressing issues often treated as belonging to the private domain by mainstream politics, like gender roles, domestic and sexual violence, unpaid care, and gender stereotypes, is crucial not just to realise economic equality but also because they are problems in themselves that violate women's human rights. The problem with gender equality policy in the EU identified by several scholars is thus one of 'narrowing' the meaning of gender equality (Lombardo et al. 2009, p. 4) in the sense that the meaning of gender equality is reduced and simplified to mean mostly equality in the labour market (Lombardo et al. 2009, p. 6). Equality in this narrow sense translates into getting women into the labour market by emulating the male full-time worker pattern, which is taken as the ideal (Elomäki 2015). The justification for the EU to act on gender equality become one of efficiency, of tapping into the under-used human resources that women constitute to improve the European economy (Ibid., but see also Kantola 2010; Lewis 2006; Stratigaki 2004; Young 2000). Thus 'bending' of the meaning of gender equality (Lombardo et al. 2009, p. 6) also occurs in the sense that gender equality becomes not an end in itself but a means to achieve other goals: competitiveness and economic growth.

Mark Pollack and Emilie Hafner-Burton (2000) argue that bending gender equality may not be bad in itself if it means that concerns of equality between men and women enter reluctant political agendas or sceptical institutional environments and therefore expands

the policy into new fields of action. If gender equality is reconciled with the goal of climate change or economic competitiveness then it can be better received, since it stops being an either/or choice to become a win-win situation. Gender equality can thus gain new interpretations by its expansion into new policy areas, new meanings and potentially new proposed solutions for its achievement, in a process that Emanuela Lombardo et al. refer to as 'stretching' (Lombardo et al. 2009, p. 9). Other authors are more sceptical about the possibility of reconciling gender equality with the overall mission and goals of the European Union. Anna Elomäki (2015) refers to the damage that the economic case for gender equality has caused due to a de-politicisation of gender and gender relations (see also Rönnblom 2009). This is further accentuated by the neoliberal ethos that heavily permeates the EU institutions. Elaine Weiner and Heather MacRae (2014b) refer to the '(ir)reconcilability of gender equality goals with the European integration project' due to its inherent neoliberal rationale and its male bias, describing the process of integration as an 'agglomeration of largely self-perpetuating 'male power' and masculine interests' (Weiner & MacRae 2014b, p. 6). Similarly, in her study about gender equality considerations in EU trade policy, Jacqui True finds that the frame of gender equality as a human rights issue is subordinate to the neoliberal frame of women as an untapped resource to achieve greater economic growth (True 2009). Whenever the two frames clashed, it is the human rights frame that is dropped from the political discourse (True 2009, p. 125-127).

One of the reasons for the seeming irreconcilability of gender equality as an end in itself and the neoliberal rationale is that they have two very different conceptions of the role of the state and of what it means to be a citizen. Gender equality very often requires redistribution of resources in what could be termed 'state-led equality', while neoliberalism praises efficiency driven by market-led economic growth with the state playing a limited regulatory role. Gender equality, and the mandate of gender mainstreaming in particular, is about dismantling the gendered assumptions of public policies, while neoliberalism seeks to promote policies that are understood as value-free. Finally, gender equality draws attention to gendered individuals and the links between productive and reproductive work, while neoliberalism treats people blindly as rational and autonomous citizens, consumers and workers (Teghtsoonian 2004), disregarding the relationships of dependence that particularly shape the lives of women as mothers (Abels & Mushaben 2012a). In terms of the state's role of redistribution versus regulation, Rainer Eising et al. (Eising et al. 2015) argue that the institutional context of

the EU is more prone to accept and to promote policy frames related to 'market integration, regulation and policy harmonization while being, for example, less permeable to redistributive frames' (Ibid., p. 519). The fact that EU's competences are most notable in regulating the internal market and are very scarce in fiscal policy and social security largely explains the above and limits the perceived relevance of gender mainstreaming in many of the EU's policy arenas.

2.3. Explaining receptiveness of the EU to (women's) interest groups

In order to understand how gender mainstreaming affects political opportunities for women's groups in the EU, we need to understand why and in what ways the EU institutions provide access to interest groups in general and women's groups in particular. What motivates EU policymakers and politicians to interact with interest groups? What do they gain from these interactions? What do they need from interactions with interest groups and women's groups in particular? The literature on interest representation in the EU has delved into these questions in the last decade, drawing from the more substantive US interest representation literature and wider research on social movements.

2.3.1. Perspectives on interest representation in the European Union

The political structure of the EU is quite promising to interest groups (Pollack 1997; Imig & Tarrow 2001; Hooghe 2008; Klüver 2013). This is mostly a consequence of the structural characteristics of its political system that make it relatively porous and receptive to interest groups. The EU's structural composition of a handful of institutional arenas – the Commission, the Parliament, the Council, and the European Court of Justice, to name the most prominent – and the complex constitutional power balance between them means that policies move along distinct political settings of equal relevance during the policymaking cycle. This provides plenty of opportunities for interest groups to access the legislative process and, since the different institutions have different concerns and resource requirements, no interest group is dominant throughout the entire process (Pollack 1997; Imig & Tarrow 2001). The multi-level nature of the EU also adds to the variety of access points for interest groups (see for example Imig & Tarrow 2001; Hooghe 2008): they are able to participate in the European policymaking process supranationally by lobbying the European Commission and the Parliament,

nationally by getting in touch with domestic governments, and/or locally by getting a voice in shaping implementation strategies of local authorities for EU legislation. But the EU is not just porous to interest groups – it is also largely receptive to their input. This receptiveness is largely the consequence of two factors: the understaffing of its institutions and the perceived democratic deficit of its political system. The resource exchange theory digs deeper into these two elements and connects them with interest group lobbying through a rational-choice approach.

Lobbying as a resource exchange

The resource exchange perspective of EU interest representation (Dür 2008; Greenwood 2003; Princen & Kerremans 2008; Schmitter & Streeck 1999) is based on the uncontroversial notion that the European institutions and the European Commission in particular are relatively understaffed for the task of legislating in diverse matters to 500 million citizens (see for example Bouwen 2009, p. 20). It provides an explanation of interest representation as a transaction of information for access (Dür 2008; Greenwood 2003; Princen & Kerremans 2008; Schmitter & Streeck 1999). It assumes that interest groups have something that the European institutions need, and vice versa. Lobbying is itself represented as an 'exchange relationship between interdependent actors in which the European institutions trade influence for information, citizen support, and economic power' (Klüver 2013, p. 15). In the case of the Commission, due to its role as sole initiator of legislative proposals, there is a strong need for detailed expertise on a wide range of policy areas to inform and legitimise its policy proposals (Bouwen 2002; 2004).

The kind of knowledge that the EU institutions seek from interest groups can take a myriad of shapes. Iskander De Bruycker distinguishes between two big types of knowledge resources that groups can provide: political information and expertise (De Bruycker 2015). Political information is information garnered about whether a proposal is likely to enjoy support or opposition, whereas expertise can take many forms: technical, economic, legal or administrative (Ibid.). Expertise can also translate into information about the domestic interest, information about the aggregated interest of a particular domestic sector, or information on the European interest (Bouwen 2002; 2004). All of these contribute to increase the legitimacy of a policy proposal but the information about interests at different geographical levels are relevant for the EU institutions according to the distinctive constituencies they represent.

Citizen support, although a resource particularly sought after by elected bodies such as the EP, is also important for the Commission. The Commission cares about the democratic legitimacy of its policy proposals in order to secure support for them by the other institutions along the policymaking process (Bouwen 2009; Lehmann 2009, p. 50) and to close the democratic gap it is often criticised for (Pollack 1997). This is particularly relevant for public interest groups that claim to represent a broader social group than just their own members, which is the case of women's groups. Regardless of the representative clout of these public interest groups, the Commission sees them as representative of their constituents, especially when it comes to European umbrella groups that gather within their structure domestic groups from most of the EU member states. Thus, beyond expertise on matters of gender equality such as support for victims of gender-based violence, equal opportunities in the job market, or measures for increasing women's political representation, the consultation of women's groups gives the European Commission increased legitimacy as it counterbalances the business bias often criticised in EU policies (Dür 2008, p. 1215; Dür & De Bièvre 2007; Pollack 1997).

The perspective of the resource exchange framework is that opportunities for access are derived by the characteristics of the EU political institution in question. These are fixed by the treaties and by institutional constraints, which means that presumably interest groups cannot change them. In this view opportunities are exogenous to interest groups (Princen & Kerremans 2008, p. 1136).

Interest groups go venue-shopping

While they cannot change the institutional layout and constraints, interest groups can change the target of their lobbying – they can engage in 'venue shopping' (Baumgartner & Jones 1993; Mazey & Richardson 2001; Richardson 2000). The EU is a complex and loose multi-level system (Hooghe 2008, p. 73-74; Pollack 1997, p. 573) and these types of polities are more porous to a proliferation of interest group lobbying. Due to multiple points of access and no single decision-making body they are more difficult to be controlled by a few powerful groups. Interest groups have many alternative venues to lobby, and it is very difficult for a single group to secure their demands along the policymaking process that spans multiple institutions with different concerns and resource needs (Imig & Tarrow 2001; Pollack 1997). This is of particular relevance to

marginalised groups or groups that end up on the losing side of a policy proposal: there are more chances to try to get their demands heard as the policymaking process trudges along and the most relevant actor in each stage changes.

Of course, changing the venue where groups target their lobbying efforts is not without its costs. Moving from venue to venue involves a transaction cost of money and human resources, so change will not be just a rational choice to maximise a group's chance of their demands being heard (Princen & Kerremans 2008, p. 1137). Effective lobbying requires trust, which in turn requires regular contact and a history of reliable information provision from the part of the interest groups (Coen 2009, p. 152). It also requires a practical knowledge of the formal and informal rules of each particular unit engaged with, since each EU institution is not a monolithic body and different policy fields will also have their own idiosyncrasies (see Chapter 3).

Nevertheless, the venue-shopping perspective acknowledges the agency of stakeholders in either framing the debate in a way that ties in with a venue's institutional concerns or – more difficult – try to involve an already amenable venue into the policy debate (Princen & Kerremans 2008, p. 1138). As a consequence of their role and policy remit, different venues will be particularly sensitive to different 'policy images' (Baumgartner & Jones 1993, p. 1046). So an interest group has to be able to strategize its own discourse to make it fit with the discourse of the venue it is aiming to include in the policymaking process, or try to change the terms of the overall debate to turn an amenable venue into a stakeholder in that policy. Losers, of course, have the most incentive to try and shift venues and policy images. For attempts at changing venues 'well-placed allies are essential' (Ibid., p. 1050). The authors mention subsystem politics ('iron triangles', 'issue networks' and 'advocacy coalitions') as important to understand the process of change in policy images and venues (Ibid., p. 1051). This will be further expanded in section 3.3.2 on feminist allies and velvet triangles.

The venue-shopping perspective acknowledges the agency of interest groups in their lobbying by recognising their capacity to frame their discourse and their attempts to frame the overall debate of a policy issue strategically: 'Instead of adapting themselves to the characteristics and requests of particular venues, groups use strategic framing with the purpose of shifting policy issues to those venues that show the highest level of receptiveness to their demands and concerns.' (Princen & Kerremans 2008, p. 1138).

2.3.2. Transnational advocacy for women's rights in Europe

Anne Van der Vleuten argues that 'equality advocates have proved very adept at playing a multilevel game' (Van der Vleuten 2012, p. 41). The EU's structural characteristics and the drive of the Commission in the last three decades in encouraging public interest representation has given women's groups political opportunities for engagement and financial survival. Feminism – or at least a part of the movement – has grown in close cooperation with the state and learned how to navigate its institutions (Walby 2002). Nevertheless, engagement with the state comes with its own compromises. This section gives an overview of those compromises, along with a brief analysis of the Commission's efforts in setting up structures for the representation of women's interests, illustrated most vividly in the European Women's Lobby (EWL).

From contentious strategies to cooperation with the state

In recent decades, the women's liberation movement across the industrialised world saw a significant change in the strategies used to engage with the state authorities and in the role played by the women's organisations that sprung from the wider social movement. There was a trend from contention to cooperation: women's rights' advocates moved from the sectarian protests of second-wave feminists to an institutionalised and conventional relationship with state institutions (Squires 2007). The protest methods also changed: feminists became more willing to address gender equality through the lens of utilitarian arguments rather than rights-based ones, to make their demands resonate with the neoliberal political and economic paradigm of less state, more (free) market. Gender equality was framed as an added value for the realisation of other goals – competitiveness, economic growth – and thus feminist advocates made gender equality compatible with other governance goals. Some feminist groups therefore undertook a process of institutionalisation (Silliman 1999, p. 25) that made them external partners of public authorities that relied on these groups for the provision of services the state was no longer willing and/or able to provide, for the provision of expert knowledge on gender issues, and for monitoring and benchmarking services.

This process of institutionalisation that many women's groups went through meant that they had to change not only their goals and discourse but also their internal structures. The current focus on quotas and gender mainstreaming is a reflection of the neoliberal governance penchant for evidence-based policies that are empirically quantifiable (through number of women and impact assessments respectively). The expertise sought from women's groups is mostly a quantitative one, based on the traditional scientific method. Gender equality thus becomes depoliticised, since both quotas and gender mainstreaming understood in this quantitative way tend to side-line the discussion of the very concept of gender equality (Squires 2007, p. 3) and to ignore the impact of policy on gender relations (Elomäki 2015; Rönnbom 2005). For many groups, the adaptation to this neoliberal political and economic paradigm was crucial not just for them to maintain their relevance within the political system; it is also very often a question of survival. Funding agencies – with the EU being no exception – have adopted the empirically quantifiable rationale as the criteria to award funding, which women's groups are forced to adopt to be successful in their applications (Silliman 1999, p. 25). To be able to apply this paradigm, women's groups have also been forced to professionalise and bureaucratise themselves (Silliman 1999), since they must be able to navigate the complex funding procedures and report on their project grants regularly. The adoption of the language of 'rational empiricism', reflecting the demands from the state for quantifiable knowledge to inform policies, ultimately translates into a loss of political edge (Squires 2007, p. 143) and the de-politicisation of gender equality and women's rights. This trade-off, which some feminist organisations were willing to accept and others were not, led to the inclusion in the policymaking process of some groups but the marginalisation of others (Ibid., p. 146).

The creation of EWL and the Commission's entrepreneurship in the representation of women's interests

The creation and successes of the most recognised transnational European women's group – the European Women's Lobby – must be understood in the context of this shift from contentious politics to engagement with the state that a large part of the feminist movement worldwide has gone through. The relative strength of the EU gender equality policy, compared with the soft measures that are the staple of the rest of EU social policy, is striking. Sonia Mazey presents a bold argument for why this is so: gender equality policy in the European Union was developed through the efforts of women's

groups' advocates and committed officials within the EU institutions (mostly in the Commission but also in the European Parliament and in the European Court of Justice) (Mazey 2012, p. 128). The fruitfulness of this alliance was the result of a series of windows of opportunity that were seized by femocrats and women's organisations combined (Ibid., p. 131-132). The United Nations declared the years 1975 to 1985 the UN Decade for Women. Beyond raising global awareness of gender inequalities, this commemoration spurred cooperation between governments, women's rights activists and other actors, which in turn created networks around the issue of women's rights that became influential and spurred change. At the EU level, the Nordic enlargement in the mid-1990s had the effect of increasing the number of femocrats within the EU and thus provide women's rights advocates with allies inside the EU institutions, often in senior positions. Also during the 1990s and in the first years of the new millennium, a succession of treaty changes provided women's groups and women's rights' advocates within the European institutions several opportunities to expand and reinforce the remit of competences of the EU in gender equality (Ibid., p. 132). This included the inscription in the Amsterdam and Lisbon treaties of gender equality as a fundamental value of the Union.

Mazey also attributes the success of this symbiosis between women's groups and EU institutions to the close relationship between EU policymakers and organised interests in general (Mazey 2012, p. 130; but see also Mazey & Richardson 2006). In fact, the Commission has often gone further than being a recipient of interest groups' demands to be an active motivator of the institutionalisation of certain interests, particularly public interests (Kronsell 2005). Taking the case of women's rights, the most salient organisation representing women at the European level had its set-up encouraged and financed by the European Commission. The European Women's Lobby was created in large measure because the Commission wanted a one-stop shop to go to whenever gender equality legislation was being considered (Hoskyns 1996; Mazey 1998; Zippel 2004). The expertise on gender issues, coupled with a European-wide representativeness, provided the EWL with the legitimacy the Commission was looking for to represent women's interests. This in turn also conferred legitimacy to the Commission to expand the scope of its competences further into social policies beyond a strictly employment-related rationale, the traditional reserve of gender equality in the EU (Van der Vleuten 2012).

The complex nature of the EU decision-making process provided women's rights' advocates with multiple access points to the European policymaking process. The Commission, for the reasons mentioned above and for its nature as the legislation-initiator body of the Union, was particularly keen on establishing regular links with women's groups, often actively seeking advice from feminist experts and other women's advocates (Hoskyns 1996). It was not the only European institution amenable to gender equality demands. During the 1970s, links between women's organisations and women MEPs were crucial for putting and maintaining women's rights in the political agenda of the European Union (Mazey 2012, p. 134; Vallance & Davies 1986) and since its creation in the eighties the FEMM (Gender Equality and Women's Rights) committee of the European Parliament has been one of the most welcoming receptors of women's rights' demands.

The EU also stimulated the creation and development of women's networks within and outside the EU institutions. These networks were able to link issues such as human trafficking, violence against women and sexual harassment to the wider framework of fundamental human rights that made the expansion of gender equality beyond employment policy an acceptable action in the EU (Mazey 2012, p. 131). The culmination of this movement was the Beijing 1995 Conference on Women and the international hailing of gender mainstreaming as the best approach to achieve gender equality. One of the reasons for this active propelling of women's networks was the desire from both the Commission and the EP to expand the EU's competences on social policy (Ibid., p. 132; Van der Vleuten 2012).

Today, the EU continues to foster women's rights' networks in two ways. It offers women's groups not just occasional opportunities for engagement but rather 'regular institutional spaces' (e.g. groups promoted and sponsored by the Commission, organisation of parallel NGO conferences) that foment the cooperation between women's NGOs by promoting the exchange of practices between them and with the policymakers (Lang 2009, p. 328; but also Cichowski 2002; 2007; Pudrovska & Ferree 2004; Rolandsen Agustín 2008; Woodward 2003). Furthermore, the EU also fosters transnational cooperation between women's organisations by establishing it as a condition for awarding funding for projects (Lang 2009, p. 329).

To sum up, a penchant for evidence-based policies from the state means that feminist NGOs have been permitted and even requested to participate in the policymaking process and some have been quick to take this opportunity (Squires 2007, p. 143). The EU, due to a series of favourable circumstances (e.g. the Commission's keenness to involve groups representing public interests to increase legitimacy and expand its mandate) and structural characteristics (a porous and understaffed political system), is a particularly welcoming arena for women's rights' advocates that have had successes in navigating and influencing the multi-level system (Van der Vleuten 2012). Nevertheless, this required a shift from contentious strategies to more legitimised modes of political engagement with political systems and a consequent loss of political edge to women's groups' demands.

2.4. Receptiveness to gender mainstreaming and to women's groups: the paradox

Fusing together insights from interest representation theories in the EU with the literature that critically analyses the implementation of gender mainstreaming already allows for the paradox of political opportunities for women's groups to be spelled out more clearly. In section 2.2. I identified two different sets of critiques to gender mainstreaming implementation in the EU that stem from two different understandings of what the obstacles are. Whether the opposition to gender mainstreaming is structural or institutional seems to indicate two different outcomes for women's groups.

If, as the institutional set of critiques indicates, the shortcomings of the gender mainstreaming mechanism in the EU are due to bad implementation as a result of a lack of gender expertise in DGs that traditionally did not have to deal with a gendered perspective to their policies, then it would appear that there would be a demand for said expertise from civil society groups that have it. The EU institutions, as we have seen, trade expertise and other informational needs for access to the policymaking process (Bouwen 2002; Dür 2008; Kohler-Koch 1994), partly because they are understaffed and partly because they want legitimacy for their policies (Dür 2008). In certain issues, the EU may be more receptive to public interests as an attempt to close the democratic gap, on one hand (Ibid., p. 1215), and to improve its political legitimacy in certain policy fields vis-à-vis de member states, on the other (Young & Wallace 2000). This would seem to suggest that gender mainstreaming opened new 'privileged points of access'

for women's groups (Van der Vleuten 2012, p. 62). Traditionally, the most enthusiastic interlocutors of women's groups in the EU have been the women's rights and gender equality (FEMM) committee in the European Parliament and the DG responsible for employment and social affairs in the European Commission. With the expansion of a mandatory consideration of gender to all policy areas it would seem that women's groups expertise would now be in demand throughout all other DGs and EP committees as well. Thus, women's groups would now be able to advocate on a broader range of issues that would go beyond the narrow employment-related scope often criticised in the EU gender equality policy (Guerrina 2002; Lombardo & Meier 2006).

However, the other set of critiques – on the structural opposition to gender mainstreaming – seems to indicate the very opposite. Instead of making new venues receptive to the demands and expertise of women's groups the mechanism of gender mainstreaming seems to have made advocating for women's rights more difficult. Sabine Lang has discovered that women's organisations find it now much more difficult to lobby for women's empowerment programmes or for affirmative action than before gender mainstreaming was adopted (Lang 2009, p. 338). Civil society input is only sought and listened to insofar as it uses gender-mainstreaming language. The mal-implementation here is not a matter of flawed design but of conscious side-lining: the general subservience of gender equality goals to economic growth and competitiveness is translated into a half-hearted application of gender mainstreaming through tick-box exercises or downright disregard for the mechanism in the first place. Moreover, structural critiques see the botched implementation of gender mainstreaming as destabilising the close cooperation between gender advocates and femocrats within the EU institutions that used to characterise the EU equality policy area (Jacquot 2010). This destabilisation occurred due to the opening of the gender equality field to include new policy areas and new actors. However, such destabilisation could be regarded as an advantage for women's organisations (i.e. more venues for advocacy) or as a weakness (i.e. disruption of institutional alliances).

Based on these two contradictory indications, the gender mainstreaming mechanism seems to pose a paradox for women's organisations in the EU. On the one hand, the obligation of all EU policymaking institutions to apply gender mainstreaming to all policies in consideration – even institutions not used to working with gender – seems to indicate that the expertise of women's groups is now sought on a broader range of

issues in a broader range of venues. Effective implementation is thus just a matter of increasing the gender expertise available to policymakers and educating them on the topic. On the other hand, there seems to be a structural problem with gender mainstreaming receptiveness that runs deeper. Treating gender mainstreaming as a tick-box exercise strips it of its revolutionary potential and at the same time undermines networks and sites within the EU institutions where gender equality was traditionally taken seriously. The extended mandate of gender mainstreaming to virtually every policymaking area makes it now more difficult to advocate for programmes correcting women-specific disadvantages. Summing up the paradox in a brief sentence, gender mainstreaming seems to have extended the scope of opportunities for women's groups while at the same time closed down their opportunities for influence in traditional equality-friendly arenas.

The remainder of this section will deal with two issues that are intimately related to this paradox. Firstly, I will analyse the distinction between adding a gender perspective to policy – which is the mandate of gender mainstreaming – and focusing specifically on women's interests, and what this difference means for women's groups' participation in the EU political process. Secondly, I will distinguish between different gender mainstreaming approaches that may help to explain at least partially the difference between the potential and the expectations deposited in the gender mainstreaming mechanism, and its use in the EU policymaking process. Different gender mainstreaming approaches also mean different roles for external gender experts and civil society, which explains whether women's groups can anticipate being included in the process.

2.4.1. Different mainstreaming approaches: a bureaucratic exercise or a participative endeavour?

Gender mainstreaming as a mechanism for achieving gender equality has become ubiquitous not just in the European Union but throughout the world since the 1990s. What the mechanism entails in practice, however, remains rather vague and so largely open to interpretation. Expectations and reality can thus clash not just due to a matter of practical obstacles or lack of political will but also due to different interpretations of what is to a large extent an ambiguous mechanism. Judith Squires (2007), based on earlier distinctions of gender mainstreaming by Rounaq Jahan (Jahan 1995), identified two

different mainstreaming approaches that have different understandings of the role of the state and of civil society in the implementation of the mechanism: the expert-bureaucratic (or integrationist) and the participative-democratic (or agenda-setting) approaches (Squires 2007, p. 41).

The expert-bureaucratic approach is the process whereby political institutions decide how to gender-mainstream issues through a top-down logic. It is an approach that produces evidence-based knowledge for policymaking through gender experts, and measures gendered impacts without questioning existing policy paradigms. Therefore, this approach often does not question prevailing frames that permeate the political institutions, leaving gender equality not as an end in itself but as a means to achieve competing goals such as economic competitiveness and efficiency. The expert-bureaucratic approach leaves very little space for civil society participation since the process is mostly conducted through a top-down logic and the space and input required from external stakeholders is limited and very much defined by the political institutions that seek it. In this approach to gender mainstreaming, women's groups risk not being active participators since the opportunities for their engagement turn out to be very limited. On the other hand, the participative-democratic approach is one that, as the name indicates, implements gender mainstreaming by an extensive process of engagement with civil society actors and gender experts. It focuses on the empowerment and participation of disadvantaged groups by engaging civil society, with the aim of rethinking policy paradigms to make them more gender equal (Squires 2007, p. 138). Women's groups are able to set the agenda of what concerns gender equality and are consulted extensively throughout the process, not just by virtue of their expertise in gender issues but also to confer legitimacy and representativeness to the gender mainstreaming mechanism.

Which approach has the EU taken concerning gender mainstreaming? At first glance, the EU's understanding of gender mainstreaming seems to match the expert-bureaucratic approach. The EU conceives gender mainstreaming as correcting the limitations of the equal opportunities and positive action approaches previously based on equality for the Single Market, resulting in an 'equal opportunities mainstreaming' approach (Squires 2007, p. 45) since its major focus remains economic equality. Emanuela Lombardo and Petra Meier, in their analysis of the gender discourse used in EU family policy and inequality in politics found that there is an 'almost non-existent

voice of feminist movements in official texts' (Lombardo & Meier 2006, p. 60) and the 'modest space given to civil society' (Ibid., p. 62) could explain the lack of a feminist understanding of gender equality on the two issues concerned. Similarly, Emanuela Lombardo found that the European Constitutional Convention of 2001-2003 also adopted an integrationist approach to gender mainstreaming (Lombardo 2005), since 'issues and perspectives that accepted the existing neoliberal trend were prioritized, while social and gender issues that challenged this model were marginalized, and the actors defending them were constrained to adopt "realistic" (that is, within the dominant paradigm) standpoints to participate in the debate' (Ibid., p. 428). Participation of civil society was 'passive' and opportunities for influence was limited to women's organisations used to the EU jargon and political processes (Ibid., p. 427).

Nevertheless, there seems to be a large discrepancy between policy fields and between the different DGs in their acceptance and adoption of gender mainstreaming (see MacRae & Weiner 2017). Participation of women's groups in the policymaking process is also expected to vary according to policy field. Even in their study on feminist frames in EU policy, Emanuela Lombardo and Petra Meier found that feminist frames were extensively used in EU policy documents on gender inequality in political representation, while almost none were used in EU family policy (Lombardo & Meier 2006, p. 60). This may reflect the more or less successful framing that women's groups developed for their demands on different issues. Even if an expert-bureaucratic approach is applied for gender mainstreaming, the EU privileges evidence-based policies, and these require (gender) experts.

Thus, gender mainstreaming can either be used to bring women's voices into the policymaking process, in defining the policies, change from within (agenda-setting or participative-democratic approach), or it can just be used to more fully realise the goals of economic efficiency, being no more than a 'technocratic integrationist project' (Squires 2007, p. 140). One of the goals of this research will be to analyse, for each policy field in question, which approach was adopted by the European Union and how they work in practice.

2.4.2. Adding a gender perspective to policy or focusing on women's interests?

One set of critiques on gender mainstreaming in the EU focuses on the structural opposition to the goal of gender equality in itself when it clashes with competing economic goals. The harshest critics argue that gender mainstreaming was on the surface readily accepted by EU politicians because it was seen as a pretext to dilute existing women-friendly provisions (Stratigaki 2005).

At first glance, a potential tension exists between using a gender approach in policies – gender mainstreaming – and tailoring programmes to address the specific disadvantages of women, of which positive discrimination, or gender quotas, is the most familiar face. The mandate of gender mainstreaming in the EU is one focused on 'difference' (Bacchi & Eveline 2010, p. 42): to consider the effects of policies on both women and men when drafting legislation and correct imbalances when spotted. This indeed seems to render positive action programmes as unnecessary, or even frowned upon for violating the principle of equality in 'gender equality' policy. However, and on closer inspection, some misconceptions can be spotted. The problem with gender mainstreaming conceptualised in this way is that it equates gender with man and woman or – more commonly – with woman through its emphasis on sex-disaggregated statistics. It locates difference in women (Bacchi & Eveline 2010). This perspective renders the privilege and advantages of current legislation to men invisible, while, in fact, the deeper problem of gender is the male-as-norm in most policy fields (Kronsell 2012). The revolutionary potential of gender mainstreaming is of shedding light onto existing biases and thus of leading the policymaking process into a self-reflective overhaul. In order to spot the norms that advantage men the focus should be on what makes women different, the power relations between the genders and how gender is itself constructed through these asymmetrical relations (Bacchi & Eveline 2010). In order to do so, gender mainstreaming needs to focus on ex-ante evaluations, not on reactive policies of discerning the impacts of already-made policies on women and men (Ibid., p. 41). Policy needs to be seen as creative of gender relations, and not just as a reaction to problems (Ibid.).

The 'difference' approach to gender mainstreaming is often used to repudiate quotas and women's agencies (Squires 2007, p. 13). Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective into policies is therefore not a guarantee of including women's voices in the process or of furthering women's interests. 'To mainstream a gender equality perspective is not necessarily to democratize the state' (Ibid., p. 17) since gender

mainstreaming is concerned with implementing gender equality measures but not with discussing what gender equality actually entails or the impact of policy on gender relations (Kronsell 2012). Inequality has many possible indicators and deciding what to measure is 'a political process with political consequences' (Squires 2007, p. 17). The necessity to discuss what is gender equality renders the participative-democratic approach to gender mainstreaming the most positive one for furthering women's interests. But if gender mainstreaming is not a guarantee of furthering women's interests on its own, neither are gender quotas. Judith Squires captures the limitations of both gender mainstreaming and gender quotas (in politics) for the representation of women's interests: 'mainstreaming requires that policy-makers take gendered effects into account when drafting legislation but does not require that policy-makers be women, while quotas promote women to the ranks of policy-makers, but do not compel them to consider gender when proposing public policy' (Ibid., p. 13). Therefore, what seems desirable is the conciliation of both approaches to achieve true equality in a process that bears in mind the disadvantages that one sex currently has in comparison to the other.

2.5. Conclusion

Gender mainstreaming seems to have constituted a paradoxical opportunity for women's organisations in the EU. A gender equality strategy that is mostly based on monitoring and checking existing and newly-formulated policies for their impact on men and women offers less leeway for actors that wish to develop European legislation that further women's rights and positive discrimination programmes to correct women's disadvantages. Most importantly for this research, some of the literature on gender mainstreaming seems to suggest that there is less room for activists to advocate for women's rights legislation and gender quotas politically (see for example Stratigaki 2005). Gender equality through gender mainstreaming gets reduced to considering the impacts of existing policies on men and women but a women's equality agenda gets side-lined and there is the risk of losing sight of existing inequalities that disadvantage women disproportionately (Lang 2009, p. 339). Radical discourses and structural changes are ignored in favour of proof of added value of gender equality to existing policies (Ibid.). Moreover, the functioning of the EU gender policy, traditionally based on a close-knit network of actors that were all expressly committed to gender equality – the velvet triangles (Woodward 2003) – was destabilised to now include actors from potentially all policy fields and who often have competing interests (Lang 2009, p. 129).

The loosening of the velvet triangles is also the reflection of the greatest opportunity that gender mainstreaming brought for women's organisations: new and specific-issue organisations can now mobilise and groups such as the European Women's Lobby have been able to broaden their objectives and advocate for gender equality on new issues that are not traditionally associated with employment and social policy (Ibib., p. 130; Walby 2004).

Bearing in mind the differential in receptiveness to gender mainstreaming and what the diverse EU institutions seek from interest groups, the next chapter's endeavour is to create a theoretical framework capable of mapping out the political opportunities and hindrances that the EU affords to women's groups. It will also focus on the agency of these groups in taking up these opportunities or even shaping new ones for themselves within the political system through discursive and location strategies.

CHAPTER 3. A MULTI-LEVEL FEMINIST INSTITUTIONALIST APPROACH TO POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE EU FOR WOMEN'S GROUPS

The previous chapter explored the change in the women's movement political strategies in the last half-century, crystallising contentious politics into formal and professionalised organisations that seek to engage with the state and change it from within. As a consequence of that shift came the contribution of women's groups to the adoption of gender mainstreaming and their potential in its realisation. The chapter also introduced some theories about interest representation in the EU, and considerations about the Commission's entrepreneurship in interest-group making, particularly groups representing citizens' rights, such as the European Women's Lobby. This chapter seeks to dig further into the interaction between women's interest groups and the EU institutions and build a theoretical framework that allows us to analyse the political opportunity structures – and the constraints – that the EU as a system and the varied units that compose it present for feminist advocacy. The framework will also seek to account for the agency of women's groups and the strategies available to take advantage of those opportunities. Crucially, this framework will take a dynamic approach to political opportunity structures, following the approach of Sebastiaan Princen and Bart Kerremans (2008) of reserving analytical space for the possibility of interest groups to affect political behaviour of the actors and institutions they interact with and thus to shape political opportunities. Similarly, it is anticipated in the present theoretical framework that women's groups do not just sit idly waiting for opportunities of engagement to present themselves but may try to circumvent constraints and resistances and, potentially, open new opportunities for themselves within the EU political system by, for instance, changing the preferences of its actors and the receptiveness of its institutions to gender mainstreaming. As a consequence, opportunity structures are here understood to be 'both exogenous and endogenous to political processes: they impose opportunities and constraints on interest groups, but they may also vary as a result of group activities.' (Princen & Kerremans 2008, p. 1130).

3.1. Understanding political opportunities from both points of view: EU institutions and interest groups

3.1.1. Modes of engagement

According to the resource exchange perspective, interest groups gain access because they are able to provide the type of resource that an institution needs at a particular point in time. There is however a lack of theorisation in the interest representation literature of what the concept of access actually means (Halpin & Fraussen 2017). In their engagement with policymakers, stakeholders gain, or expect to gain, not just access but also the ability to impact public policy being considered, drafted or amended. Indeed, there is an important difference between access and influence: interest group advocates may be able to communicate directly with policymakers but whether their positions are really taken up is another matter. Influence has to do with 'the ability of an actor to shape a political decision in line with his preferences' (Dür 2008, p. 561) and is distinct from luck because it presupposes that the actor has done something to contribute to that convergence of positions (Klüver 2013). Darren Halpin and Bert Fraussen fine-grain this distinction even more by listing involvement, access and prominence as the different types of engagement that an interest group can have in the policymaking process (Halpin & Fraussen 2017). Involvement is the easiest level and it happens through responses to online public consultations and letters sent to politicians. It is virtually open to all interest groups and is bounded only by the effort that the interest group is willing to expend to be involved in policy, determined in part by the resources a group possesses. Access involves a direct exchange of information with policymakers – a meeting, membership of advisory groups, invitation to hearings. These are at the discretion of policymakers and are not something all groups achieve; they have to be granted access by gatekeepers or earn it (Ibid.) and this is therefore very much determined by the policymakers' needs and preferences. Lastly there is prominence, the type of engagement where an interest group is acknowledged by policymakers as representative of a particular constituency, such as the European Women's Lobby and women's rights in the EU (Helfferich & Kolb 2001; Karlberg & Jacobson 2015; Ramot 2006). Prominence is about the perception of policymakers of the representativeness of the group and is related to the salience of an issue on the political agenda at a given point in time, rather than to any particular efforts that an interest group has exerted for a specific policymaking process (Halpin & Fraussen 2017).

This differentiation of modes of engagement is useful because it helps us to anticipate the influence that an interest group might have in a particular policy context. It also brings to the fore the importance of groups' characteristics to their ability to engage in the policymaking process. For involvement and access, interest groups have to be able to develop policy goods that will be suitable for the institutions they are trying to interact with. Two of the most relevant, information and expertise, require research and professionalisation, which in turn require human and financial resources. Even the act of involvement in the process of policymaking demands constant monitoring of new consultations and input requests from institutions, with access demanding time for meeting political actors, and ability to attend those meetings and satisfy informational requests. Similarly, applying for EU funding programmes, an important strategy of survival for many national and transnational NGOs in Europe, requires human and time resources, as well as experience of the application, budgeting and reporting process, and therefore a degree of professionalisation to be able to comply with the bureaucratic requirements of these programmes. Therefore, analysing the characteristics of women's groups will be a crucial pre-condition to understanding their types of engagement in the EU policymaking process in different arenas and the level of influence they may be able to have, as well as their capacity to seize other political opportunities such as EU funding crucial to their survival and strengthening.

3.1.2. The importance of interest groups' characteristics

Following the typology made by Sebastiaan Princen and Bart Kerremans (2008) of the conditions that have to be in place for interest groups to seize available political opportunities, we can build a lens through which to analyse the capability of groups to engage with the political system. Three conditions are thus expected to impact on a group's ability to engage with policymakers: resources, location and the identification of opportunities to mobilise.

Resources and location

Rainer Eising's (2004) study on the response of business groups to European integration found that the strategies employed by interest groups very much depend on their location (i.e. either at the local, national and/or European-level), and on their negotiation capacities and organisational resources. It is important to note though that

the relationship between resources and lobbying success is not clear-cut. Heike Klüver (2012), in her large-N case study of variation of lobbying success in the EU draws attention to the contradiction of conclusions of previous work on that question (Ibid., p. 60). She shows that if on one hand Eising (2007) demonstrates that resource capacity impacts positively on interest group access to European institutions, on the other hand Christine Mahoney (2007) and Frank Baumgartner et al. (2009) cannot find a clear relation between resources and success in lobbying. However, resource endowment is still relevant for obtaining characteristics that are relevant for lobbying success. Information supply requires the capacity to generate detail-rich, rigorous and in-depth reports on the issue at hand, which in turn requires resource capacity. Large financial resources allow groups to have permanent and specialised staff, which in turn enables them to be more effective in their goals, think longer-term and thus build up more durable relations with policymakers (Eising 2007, p. 339).

The identification of the opportunities to mobilise

It is not enough for opportunities to simply be there. They have to be identifiable by the interest groups as seizable opportunities. The identification of opportunities will depend to some extent on the financial and human resources of an interest group – since it requires monitoring, knowledge and experience of the political system and the specific policymaking process. It also requires a relevant contact network. It is pertinent to look not just at a single group's characteristics but also at the relationships between interest groups. Analysing the ties between organisations helps us to understand how they gain access to political actors and venues and how they trade information among themselves and with policymakers (Bunea 2015, p. 284). Already-granted access feeds into this capacity to identify opportunities to mobilise. A group that maintains frequent contacts with other interest groups and with the EU institutions will identify more readily the emergence of new opportunities for access to new venues and/or the acceptance of new demands. An 'insider' status thus seems to be an important characteristic that will impact positively on the identification of the opportunities to mobilise.

Types of information

The type of information and expertise required by the EU from interest groups varies from one institution to the next and is determined by the role that institutions play in the

policy-making process. In the particular case of the European Commission, due to its role as initiator of legislative proposals, there is a strong need for detailed expertise on a wide range of policy areas to inform and legitimize its policy proposals (Bouwen 2002; 2004). In the case of the European Parliament, for instance, information about citizens' interests and the aggregated European interest is welcomed, as the institution is particularly keen to increase its democratic legitimacy (Lehmann 2009). It is important that an interest group is able to shape the content of its communications in a way that fits the needs of various institutions to maximise its chances of being heard as the policymaking process trudges along and the relevant institution changes. So the types of information a women's interest group is able to provide – descriptive statistics, technical details, best practices, surveys about citizens' policy preferences, etc. – will determine to some extent their success in accessing and influencing the EU policymaking decisions. Another important strategy related to this – framing – and its importance for lobbying success, will be explored in more detail in the next sections of this chapter.

3.1.3. Granting access: the importance of EU institutions' characteristics

We have seen that access to policymakers is something granted to groups; it is not automatic. Interest groups have to earn access and so access is in part determined by the effort of a group to 'generate capabilities that will shape their "value" to policymakers' (Halpin & Fraussen 2017, p. 728). Resources here matter because they will shape the extent to which these valuable capabilities can be generated. However, analysing the efforts of a group is not sufficient to understand access since it is 'the policymakers' needs and preferences that shape the granting of access' (Ibid.). These, as resource exchange predicts, are largely determined by an institution's characteristics. David Coen and Jeremy Richardson (2009) demonstrate that each EU institution has developed over time their own 'formal and informal institutional criteria for access' (Coen & Richardson 2009, p. 7), closely related to the function of that institution in the policymaking process. As mentioned above, bodies that face electoral scrutiny will be more sensitive to concerns of the public. Also, an institution's role in the policymaking cycle will affect the type of resource required. A greater level of technical expertise may be needed in the proposal stage while legitimacy is more readily sought-after in the agenda-setting and decision-making stages (Princen & Kerremans 2008, p. 1136). More importantly for this research, whose focus is on sub-units (DGs) of the same EU

institution (Commission), the type of policy will determine the policymakers' needs and their preferences. Coen makes a distinction between 'regulatory policies' that need technical details, are based around relationships of trust and credibility, and formulated in a depoliticised context, and 'redistributive policies' involving a wider range of actors and consultations (Coen 2009, p. 152). The type of issue discussed is thus an important factor in determining which frames are more likely to be acceptable in different institutional arenas. However, 'the formal and informal institutional criteria for access' (Coen & Richardson 2009, p. 7) is not sufficiently explored in EU interest representation literature.

The implementation of gender mainstreaming varies widely across DGs and across policy fields in the EU. This is attributed to the diverse characteristics of these institutions, such as whether the policy issue in question is of a regulatory or redistributive nature (Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000), the EU competences in that field (Van der Vleuten 2012; Walby 2004), gender expertise tradition (Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000) and the (gendered) power distribution within each DG (Debusscher 2017). The goal of this research is to analyse the role of gender mainstreaming in the dynamic of receptiveness to women's groups: how does it affect the existence of opportunities for women's groups, for lobbying and funding access, across the EU? Are DGs that have implemented gender mainstreaming more rigorously also the ones that women's groups find more receptive? Can women's groups have a say on the implementation of gender mainstreaming? Are they able to bring a gender perspective to different policy areas? It is not expected that gender mainstreaming implementation and women's groups' receptiveness are bound by a relationship of causality; it is much rather likelier that the characteristics of institutions are impacting both phenomena.

If we want to reconcile the assertion that the EU is a relatively welcoming polity to groups advocating for gender equality and women's rights (Hoskyns 1996; Pollack 1997; Van der Vleuten 2012) with the stark variation of gender mainstreaming implementation across EU policy fields, we need to look at two different levels of institutional criteria for interest group access: the macro-structural and the meso-institutional levels. Moreover, several EU gender equality scholars have pointed out the importance of feminist individuals within the EU institutions teaming up with advocates from civil society to advance equality policy at the supranational level (Holli 2008; Locher 2012; Mazey 2012; Woodward 2003); this seems to indicate a role for individual

actors in shaping the political opportunities for women's groups. These findings point to the usefulness of looking at institutions' characteristics – and at political opportunities – through a multi-level approach. The analytical macro level is where we situate statements like the EU being a porous and relatively receptive system to groups representing public interests. The variation of gender mainstreaming implementation and an anticipated variation in the receptiveness to women's groups according to policy fields would make the case for exploring the meso level of the EU institutional components (e.g. DGs). The importance of well-placed allies and the opportunities brought about by individual actors throughout the history of EU gender equality policy justifies a closer look at the micro-level, the level of the individual. The mixture of new institutionalism, with its focus on institutional structures as shapers and constrainers of individual behaviour, and feminist scholarship on organisations, with its emphasis on gender as 'an organising principle of social relations', will aid me in devising a theoretical framework capable of teasing out the variations of receptiveness to gender mainstreaming and gender equality advocacy vertically and horizontally in the EU.

3.2. Bringing gender in: a multi-tiered feminist institutionalist approach to political opportunity structures in the EU

Resistance to change is an important part of understanding the successes and failures of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the different institutions of the EU. If gender mainstreaming became constitutionally mandatory across all policy fields, what explains the variation in its implementation? An analytical framework based on the concept of resistance is a useful tool to help us answer that question.

New institutionalism, in all its variants (i.e. historical, rational choice, sociological and discursive), stresses the importance of institutions, both formal and informal, in explaining individuals' behaviours and in explaining why some political outcomes are more likely than others. '[P]olitical structures shape political conduct, and are normatively and historical embedded' (Lowndes & Roberts 2013, p. 28). This means that institutions are rules that structure political behaviour and that are relatively stable and enduring as they cannot be changed easily (Mahoney & Thelen 2010, p. 4). Processes of change are usually incremental in the sense that new features are imprinted onto settings that already have their own rules and norms – the mingling of the old and new can therefore produce unintended consequences (Krook & Mackay 2010;

Waylen 2009). Gender mainstreaming, for instance, was '*layered on*, to some extent, to the prevailing institutional order' (Weiner & MacRae 2017, p. 81, italic original), which explains the divergent degrees of acceptance of the mechanism across different EU institutions. Furthermore, changes to formal institutions can also have unintended consequences if there are informal rules that subvert them (Chappell & Waylen 2013). Formal change, such as the inclusion in the Amsterdam Treaty of the obligation to promote equality between women and men across all EU policies, can thus be subverted by informal norms in certain organisational settings that are in tension with the new mandate. However, informal rules don't necessarily always sabotage formal change; they may complement formal institutions and therefore facilitate change (Ibid.).

Analysing the formal and informal institutions that permeate the different DGs is therefore a crucial step to, on one hand, understand processes of resistance to the implementation of gender mainstreaming and, on the other, to set out the diverse institutional criteria of access for interest groups that generate distinct levels of receptiveness to women's groups. The blind spot in mainstream new institutionalism is its disregard for gender as 'a basic organizing principle of the social and political world' (Locher & Prügl 2009) that is also a constitutive element of institutions. Political institutions are nominally gendered, in the sense that it has been men who have historically held positions of power (Waylen 2014). Women have entered these spaces in the last decades in increasingly large numbers and thus have exposed some of the hidden expectations – i.e. informal rules – of these institutions (Chappell & Waylen 2013). However, even if the number of women holding positions of power reached parity with men it does not mean that institutions would work differently; that is because institutions are also substantively gendered and biased towards masculine norms. Positive traits such as rationality, power, strength, competitiveness, autonomy, logic, control are associated with masculinity whereas contrasting traits such as passivity, care, emotion, irrationality are associated with femininity (Ibid.). The masculine ideal is what underlines institutional structures, practices and norms, and it shapes 'ways of valuing things, ways of behaving and ways of being' (Duerst-Lahti & Kelly 1995, p. 20 quoted in Mackay et al. 2010, p. 582). Gender thus plays out within institutions in different ways: it is a category but also a process. Political institutions are gendered in the sense that they prescribe rules about gender and rules that have gendered effects (even if not specifically and explicitly concerned with gender), and also because they produce policies that impact women and men differently and shape the relations

between the two (Gains & Lowndes 2014). Gender mainstreaming, in itself a policy mechanism whose main goal is to make the gendered aspects of institutions visible in all these three dimensions and correct them in order to eliminate gender bias, lends itself particularly well to a feminist institutionalist analysis.[2]

Two sets of critiques to the haphazard implementation of gender mainstreaming were identified in the first chapter: one which focuses on institutional obstacles including lack of knowledge and resources and another which focuses on a wider and more structural misfit between gender mainstreaming and other EU's objectives. Similarly, we can see political opportunity structures divided in two categories: the general receptiveness of the EU to interest groups, a macro-level dimension that is largely determined by the constitutional characteristics of the polity; and the receptiveness to interest groups at a given point in time and space, contingent on power relations, policy priorities and likely to diverge according to the meso-level institutional arena we are looking at. To make a meaningful contribution to the gender mainstreaming literature in the EU I will map out the types of resistances to the mechanism at different levels – vertically and horizontally – and thus a multi-level approach will be particularly advantageous. Moreover, a multi-level feminist institutionalist approach is well-suited to analyse the overall EU's openness to women's groups' advocacy while permitting us to distinguish different levels of receptiveness among DGs and policy fields.

3.2.1. Revisiting gender mainstreaming implementation critiques: categorising multi-tiered resistance

Resistance to change is an important part in understanding the successes and failures of implementation of gender mainstreaming in the different institutions of the EU. Lut Mergaert and Emanuela Lombardo, in their analysis of gender mainstreaming implementation in EU research policy, came up with a typology of resistance that is useful to distinguish different hindrances to gender mainstreaming across Commission units (Mergaert & Lombardo 2017). They distinguish between individual and institutional obstacles to change, with the former located in specific actors that oppose gender

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[2] The terms 'feminist institutionalism' and 'gender institutionalism' are often used interchangeably to mean an approach that combines new institutionalism and feminist research and that sees gender as a central organising element of political institutions. I use 'feminist institutionalism' rather than 'gender institutionalism' to accentuate the normative drive for gender equality: feminist institutionalism attempts not just to analyse political institutions but also to contribute to our understanding of when and under which circumstances they work or can be made to work for the benefit of gender equality (Lovenduski 2010 [foreword in next citation]; Krook & Mackay 2010, p. 1).

mainstreaming, or lack information about it, and the latter being about the systematic opposition to gender change or systematic inaction on it (Ibid., p. 107). Individual resistance may take the form of reluctance to implement gender mainstreaming due to its burden: an individual that lacks time, resources and knowledge might simply refuse to do it. An institutional form of resistance would be a refusal by the higher ranks of the institution to allocate resources and training to gender mainstreaming in the first place. A further distinction is made between resistance made explicit (when opposition is clearly made apparent by actions and discourses of actors) and implicit (when there is no overt opposition to gender change but actors distance themselves systematically from that goal) (Mergaert & Lombardo 2017).

Types of resistance	Features
Individual	Resistance expressed through the action or inaction of an individual to oppose gender change.
Institutional	Resistance revealed by a pattern of aggregated action or inaction that is systematically repeated and that suggests a collective orchestration to oppose gender change.
Explicit	Resistance expressed overtly when actors oppose gender equality initiatives through their action and discourses, or do not do what they ought to do to advance gender equality even when they are made aware of gender equality commitments.
Implicit	Resistance not overtly manifested that can be verified by observing the extent to which actors, in their discourses and inactions or inadequate actions, distance themselves from the goal of gender equality itself.

Table 1. Types of resistance to gender mainstreaming (source: Mergaert & Lombardo 2017, p. 107)

3.2.2. Logics of appropriateness of EU institutions: the meso/institutional level

A question that follows from this typology is why do these resistances happen in the first place? Feminist institutionalism provides useful concepts and tools to analyse resistance to gender mainstreaming in the EU. The attention to informal rules and how these may subvert formal ones is crucial to understand resistance to a mandatory policymaking mechanism. Informal rules, 'socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels' (Helmke & Levitsky 2004, p. 727), matter because they may affect the implementation success of formal rules and contribute to the subverting of formally established mechanisms – in this case, gender mainstreaming. Informal rules are closely related to the logic of appropriateness of a specific institution. New (sociological) institutionalism contends that

the 'logic of appropriateness' (March & Olsen, 1989) of each Directorate-General (DG) in the European Commission, each committee of the European Parliament, and each working group in the European Council is the mechanism that largely determines the behaviours, norms, values, and frames used by each of these political units. Furthermore, feminist research on political institutions tells us that these different logics of appropriateness are inescapably gendered (Chappell 2006; Chappell & Waylen 2013). This can be expressed, for example, as they establish the acceptable behaviour of individuals within these units, while privileging norms and values typically associated with masculinity (e.g. competitiveness, assertiveness, rationality). As a result, they also limit the ways that policy issues are understood, approached, and debated.

Different DGs within the European Commission present distinct levels of implementation of gender mainstreaming and, necessarily, gender mainstreaming will have faced different types of resistances. Implementation differences are a consequence of the disparate amount of resources that each DG allocated for this mechanism – staff, training, money and time – and of the existence or absence of explicit commitments to gender equality in policy-specific documents. This is a reflection of the gender work distribution (i.e. proportion of women and men present in each role and hierarchical level) – and therefore of each unit's distribution of power – and its own logic of appropriateness which dictate the behaviour, values and norms suitable for individuals within the unit. Gendered logics of appropriateness, in addition to prescribing the proper roles for individuals working within each institutional setting, also limit the ways in which an issue is handled, and the frames used to debate it. We know that the purpose of a policy, whether it is regulatory or distributive, will influence the type of expertise required, the frames used to discuss it and the practices of engaging with stakeholders (Reis 2017). Policies such as social affairs and development, and regional policy and cohesion are more amenable to the inclusion of a gender dimension into their actions as they are used traditionally to address inequalities (Locher & Prügl 2009; Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000). Competition policy, on the other hand, is a much more market-oriented policy field concerned with taking down barriers to free trade and much less accustomed to considering and redressing disadvantages of liberalisation to certain groups (Coen 2009). Due to their depoliticised context and the attention to technical detail, regulatory policies also reflect a stronger adherence to the idea of a neutral and objective bureaucracy (Reis 2017). These circumstances can make it harder for gender mainstreaming to be implemented and women's rights advocates to be heard, since

they both can be seen as biased towards a gender equality policy position (Chappell 2006; Minto & Mergaert 2015). Looking at the different logics of appropriateness across DGs is important because they show us not just the masculine and feminine behaviours that they prescribe for men and women within the institutions but also – and more importantly for this research – because they reveal the appropriate frames to debate policies in each institutional arena (Reis 2017). The policies and legislation produced by political institutions will therefore be shaped by gender norms; in addition, these are 'outcomes which, in turn, help to re/produce broader social and political expectations' (Chappell 2006, p. 226).

The issue that is seldom addressed is the uneven distribution of power between policy areas and units within the EU. The main raison d'être of the EU is the concretisation of an open and single market, meaning that European Commission DGs directly related to this goal – regulatory DGs such as DG Competition or DG Trade – are given preponderance, with more resources and more power than redistributive DGs such as EMPL. Moreover, many of these redistributive DGs share their policy competence with the member states and so have their legitimacy more in question. The former are also the ones where feminist advocates have had the most difficulty gaining access (Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000), for the reasons explained above (i.e., smaller network of actors, requirement of technical detail, depoliticised and neutrally-perceived policies, lack of gender-mainstreaming implementation). However, the importance of power inequalities between venues is not something taken into account when exploring women's groups' strategic decisions about where to seek access. We know that the most amenable venues for women's groups are linked to the redistributive policies, the ones on the fringes of EU-policy competence. Therefore, the literature already hints that the chances for women's groups to change their lobbying target and be successful are limited to a few peripheral institutional settings (Reis 2017).

3.2.3. Introducing the macro/structural level: hegemonic masculinity, neoliberalism and master frames

In the context of an analysis of resistance to gender mainstreaming and political opportunity structures across three DGs, it is useful to refine the category of *institutional* as given in Lut Mergaert and Emanuela Lombardo's typology, separating it into institutional resistances at the meso level, i.e. a pattern of refusal to implement gender

mainstreaming within a particular unit or DG, and institutional resistances at the macro level, i.e. the structural obstacles that gender mainstreaming faces in the EU and that thread through the different institutions that make up the whole organisation. The gendered logic of appropriateness of each institution is what connects the macro aspect of an organisation such as the EU – that can be understood as composed by several different institutions, the *EU institutions* – to the micro level of the individual that does the resisting (Kronsell 2016). This research thus narrows the *institutional* category to the DG-level, and adds a category of *structural* resistance, to make a distinction about resistances that are local to a specific DG and resistances that are common across DGs and that stem from the EU constitutional characteristics.

Types of resistance	Features
Structural	*Resistance that stems from the EU's constitutional make-up including the balance of power between its institutional components, treaty-ascribed competences, and long-term political projects.*
Institutional	Resistance revealed by a pattern of aggregated action or inaction that is systematically repeated and that suggests a collective orchestration to oppose gender change.
Individual	Resistance expressed through the action or inaction of an individual to oppose gender change.

Table 2. Typology of multi-tiered resistances to gender mainstreaming

Hegemonic masculinity, neoliberalism and Weberian bureaucratic neutrality

In recent years the focus of the engagement of gender scholars with the EU has shifted from an exclusive attention to the impact of feminist advocates on EU gender equality policies, to a theoretical challenge of the very concepts of European integration and EU

studies (Abels & Mushaben 2012a). A small literature has been growing that challenges the gender-blindness of EU integration literature and that analyses the gendered nature of the integration project and its impact on gender power relations within the EU institutions and in European society more broadly (Abels & MacRae 2015; Abels & Mushaben 2012a; Kronsell 2005; Kronsell 2016; Locher & Prügl 2009; Weiner & MacRae 2017). These scholars bring attention to the male bias of the European integration project since its inception. The complete absence of women at the negotiating and decision-making table in the first three decades of European integration, and the original focus of integration on male-dominated industries such as coal and steel nominally reflects the male bias of the EU's origins (Abels & Mushaben 2012b). Substantively, the EU has also 'institutionalized hegemonic masculinity' (Locher & Prügl 2009, p. 187), meaning not only that institutions have been dominated by men but also that they have been constituted on norms associated with masculinity (Kronsell 2005). Moreover, EU policies have crystallised particular forms of masculinity into institutionalised norms (Locher & Prügl 2009), transforming originally masculine norms into the standard and thus rendering characteristics associated with masculinity – assertiveness, rationality, control, autonomy - hegemonic (Kronsell 2005; Locher & Prügl 2009).

A case in point is the EU's long-standing and prioritised focus on the neoliberal market project that 'can be understood as validating and constructing rational, autonomous, economic man as the hegemonic type of masculinity' (Locher & Prügl 2009, p. 187 but see also Kronsell 2006). As feminist economists have shown, the concept of an autonomous individual is deeply gendered since it neglects the relations of dependency between individuals that is relegated to the publicly-invisible realm of care, a role that is in its vast majority performed by women (Locher & Prügl 2009). Therefore, '[i]n so far as EU policies adopt liberal presumptions – as for example in the neoliberal market model – its prescriptions for the making of a single market and a political union reproduce masculinist commitments' (Ibid., p. 198). This has led several feminist scholars to question the reconcilability of gender equality commitment with the neoliberal logic that permeates an EU integration project that has been an 'agglomeration of largely self-perpetuating "male power" and masculine interests' (Weiner & MacRae 2014b, p. 6).

The predominance of men in positions of power has 'permitted a set of male-centred institutional practices to evolve without comment or protest (Lovenduski 2005, p. 27)'

(Haastrup & Kenny 2015, p. 6). These practices, because they constitute the norm, are rendered invisible and seen as gender-neutral because they are presented as common-sense. (Connell 1995; Haastrup & Kenny 2015). The ideal of the Weberian neutral bureaucracy is a reflection of this invisibility of gender. The EU institutions understood in Weberian terms as neutral and de-politicised institutional sites masquerade the actual male-as-norm women-as-deviant model of the neoliberal single market project. Moreover, this illusion of bureaucratic neutrality represents a problem for the implementation of gender mainstreaming because women-advancement strategies tend to be portrayed as ideologically biased and running contrary to norms of neutrality and de-politicisation (Chappell 2006) that are more pronounced in more markedly neoliberal institutional settings such as the ones that deal with competition and trade (Locher & Prügl 2009).

The resilience of the economic master frame for gender equality

As referred to in the previous section, the (gendered) logics of appropriateness of the diverse institutions generate receptiveness to different discursive policy frames. However, not all frames have the same resilience or dependence on political opportunity structures (Thomas & Turnbull 2016): while some frames are fleeting, others enjoy continuity in their resonance within a political system for decades (Benford & Snow 2000). For issues of gender equality, an economic frame, such as the one adopted in the case of sexual harassment, has been a very resilient one (Kantola 2010; Lewis 2006; Ostner 2000; Stratigaki 2004; Young 2000) and can be considered the 'master' frame of gender equality in the EU (Elomäki 2015). Typically, feminist actors have taken advantage of the fact that the EU is built around the neoliberal concepts of an open market and economic competitiveness and have framed gender equality as a way of correcting market inefficiencies (e.g. non-discrimination legislation as a way of getting more women into the labour market to increase competitiveness of European economy). Sexual harassment was framed as a problem of inequality of treatment between women and men in the workplace (Zippel 2004); women's marginalisation in science and research was framed as a problem of inefficiency (i.e. of human resources mismanagement) (Abels 2012). So, the economic frame of gender equality is a generic frame that can be employed across policy areas and has been resilient over time. Notwithstanding the institutional differences in frame resonance across DGs, the economic frame of gender equality is frequently successful because it resonates with

the overarching neoliberal ethos that dominates the EU institutions. In fact, Richard Thomas and Peter Turnbull (2016) conceptualise neoliberalism as the master frame used by the Commission to 'establish a mandate for sector-specific policies that can be pursued via autonomous action by the Commission and/or collective action by adherents of Commission policies' (Thomas & Turnbull 2016, p. 1). In other words, the Commission persuaded a varied group of political actors – including women's organisations – that the market was the solution to Europe's problems (Thomas & Turnbull 2016).

In addition to the content of the frame, its empirical validity, or the form in which it is presented, also matters (Benford & Snow 2000). In the EU, there is generally a penchant for evidence-based policies that are empirically quantifiable, particularly through impact assessments, and a valuation of the cost and benefits of policies. This is also true of the criteria for applying to funding programmes. Funding agencies, including the EU, have adopted an empirically quantifiable rationale as criteria to award funding. The expertise sought is thus mostly a quantitative one, based on the traditional scientific method. Yet often, feminist issues cannot be easily captured through stereotypically 'masculine' methods. Many issues of interest to women's groups, including sexual harassment at work, are difficult to quantify because of problems of underreporting and even difficulties in reaching a consensus over what constitutes harassment. These empirical validity requirements have important consequences for the take up of political opportunities by women's groups in the EU.

To sum up the relevance of the EU's structural characteristics, the EU is permeated by a hegemonic masculinity at the macro-level that heavily influences the diverse institutions that are part of it, which in turn shape the behaviours, values and norms to which individual actors abide. Hegemonic masculinity also limits the acceptable ways around which an issue is problematised and the solutions prescribed to it. In other words, the hegemonic masculinity that permeates the EU limits the frames used by the EU institutions. This hegemonic masculinity is rendered invisible by its elevation to the status of normal; the bureaucracy of the EU, like other Western bureaucracies, is thus understood as neutral and guided by objective values, when in fact it is gendered because the appropriate forms of behaviour for civil servants are masculine (Chappell 2006, p. 227; Longwe 1997). Gender mainstreaming has the potential to make this hegemonic logic visible and counteract its disadvantages but precisely because of that it

runs counter to the underlying logic of most of this institutionalised modus operandi across the EU and is therefore a potential disruptor of the status quo.

3.2.4. Individual agency and change: the micro/individual level

Looking at political opportunity structures through a feminist institutionalist lens is useful because while it concedes that institutions tend towards path dependency, it also leaves room for political agency. The logic of appropriateness of institutions only matters because individuals enact the script provided by these logics. The macro is connected to the micro level by these gendered logics of appropriateness, 'whereby individuals follow embedded rules and routines, according to what is appropriate for their social and professional role and the individual's identity' (Kronsell 2016, p. 5). The enforcement of these norms and modes of behaviour, particularly informal rules, is not done by third parties but rather 'through internal actors and self-enactment and self-assertion' (Chappell & Waylen 2013, p. 605 but see also Lauth 2000). It is also at the micro level that gender mainstreaming happens: rhetorical commitments to gender equality have to be translated into practical and precise tasks that will in part depend on an individual's gender expertise and gender equality commitment. For instance, Lut Mergaert and Emanuela Lombardo identified a series of resistances to gender change in DG Research by individuals who refused to mainstream gender due to insufficient time, resources and training (Mergaert & Lombardo 2017).

On a more optimistic note, feminist scholars looking at political institutions also recognise the importance of individual agency for institutional change. Political institutions are not neutral monolithic arenas: 'institutions are battlegrounds in which opposing principles, interests, values, norms, and objectives are overtly or covertly articulated.' (Mergaert & Lombardo 2017, p. 104). Individual actors are constrained by the institutional environment they operate within but, under certain circumstances, they can trigger change and thus alter the gendered rules of institutions (Beckwith 2005; Krook & Mackay 2010). This is because there is an interactive relationship between gendered individuals and institutions structurally gendered: institutions shape gender performance but gendered ways of acting and being can also in turn shape institutions (Krook & Mackay 2010). Change can also be brought about externally by the interaction with social actors, including feminist advocates, leading up to a dynamic and interactive understanding of the political opportunity structure: by interacting with the political

system, interest groups can disrupt the norms and open new spaces for themselves (Chappell 2006). Change is not always linear or progressive due to the stickiness of institutional norms; however, the task of the researcher is precisely 'to clarify the conditions under which gender norms can be disrupted and to enable equality seekers to target when and where there are institutions that are most likely to be open to their demands' (Ibid.).

Individual agency is thus important to explain change in institutions. Sometimes a powerful feminist actor can change the opportunities for women's groups at a certain point in time. For example, the legislative actions on equal pay and equal treatment in the 70s and 80s, and the creation of the European Women's Lobby were very much propelled by a series of feminist female civil servants in high-up positions.[3] However, these actors benefitted from a European Commission keen to expand its competence in social policy by increasing input legitimacy of its policy proposals; this led to a willingness to institutionalise transnational feminist advocacy in the form of the EWL, for instance. When analysing the political opportunity structures and institutional change, the challenge is often to establish causation between all of these sets of variables: did opportunities arise because the system changed or did the system change precisely because interest groups interacted and altered it from the outside? An interactive and dynamic approach to the political opportunity structures is thus essential to avoid falsely attributing causation (Gains & Lowndes 2014, p. 531).

3.3. Resisting resistance: a dynamic approach to political opportunity structures

Stating the institutional and structural characteristics of the EU and how these impact the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming and receptiveness to women's advocates is by no means to affirm that resistance to gender change is inevitable and gender equality an irreconcilable goal with other EU projects. As Raewyn Connell reminds us, the state is internally complex and even contradictory; it is 'by no means consistent in [its] processing of the gender issue' (Connell 1987, p. 129). That is why hegemonic masculinity does not preclude the Commission from pursuing feminist

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[3] Some of these individuals include Fausta Deshormes La Vallé: leader of the Information Service of Women of the Commission; Marcelle Devaud: vice-president of the consultative committee for employment and equality of opportunities of the Commission; Jacqueline Nonon: director of the unit for the employment and equality of women of the Commission (Ramot 2006).

policies in certain fields and why change is possible through windows of opportunity and actor agency. These internal conflicts and contradictions of the EU as a 'quasi-state' mean that sometimes unintended consequences of institutions provide marginal groups with opportunities for change (Kenny 2007). The literatures on venue shopping and on framing, along with empirical research on feminist alliances in the EU, provides important material to design an approach to political opportunity structures that takes into account the agency and proactiveness of women's groups in not only taking up existing opportunities but carving new ones for themselves by their interaction with the EU.

3.3.1. The importance of framing

Framing is a tool that interest groups—including women's organisations—have at their disposal to effect change. Framing is strategic, goal oriented, and purposeful (Ferree & Merrill 2000). It is about 'making some aspects of reality more salient at the expense of other aspects' (Thomas & Turnbull 2016, p. 6). It is directly connected to the idea of venue shopping, as it is framing (and specifically, differential frames) that allows an interest group to reshape its position to appeal to a variety of institutions. Generally, interest groups frame their discourse and demands to fit with the dominant discourses of the institutions they are trying to influence so as to have a higher chance of being heard (Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000).

Framing strategies can be employed in two different ways in order to increase the chances of successful venue shopping. First, interest groups can frame their own demands to fit with the existing discourse of a certain venue. Alternatively, groups can frame an issue in a way that makes it fall under the responsibility of a venue that is already amenable to their demands (Princen & Kerremans 2008). The latter is a more dynamic understanding of venue shopping, but it is also much more difficult for interest groups to achieve. It is arguably easier to succeed when an issue is new to the agenda of the political system and has not been dealt with by any institution within it. In the EU, there is often an additional problem of framing issues in a way that justifies policy action at the EU level based on the EU's policy competences. For example, when feminist activists raised the issue of sexual harassment in the 1980s at the EU level, they framed it as a problem of sex discrimination in employment rather than a problem of violence against women. This reflected the dominant frame in the EU – the economic master

frame – but it also revealed the need to address the issue through a legal basis wherein the EU had a clear competence: there was a much stronger mandate to act on employment-related affairs than on questions of violence and justice (Zippel 2004). In this case, the cooperation between feminist activists in civil society and EU civil servants with feminist preferences successfully brought a new issue of gender equality onto the EU agenda and under the responsibility of a venue that had experience in dealing with equality issues: the Equal Opportunities Unit of the DG responsible for employment and social affairs. This means that the framing of sexual harassment was constrained by the existing dominant frames of the EU and by its institutional characteristics (e.g. its constitutionally dictated competences).

While framing can explain how groups access institutions, in the case of women's organisations, it is also important to consider which frames women's groups should employ in order to have their demands heard in various EU institutions. As mentioned before, an economic framing, infused with a neoliberal ethos, has been a very resilient frame for gender equality in the EU throughout the decades, enjoying the status of master frame in this policy area. Yet the content of the frames is not the only dimension that matters in their acceptance. The agent, or group, who proffers the frame also matters for its credibility (Benford & Snow 2000; Thomas & Turnbull 2016). From a resource-exchange perspective, EU institutions are looking for legitimacy for their policies, not just technical expertise. Interest groups that advocate for public interests, such as women's groups and, particularly, transnational umbrella organisations, are capable of lending (input) legitimacy to the European Commission's proposals because they are perceived as representing the interests of the European citizens at the grassroots level (Dür 2008; Dür & De Bièvre 2007; Pollack 1997). In addition, the empirical validity of the frame is also a factor that determines its receptiveness (Benford & Snow 2000). Women's groups are thus limited in how they can present and advocate for issues that often do not fit an evidence-based quantifiable approach to policy information, favoured by the EU institutions. This is also true of the criteria for applying to funding programmes. Funding agencies, including the EU, have adopted an empirically quantifiable rationale as criteria to award funding. Moreover, the award of funding is always linked to the EU's defined priorities for a particular policy field, which can often be quite strictly limited. Women's groups are forced to adopt these methods and frame their projects according to the EU's priorities in order to be successful in their applications (Silliman 1999). This has consequences for the nature and characteristics

of women's groups, since, in order to apply this paradigm, women's groups may be forced to professionalise (Ibid.), and to hire qualified staff to monitor, benchmark, and produce quality reports. Women's groups are thus in a difficult position. On the one hand, they may be required to 'masculinise' their approach to issues. They may also be required to fit within the dominant neoliberal frame of the EU, even as this reality often clashes with the gender-equality expertise women's groups possess (Locher & Prügl 2009). Finally, in professionalising, they may compromise the representativeness which helped to generate a (perceived) legitimacy for the group by the European Commission.

This adaptation of discourse through framing presents a conundrum for groups, which is not easily solved. Groups may choose to engage with the state to effect change and to survive but, in so doing, may be required to compromise aspects of their demands that are central to their goals. Framing involves a loss of radical edge of the original goals and demands of interest groups and may also hinder groups' ability to criticise the assumptions behind the state's discourse on certain issues. The question of why some frames are more dominant (or how they become dominant) is generally underexplored in the literature. It is particularly interesting from an FI perspective to question whether masculine frames are more likely to become dominant than feminist ones. This is where a feminist institutionalist approach to the characteristics of the EU as a polity and its institutional components proves useful to explore this blind-spot in the framing literature. In the case of the EU, we know that women's interests have to be framed in economic terms – women and men viewed as customers, with a need to cater to their different needs to optimise satisfaction (Squires 2007) – in line with a neoliberal paradigm. Arguments for gender equality have to be based on utility and economic efficiency rather than on rights-based justice (Ibid.).

3.3.2. Linking up with feminist allies within EU institutions

One of feminist institutionalism's focus points is change and under which circumstances can 'policy entrepreneurs' (Kingdon 1995) change the gendered rules of institutions to bring about gender equality (Chappell 2006). Feminist agency is thus an important issue for feminist scholars working with new institutionalism. The majority of the literature on the history of EU gender policy fails to address the importance of women's agency in furthering this policy area at the EU level (Locher 2012). In her critique of this overlooking of women's agency in EU gender policy in research, Birgit Locher mentions

the importance not only of gender advocates from women's groups but also of female politicians with a feminist agenda and civil servants committed to gender equality in developing gender policies in the EU (Ibid.). Policymakers and politicians with a feminist preference are thus important features to be analysed, in order to understand the interaction between women's groups and EU institutions.

Alison Woodward pioneered the conceptualisation of these feminist alliances in the European Union using the term 'velvet triangles'. These are networks between 'the Commission officials (the so-called femocrats) and europarlamentarians with feminist agendas, gender experts in academia or consultancies, and the established organized women's movement' (Woodward 2003, p. 85). Woodward borrowed the term from the US notion of 'iron triangles', powerful and closed alliances of actors that have considerable influence over specific policy issues (Gais et al. 1984). The use of the adjective 'velvet' is to oppose the EU gender alliances to the original 'iron' concept: the velvet triangles are characterised by their marginal position relatively to core EU policies such as competition, trade and agriculture, and by the fact that the actors are almost all female navigating within a predominantly male environment (Woodward 2003, p. 84). Woodward conceives the velvet triangles as informal networks where exchange of information is key, but networks with scarce power. Important is also the ambiguity and fluidity of the loyalties of the actors and their input into these alliances. These policy networks are flimsy and fluctuating, constituted by many actors, actors that may often have divergent interests (Vargas & Wieringa 1998, p. 3). In her study of women trafficking Sabine Locher (2007) applied the velvet triangle concept to describe in detail how a policy was created on human trafficking of women through the powerful combination of 'technocratic, procedural, testimonial' types of knowledge to form powerful policy frames that translated then into policies through the use of windows of opportunity.

It is the seeming lack of fluidity of the velvet triangles concept that led some scholars to criticise the feminist alliances as conceptualised by Woodward. The pre-determination of the actors important in these gender alliances was contested by some (see for example Holli 2008) who argued that defining a priori the relevant sets of actors limited the ability of researchers to analyse the contributions of male allies and other organisations that might also play a part in furthering specific gender equality issues. Thus, the terms 'transnational advocacy networks' (TAN) or 'feminist advocacy coalitions' are often

preferred by scholars interested in exploring the connections between the women's movement and the state. Notwithstanding these critiques, Woodward had from the start room for the consideration of other actors in her velvet triangles. She argued that with the application of gender mainstreaming, the actors giving input into these alliances now come potentially from all policy areas (Woodward 2003, p. 86). These new dynamics, how women's groups adapted to them and whether they were active contributors will be interesting to explore and relevant to understand how gender mainstreaming affected the ability of women's groups to access EU institutions. Moreover, the velvet triangle concept is specifically useful in the sense that it is the only network concept that was designed with the particularities of gender advocates in the EU in mind, their specific close connections and their marginalised power relative to EU core policy areas. The relevance of the concept of velvet triangles for this research is to analyse whether new actors (including male EU civil servants) and venues, which were typically not involved in gender equality policymaking, have become allies to the women's groups in gendering new policies. For this analysis I will use venue-shopping concepts of EU lobbying literature to find out whether women's groups 'shop around' for contacts that look more amenable to their demands, even if they have to reframe them to be heard.

3.3.3. Re-gendering the rules of EU institutions: opening new opportunities for themselves?

The previous section delved into the ability theorised by the venue-shopping literature of women's groups to 'shop around' for the most amenable contacts – often dubbed femocrats or feminist allies – within the EU institutions even if it means reframing their demands to resonate with a unit's goals. The importance of these coalitions of women's groups, femocrats and other gender experts – the 'velvet triangles' – was thus explained in the capacity of women's groups to access the EU institutions. The velvet triangles, and feminist institutionalism in general, refer to the importance of the individual actor in enacting the norms and practices dictated by the logic of appropriateness of institutions and their crucial role in changing these. It thus follows that the existence of policymakers with feminist preferences in a particular unit is important to consider when analysing the formal and informal institutional rules that are most conducive to regular interaction with women's groups. The present section presents a bolder and arguably more-difficult-to-answer question: To what extent are women's groups able to influence the (formal and informal) rules of EU institutions they interact with?

Women's groups in Europe have relative ease in accessing institutional spaces in the EU political system on a regular basis (Lang 2009, p. 328). Regarding the origins of gender mainstreaming, women's groups were vocal supporters of it during the 1995 UN Conference on Women (True & Mintrom 2001) and important catalysts for the implementation of the mechanism in the EU shortly afterwards (Lang 2009, p. 332; Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000). Women's groups are conceptualised as actors that can support mainstreaming efforts through their expertise both by training policymakers and by helping to devise concrete gender mainstreaming rules to orientate the policymaking process. Women's groups also help to generate political will to maintain gender mainstreaming on the political agenda (Lang 2009, p. 332; Verloo 2005, p. 351). Pollack and Hafner-Burton argued that more advanced implementation of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission was expected specifically 'where the political opportunity structure is the most open, where the networks of gender experts and advocates are most developed, and where the policy frame of mainstreaming resonates with the organizational culture of individual DGs' (Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000, p. 439). Women's groups are therefore an integral part of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the EU.

The question that this section poses is whether women's groups also contribute to a better acceptance of gender mainstreaming in the units they interact with. Could women's groups' interaction with policymakers in DG Environment and DG Research, for instance, help improve these institutions' approval of a gendered view of the effects of their policies? Of course, care should be taken not to confound correlation with causality since it might simply be that units that are more comfortable to work with a gendered view of policies from the start are also those more willing to engage and listen to interest groups with gender expertise anyway. The intention will therefore be to analyse both women's groups and policy areas that already engage with gender equality regularly and those that were traditionally considered gender neutral, and what changed or did not change since the implementation of gender mainstreaming in their interaction with women's groups.

3.4. A dynamic approach to political opportunity structures in the EU for women's groups

The last section of this chapter will summarise and tie up the perspectives from EU interest representation, feminist institutionalism and framing literatures into a coherent theoretical framework that will guide the data collection and analysis and give the findings a robust and pertinent interpretation. The foundational goal of this research is to examine the political opportunity structures for women's groups in the EU. The adoption of gender mainstreaming is the cornerstone around which these opportunities are analysed. Therefore, two main things are theorised: 1) the characteristics of the EU as a political system that explain its receptiveness to gender mainstreaming and create opportunities for feminist advocacy, and 2) the strategies used by women's groups to take advantage of these opportunities, circumvent resistance and carve up new opportunities for gender change within the EU political system.

3.4.1. The EU as both an enabling and restricting political system

Feminist EU scholars recognise that the political system of the European Union constitutes simultaneously an opportunity for women's rights advocacy and for the enactment of gender equality policies as well as an obstacle for gender change and for a feminist political project. Sabine Locher and Elisabeth Prügl, for instance, ascertain that 'power is both enabling and constraining' – 'institutions not only delimit our world but systematically distribute privilege and thereby create patterns of subordination' (Locher & Prügl 2001, p. 117 cited in Kronsell 2005, p. 1035) This simultaneous restrictive and enabling nature is due to the EU's constitutional make-up and the internal contradictions that, as with any other political system, a complex polity is bound to develop. Opportunities and constraints also spring from the multiple logics of appropriateness of the EU's institutions and from the agency that individual actors working within it and outside exercise. The following table is thus a summary of the opportunities and obstacles that the EU's political configuration present for gender mainstreaming and for women's groups' engagement:

	Opportunities	Resistance/obstacles
Structural	Multi-level, porous system, democratic-deficit awareness	Neoliberal master frame, neutral bureaucracy
Institutional	Consultations, funding (specific opportunities in specific units)	Logics of appropriateness, regulatory vs redistributive policies
Individual	Feminist preferences, gender awareness, velvet triangles	Ignorance, refusal

Table 3. Multi-tiered approach to opportunities and obstacles to gender change and advocacy in EU

This table will guide the analysis of the particular institutional arenas used as case studies in this research to reveal ther level of receptiveness to gender mainstreaming and to women's groups' participation in their policymaking process. It will also drive the comparison of the case studies to deliver and structure the mapping out of political opportunities for women's groups in the EU as a whole.

3.4.2. Reacting to resistance and developing opportunities: women's groups' agency

The previous section provided a theoretical framework to help me map out the opportunities and constraints for women's groups in the EU. Important is also to sketch a framework that guides the analysis of women's groups strategy in adapting to and shaping those opportunities. Two sets of strategies are thus identified: processes of adaptation and processes of proactivism from the part of the groups towards the institutions they interact with. These are only artificially separate to allow for ease in structuring research and analysis. Yet in practice the same dimension can simultaneously be a mechanism of adaptation to a new development in EU policy but also an attempt – deliberate or accidental – of shaping the very internal rules of EU institutions.

	Processes of adaptation	Processes of proactivism
Discourse (Framing)	Framing the issue in a way acceptable to EU policymakers in a different DG / in that same DG	Influencing the terms in which issues are discussed
Actors (Institutional allies)	Linking up with policymakers that have feminist preferences / venue-shopping for those	Training policymakers to have feminist preferences (e.g. through gender expertise training)
Resources (Funding programmes)	Developing their capability to interact with EU institutions and to improve their expertise in their field	Advocating for budgeting for these programmes in the first place

Table 4. Women's groups' strategies for take-up and creation of political opportunities in EU

Tailoring their *discourse* and their demands to resonate with a particular EU institution is part of what interest groups do to have a chance of access and/or influencing the policymaking process. Groups that choose to interact with the European Union institutions are thus constrained in the terms that they can articulate their demands and so the framing process can be seen as an adaptation to political opportunities as they arise. Groups can and do also look for venues where their discourse will be most welcome, although the costs of moving their attention and efforts from one venue to another mean that groups and institutions are not always linked up in the most optimal way. However, sometimes groups may be able to shape the very terms in which an issue is debated. This would mean opening up an opportunity to push forward their own understanding of the policy problem that would include the diagnosis and the prognosis (Lombardo & Meier 2006, p. 154).

Similar to the venue-shopping theory, groups can also look around for individual *actors* that are sympathetic to their cause. In the case of EU gender policy, Woodward theorised the alliances made up of women's groups, femocrats and feminist academics as the 'velvet triangles' (Woodward 2003). These alliances direct attention to the fact that EU gender policy observes successful advances when these three types of actors team up. So looking for policymakers with feminist preferences within the EU institutions

can be a way of accessing and potentially influencing the EU policymaking process for women's groups. A bolder question is whether women's groups can stem feminist preferences in actors by a process of socialisation, simply by regularly interacting with certain individuals. The training of gender experts is a responsibility identified by some authors as something women's groups are often tasked with (Lang 2009, p. 332; Verloo 2005, p. 351). Could women's groups thus contribute to a change of rules within EU institutions by contributing to the gender training of policymakers?

The last element identified in the process of adaptation and proactivism is the *resources* provided by funding programmes. Several interest groups – and all that will be examined in this research – depend more or less on EU funding to finance some of their projects or even, as in the case of several not-for-profit organisations working at the European level, their very existence. This funding can be used to pay for the daily running of an organisation (including staff salaries, office rent and expenses) and/or for specific projects closely related to EU's goals in a certain policy area. In what concerns women's groups, funding can be allocated for training of gender experts, development of gender mainstreaming measuring tools, etc. In the case of funding that goes towards the survival of an organisation, being successful in getting it might be the difference between having specialised staff able to maintain regular contacts with the EU institutions and capable of providing the expertise needed, or not. Therefore the existence of these funding programmes are in themselves a political opportunity for accessing the EU institutions that women's groups adapt to. Funding for projects and organisation-subsistence is allocated on the basis of what the EU considers its priorities for a certain period of years. Therefore interest groups may be able to contribute to shaping the EU's priorities on the short- or medium-term. Pressure can also be applied from interest groups for the continuation of specific funding programmes and/or for their expansion. This would constitute an example of women's groups shaping future political opportunities available for themselves.

Tables 3 and 4 sum up the theoretical framework that will guide the analysis of the case studies for this research. Table 3 sets out the dimensions to examine each policy field study case, in particular the institutional arena in the Commission responsible for said policies. It will also serve as a comparative tool to map out opportunities and constraints to gender mainstreaming and women's rights advocacy and their relative intensity across policy fields and institutional settings in the Commission. Table 4 sums up the

strategies that I expect to see from women's groups when reacting and adapting to these opportunities and constraints. It also includes some tentative expectations of processes of proactivism that reflect women's groups' potential ability to carve out opportunities for themselves by interacting with the EU political actors. Again, since I am looking at three women's groups that develop their action in three different and specific policy areas it is expected that they will have different experiences in framing their discourse, teaming up with feminist allies and taking advantage of funding programmes. This is due to the different degrees that gender is incorporated in the chosen policy areas: environment, justice, and research, something which will be analysed through Table 3. Therefore the diverse women's groups in analysis will have access to different political opportunities depending on their policy field, and also different capabilities to carve out opportunities for themselves in the EU political system.

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

4.1. Mapping out and selecting women's organisations

This research analyses the impact of the EU gender mainstreaming mechanism on women's organisations that operate at the EU level. The main units of study are transnational women's organisations that interact regularly with the EU. These are umbrella organisations that have other women's organisations as members, usually national or regional groups. The focus on EU-level groups is meant to avoid broadening the scope and complexity of this research by including different national gender regimes, systems of interest representation, and levels of Europeanisation. Although with their own membership dynamics and different ways of aggregating their members' interests, the transnational umbrella women's groups can be considered as representing 'European' interests - and are seen by the EU institutions as doing so.

4.1.1. Defining women's interest groups

These organisations are also seen as representing 'women's' interests. Although it is complex to define women's interests – do all women share the same interests?[4] How do these differ from men's? – and potentially even troublesome, since it risks reinforcing gender differences as natural[5] (Squires 2007, p. 9), it remains useful to categorise interest groups that fight for women's rights. These organisations have in common a specific attention to issues that disproportionately affect women, such as gender-based violence, or the goal of correcting an imbalance in a sector, such as the under-presence of women in scientific careers. In this sense, they are striving for equality of opportunities and fighting for the respect of women's human rights. Far from contributing to essentialism, this categorisation is useful for activism as it helps to define a problem that affects a specific group of people. Furthermore, their focus on women is crucial for this research and for gender mainstreaming since the mandate of the latter is

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[4] There is some debate on whether objective interests for all women regardless of class, race, sexuality, religion exist. Most feminist researchers and activists work on the basis that there is at least a common denominator in terms of women's interests, what Anna Jónasdóttir defined as 'the interest in not allowing oneself to be oppressed as a woman' (Jónasdóttir 1988, p. 38).

[5] This thesis understands gender as 'the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes' (Connell 2002, p. 10). It is a practice centred in 'the reproductive division of people into male and female' (Connell 1987, p. 140) and this is why the dichotomy of women and men is such an important part of any gender order and therefore of any analysis of it.

to disrupt the male-as-norm ethos of the policymaking process. These organisations are thus well positioned to push forward an alternative perspective. Even though not all these organisations describe themselves as feminists, they all strive for gender equality in their fields. Nevertheless, the most important characteristics of these organisations is 1) they are about women, and 2) they are interest groups, with a clear purpose of engaging with the EU and influencing policy. The preferred method of describing is therefore women's interest groups or women's groups, for a shorter version. Women's rights' organisations or simply women's organisations are sometimes used for the sake of avoiding repetition.

4.1.2. The comparative case study approach

Since one of the aims of this research is to understand where political opportunities are located in the EU and what has been the role of gender mainstreaming implementation in shaping those, a comparative case study approach was chosen to best map out the differences in receptiveness to gender equality and women's groups across policy fields. Different European Commission DGs and parliamentary committees have diverse organisational cultures, also as a consequence of the different types of competences of the EU in each policy field. Therefore, comparing policy fields and respective organisational contexts regarding the opportunities for engagement that they provide for women's groups forms part of the core of the research analysis.

Contrary to quantitative studies that usually use large-N samples, choosing the few cases for analysis in a qualitative study randomly is not recommended. In fact, when we are dealing with small-N samples 'randomized case selection procedures will often produce a sample that is substantially unrepresentative of the population.' (Seawright & Gerring 2008, p. 295). Thus, for this research organisations were chosen through purposive sampling (Bryman 2008, p. 414), with the intention that they shared most of their characteristics and that they varied in the dimensions of theoretical interest.[6] Moreover, it was important that the groups chosen were relevant in their subfields of advocacy. So, in this case, the organisations chosen have the following characteristics

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[6] This choice follows the logic of the 'most similar case' approach (Berg-Schlosser & De Meur 1994; Ebbinghaus 2005; Meckstroth 1975; Seawright & Gerring 2008; Teune & Przeworski 1970) that can be traced back to John Stuart Mill's 'method of difference'. This is when the cases chosen share all or most of their characteristics except the one that we are trying to explain (in the case of present research, it is the different opportunities women's groups encountered in the diverse EU institutions they engage with).

in common: their advocacy for gender equality and women's interests; their importance in their field; their transnationality; and their regular interaction with the EU institutions. In order to fully explore the paradox of gender mainstreaming to women's organisations (i.e. the opening of opportunities in new areas but the lack of opportunities in other areas for women's groups), organisations that advocate gender equality in different policy fields were included. Apart from their policy field, they differ in their financial capacity and the location of their headquarters. The following three organisations were thus identified:[7]

Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) - advocates for the elimination of violence against women. Based in Vienna.

European Platform for Women Scientists (EPWS) - advocates for gender equality in science and research policy. Based in Brussels.

Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF)[8] - advocates for a consideration of gender in environmental issues. Based in Utrecht, Munich and Annemasse.

In an attempt to maximise the usefulness of the comparative case study approach, an effort was made to include both organisations advocating within a traditionally gender-aware policy field (e.g. WAVE and violence against women) and also organisations focusing on traditionally gender-blind policies (e.g. WECF and environment issues). The goal was to see whether new opportunities indeed opened for the latter.

The goal of this research by analysing these three case studies is not strictly to generalise the findings to all other women's groups that interact with the European institutions, nor to all policy fields in which the EU has a degree of responsibility and their approaches to gender mainstreaming. The intention is rather to understand the impact of the gender mainstreaming approach on the organisational and discursive adaptation of these particular three organisations, and also to contribute in a broader sense to the understanding of the interaction of groups' characteristics and institutions' characteristics to the emergence and take up of political opportunities for interest

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[8] In 2017, WECF changed its name to Women Engage for a Common Future. For the sake of clarity and recognisability, this thesis uses the former name, Women in Europe for a Common Future, throughout.

groups. This means that I use a case study research design not only for the intrinsic value of the cases chosen (Baxter & Jack 2008, p. 549), since I am interested in these three organisations specifically, but also for their instrumental value (Ibid.) in contributing to knowledge on the political opportunity structures for interest groups in the European Union. Thus I am seeking to come up with findings that may help explain similar phenomena, rather than insist that this will be how all cases will behave in the same circumstances. Notwithstanding the absence of an intention to generalise, the organisations chosen represent some of the main women's groups interacting with the European Union in the present and recent decades, and so the results of the research analysis will be relevant to understand the general interaction of transnational groups advocating for women's rights in Europe and the EU institutions.

4.2. Research design and data collection methods

4.2.1. Revisiting theory and data

The idea for this research came up during my literature review of the role of women's interest groups in the making of EU gender equality policy. During research for my Master's dissertation on the topic, I had already come across the extraordinary characteristics of gender equality policy in the EU in terms of its breadth and considerable binding acquis for an issue in a policy field that the EU has only limited shared competence (social policy). The capacity of women's groups to access and sometimes to influence policymakers at the EU level was also impressive considering the limited policy competence of the EU and their relatively scarce human and financial resources. When I started to read on the history of gender mainstreaming in Europe, it seemed to reveal a broader range of policies and venues that were now open to women's rights' advocacy. However, some critiques of its implementation told a more complex and contradictory story: gender mainstreaming, as it had been implemented (or non-implemented) in certain policy areas was more damaging to the existing EU gender equality project than constructive. The use of gender mainstreaming to simultaneously open new opportunities for gender change in the EU institutions but also to dismantle existing women-specific provisions due to its virtually ubiquitous mandate became the paradox at the heart of my analysis. My ultimate goal was to gauge the influence of this conundrum in the organisational and advocacy strategies of women's groups.

Initially, the paradox was the guiding nexus of the research and the theoretical framework was designed to respond to it. I knew that resistances to gender mainstreaming were a key explanation for the opening of new opportunities not having boosted receptiveness to women's groups in all policy areas, so I employed feminist institutionalism to explain those resistances through differences in organisational culture in EU institutions. Through political opportunity structures literature, in particular EU interest representation theories, I developed a framework that could guide my analysis of women's groups' processes of adaptation to political opportunities and constraints.

After data collection and analysis, however, a pattern of repeated resistances and frames of gender equality started to appear that could not be sufficiently understood through my theoretical framework. There seemed to exist struggles that were common for women's groups across disparate policy fields, while a few where locally specific. The need to revisit and revise my theoretical framework became paramount and I sharpened the feminist institutionalist approach to resistance by giving it a multi-level structure. This allowed for a more fine-grained analysis of my data and for comparisons to be more firmly grounded in the theory. A dynamic combination of reflection and iteration was taken as the approach to theory-building, an approach that was informed by 'grounded theory' (Charmaz 2006; Silverman 2000; Strauss & Corbin 1994). As opposed to starting out with a set of hypotheses to be tested, I based my data collection on an intellectual puzzle that required coming back to after initial results were captured.

Due to the nature of the research question a qualitative multi-method approach was employed. The main goal of using multiple methods is twofold: to triangulate data in order to arrive at robust findings, and to mitigate the weaknesses of each method with the strengths of the others. This allows for an increase in the internal and external validity of the research (Bryman 2008, p. 376). The methods used were document analysis, semi-structured interviews and direct observation. Disadvantages sometimes identified for interviews are the fact that they can be too rigid and oblivious to context (Ibid., p. 465-6), and referring not to an event but how a person recalls and interprets that event. These disadvantages can be mitigated by a close and prolonged contact with the context in which the actors move, through direct observation of it. Direct observation also allows for flexibility and for encountering the unexpected (Ibid., p. 466), valuable for proving or disproving the researcher's preconceptions and allowing for a

revision of those, and particularly congruent with a grounded theory approach. On the other hand, interviews allow for the discussion of issues that are resistant to observation and for an in-depth reconstruction of events that have happened outside the scope of observation (Ibid.). Interviews with a broad range of actors who participated in a specific policy process can also mitigate the problems of memory and personal bias.

4.2.2. Document content analysis – preliminary stage

One of the methods applied in the methodological approach was the analysis of documents produced by the civil society organisations and by the European Union institutions regarding gender equality. For analysing these written documents, two different sub-methods were applied: document content analysis and critical frame analysis.

Besides reviewing the literature, written primary documents were the first point of collection of information regarding the women's groups and the EU institutions that I wanted to focus on. Indeed, in a preliminary stage, written (online) documents provided the basic information about the groups' goals, mission, positions on varied issues, and organisational structure that informed my choice of case studies for this research. This preliminary document content analysis was thus crucial in shaping the direction of my study. At this stage the goal was to simply gather general basic information about the groups, so the documents were read and analysed based on their literal content with no in-depth attention to meanings or frames utilised. Attention was given to the groups' objectives, their establishment and history, their location and organisational structure, their projects co-funded with the EU, their participation in open consultations of the European Commission, and their general positions on the gender equality issues they specialise in. A similar analysis was undertaken on the DGs' and European Parliament committees' official websites for general information of specific units that dealt with gender equality or gender mainstreaming. I looked for sub-units that signalled that gender equality was an issue at least formally acknowledged by that institution (therefore their absence was also telling). This was important not just to gather general information about how gender was incorporated in the diverse policy fields in study – particularly to see whether gender equality was formally singled out in the organisational structure – but also to identify potential interviewees that would be knowledgeable of how gender mainstreaming was implemented in that DG. A preliminary document

analysis of gender in these institutions was also important to choose relevant sub-case studies that would be illustrative of the interaction of women's groups and EU institutions in each policy field.

Scott (1990) identifies four criteria to evaluate the worth of documents as information sources for social research: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning. The use of official documents produced by the European Union institutions and by formally established civil society organisations means that they fulfil the criteria above. They are authentic and the source they come from is credible. These documents represent either the official position of the EU institutions that crafted them or the standing of the civil society organisation that produced them, and their intention and meaning is also clear. Therefore, the reliability of the utilised documents is sufficiently guaranteed.

In a (feminist) institutionalist approach to institutional rules of organisation and behaviour, official documents provide the most striking clues for formal rules that regulate a particular unit (Loosemore et al. 2015, p. 1272-3). Therefore, a document content analysis of the EU institutions relevant for my research reveals how gender is formally incorporated both in their organisational structure and in the policy documents produced by them. Uncovering the informal expectations, guidelines and norms of behaviour of institutions is much trickier, since by their very definition they are not official and very seldom written down in authoritative and public-accessible documents. Nevertheless, their analysis is also important since they can determine the successful application of the formal rules or instead undermine them if the informal rules run contrary to the formal. Due to their slippery nature, two different methods are particularly useful to uncover informal rules: semi-structured elite interviews and direct observation. Through interviews and observation, the actual ways of doing things on the ground can be enquired and observed, as well as the expectations placed upon individuals, job positions and institutions. Their usefulness and application in this research is further explained in the next sections of this chapter.

4.2.3. Critical frame analysis – policy case studies

Moving on from the preliminary stage of document analysis, there is another type of document analysis conducted to specific written sources that is crucial for answering my

research question. To find out how women's groups adapted to the gender mainstreaming approach to gender equality I need to look into the discursive frames used by the EU institutions and by women's groups and see whether they are compatible or contrasting. As pointed out in the theory chapter, discourse and framing are an important part of an interest group's lobbying strategy and overall existence. In order to take a position on any issue a group has to choose among different and often opposing interpretations of it that include how the problem is portrayed and what is its solution (Bacchi 1999; 2005; 2009). On the other hand, the discourse used by institutions constrains or offers political opportunities to interest groups to participate in the policy debate, to be listened to, and to potentially influence it (Krook & Mackay 2010). Therefore, an in-depth critical frame analysis is used in EU documents and groups' position papers in order to see the terms in which gender equality issues are defined by different actors. This more in-depth and systematic approach is applied only to documents related to the sub-cases chosen for each main case study, in order to limit the scope of the research and allow for an in-depth and detail-rich analysis of a few illustrative sub-cases.

For these policy sub-cases I chose pieces of legislation that had two main characteristics: 1) they considered gender explicitly to some extent, and 2) they were important targets of relevant lobbying by the policy-specific women's group I am analysing. I use policy-tracing, to analyse in depth the journey that each piece of legislation undertook, the actors involved and, more importantly, the multiple and competing perspectives that were negotiated and contested to find out which ones were fixed in the final text. This follows an interpretative policy analysis approach, which sees policy not as a rational or top-down process, connecting policy intentions and outcomes perfectly, but rather as a process of negotiation and contestation of different perspectives of the same issues (Benford & Snow 2000; Cavaghan 2017a). The policy process understood in this way makes room for the possibility of windows of opportunity opening up for the inclusion of new frames (and thus potentially positive to gender equality) (Cavaghan 2017a; Lombardo & Meier 2009, p. 150).

Parallel to policy-tracing, I use critical frame analysis to extract the different understandings of gender equality that were used throughout the life of each policy piece. Critical frame analysis was created through the MAGEEQ project, a transnational research endeavour whose goal was to map out gender equality meanings in different

political systems in Europe (Verloo 2005). The goal was to look specifically into how gender mainstreaming was being implemented in diverse European countries and the power dynamics connected to policy making. It considers policy documents to pick up how the diagnosis and prognosis of problems were designed, and which roles and voices were attributed to which actors (Verloo 2005). By looking at several documents related to the process of policymaking of each piece – Commission's draft proposals, EP's amendments reports, Council's press releases, I highlight not only the differences in gender equality meaning in each EU institution, but also which ones were closer to the ones used by women's groups. With appropriate contextualisation through interviews to both women's groups' staff and EU policymakers that were directly involved in the legislative process of these policies, I can discern which venues were more welcoming and where women's groups were more successful in their lobbying efforts.

In the present research, the documents selected for critical frame analysis are ones that already contain an interpretation of gender equality. In the case of the women's groups' position papers or reports, documents by default include a consideration of gender equality and/or women's interests since advocating for this issue forms the core of the strategy of these organisations. For the EU institutions, I selected documents in the policies under study – science and research, justice, and environment and international development – that specifically included a mention of gender equality. The aim of using critical frame analysis in these two sets of documents is twofold:

a) **To analyse how gender was mainstreamed into a specific issue through GE meaning analysis:** for this I analysed selected EU policy documents and looked for the meaning of gender equality included in that document according to the criteria of Lombardo et al. (2009) for analysing changes in the meaning of gender equality:

- *Fixing* (when a particular meaning of gender equality becomes enshrined in official documents);
- *Shrinking* (narrowing down gender equality to one particular interpretation of it or to a specific policy issue);
- *Stretching* (expands to encompass more meanings and interpretations or issues of gender equality);

- *Bending* (when gender equality becomes a means to achieving another goal).

b) **To identify the frames used to talk about gender equality issues:** for this purpose, I analysed women's groups' position papers and reports, as well as EU policy documents on those same issues, to find out which frames the different actors used. Specifically, I looked for how the problem was portrayed, the prescribed solution, the actors referred to as part of the problem and/or the solution, and the voices that were included in the making of these frames. The aim of this analysis of frames is to compare both sets of documents – women's groups' positions and EU policy documents – and see whether the frames used are compatible or contrasting. For the EU policy documents, the progression of the frames is also traced by comparing the position of different institutions as the policymaking process moved along. These comparisons, properly contextualised through interviews with both sets of actors, will give a good indication of the political opportunities for women's groups in each policy field.

The following table gives an overview of the type of document analysis conducted for each set of documents:

Type of sources	Type of documents	Type of document analysis
Women's groups	History, goals, structure	Content analysis
	Position papers	Critical frame analysis (frames)
	Reports	Critical frame analysis (frames)
EU institutions	Goals, structure, description of policy field	Content analysis
	Gender sub-unit/group	Content analysis
	Policy documents	Critical frame analysis (GE meaning analysis + frames)

Table 5. Overview of document analysis

Below is a description of the information sought in each type of critical frame analysis:

Gender equality meaning analysis	Frame analysis

Is the meaning of gender equality:
 	
fixed?
shrunk?
stretched?
bent?
	Problem
	Solution
	Actors referred to:
	  . as part of the problem
	  . as part of the solution
	Voices included in the drafting of document

Table 6. Elements to look for in critical frame analysis

In Appendix 1 is a list of the documents that were subjected to critical frame analysis. Documents were grouped by policy issue and analysed according to the same template (see Appendix 2), to make it easier to trace how the definition of the problem/solution and the frames used changed throughout the policymaking process. Table 7 is an example of how the template was used to pick up the frames and their progression throughout the policymaking process, along with the gender equality meanings, in the victims' rights directive.

Two documents are shown in Table 7: the proposal for the directive originally submitted by the European Commission, and the joint report by the FEMM and LIBE committees on the Commission's proposal. Both construct the problem as a breach of individual rights of victims that comes to be due to member states' non-prioritisation of victims in criminal proceedings and lack of training of practitioners. Both point to prescription of minimum binding standards for victim support and protection through legislation at EU level as the solution. In this example we can clearly see how gender equality is being used differently in the two documents: the Commission *bends* the EU's commitment to ending gender-based violence to justify acting for all victims of crime, while the two parliamentary committees *stretch* the concept of gender equality by stressing the need to understand the gender dynamics of violence and victimisation. For the 'participants' column, information was often scarce in the documents analysed, so interviews were particularly helpful in providing more information here.

Author	Year	Title	Problem			Solution			Participants	GE meaning (fixed, shrunk, bent, stretched)	Comments/notes
			How it was constructed	Where it comes from	Who caused it	Why should it be fixed	Who should fix it	How should it be fixed			
European Commission	18.05.2011	**Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (COM(2011) 274) (COM(2011) 276)**	The problem is the disparate levels of support and protection of victims in member states and no obligations for action at EU level. 'Crime is an offence against society as well as a violation of the individual rights of victims.' (14, (5)) Frame of victims' rights as fundamental rights, hence victims need and deserve respect, protection and support.	Non-prioritisation of victims, lack of knowledge about their needs also from practitioners, lack of enforcing mechanisms	Member states (concretely: judicial system, police and other practitioners that don't always provide sufficient regard to victims' needs)	Common minimum rules lead to increased trust and confidence in MSs' justice systems, which leads to increased cooperation between MS, which reduces obstacles to freedom of movement.	EU since it's about improving trust between MSs and because there's a large component of cross-border crime.	By prescribing concrete and binding minimum standards but leaving flexibility to MS to adapt them to their judicial systems.	'governments, law enforcement agencies, NGOs, international organisations and universities' (5)	BENDING One reason for action that is given to put forward binding minimum standards to victims' rights is the commitment of EU towards fighting violence against women and protect its victims.	Some groups of victims are consistently referred to as more prone to being vulnerable, suggesting that victims from those groups should be flagged as vulnerable (e.g. children, disabled people, sexual violence and trafficking, terrorism). But all victims should be assessed individually. Certain groups need specialist services, incl. GBV and sexual violence victims.

European Parliament – LIBE committee and FEMM committee	18.07.2012	**Report on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (COM(2011)0275)**	Victims do not enjoy sufficient protection and respect. Victims find the legal proceedings 'hard to cope with' (52) due to their arduous experience.	Society at large is unaware of victimisation. Historical and cultural circumstances gives preponderance to rights of defendant, not victim (LIBE opinion)	Unprepared and untrained practitioners; victims who are unaware or mistrustful of judicial system.	To facilitate the reporting of crimes and increase confidence in justice; to maintain the sustainability of national justice and health systems (measures to combat victimisation mitigate costs – inc. economic – on state and society at large)	Public authorities + media outlets & civil society orgs (awareness raising). NGOs, victim support services, judiciaries, police	Legislative imposition of minimum standards and protection measures + campaigns of awareness raising also through media.	Human rights and victim support NGOs [check interviews]	STRETCHED Mention of importance of 'understanding the gender dynamics of victims' rights' (54). Includes recognition GBV affects women disproportionately. But also that 'support for victims with specific needs recognises gender dynamics and operates within a gender equality and human rights framework' (54). GBV rooted in human rights violation frame and a discrimination frame.	

Table 7. Example of critical frame analysis with template (victims' rights directive)

4.2.4. Interviews

In order to contextualise the analysis of EU policy documents and women's groups' position papers by policy-tracing their history, as well as to complement the findings gathered from direct observation, I conducted semi-structured elite interviews. In this case, the 'elite' are the actors that are seen as experts in gender equality policy in the European Union by virtue of their experience (EU policymakers) or their knowledge and representative clout (staff from transnational women's groups). Interviews have slightly different purposes in this research according to the type of actor interviewed: for women's groups staff my intention was mostly to understand the specific ways used to interact with the EU institutions and the constraints they felt when doing so. It was also to find out the policy frames used in their advocacy work and who defined them. Regarding EU policymakers, my intention was to understand how gender was mainstreamed into their unit and specific work, as well as their own accounts of their interaction with civil society organisations dealing with gender equality. Below is a more detailed description of objectives for the different sets of actors.

Exploratory interviews

In the early stages of the research, interviews were conducted with staff from the women's groups to identify, based on the research question and propositions, the most relevant policy issues and actors in the EU institutions. These exploratory interviews were crucial in narrowing down the focus of the research, as it was not possible to assess each policy that has been gender mainstreamed since the mechanism was implemented 20 years ago. The exploratory interviews were also important to establish a first contact with the organisations and explore their availability and willingness to grant me access as an observer researcher of their daily work for a few months (see participant observation section below). Alternative groups with similar characteristics were identified in case some were unwilling to participate in the research project. At this stage, the main aim was to identify other actors involved and open the way for further interviews (Pierce 2008, p. 118).

In-depth interviews (staff of women's groups)

After a preliminary interview with a representative from the organisation and after some document content analysis, in-depth interviews were conducted with women's groups' members of staff in order to focus on relevant topics in more depth. This was particularly relevant for the sub-cases within each case study where an effort was made to interview individuals who had been involved in those specific policies and could therefore recall how it unfolded. Other aims of these interviews were to identify the areas and the issues the organisations find easier to advocate for, the issues that are met with resistance from the part of the EU institutions, the strategies that the women's groups use to circumvent this resistance, and the overall organisational, discursive and institutional constraints they feel when interacting with the EU institutions. These interviews were also used to identify actors in the EU institutions with whom the organisations had contacts (successful or unsuccessful) through the method of 'snowballing sampling' (Bryman 2008, p. 459), to then be interviewed for this research as well. Besides identifying other actors involved, these interviews attempted to corroborate information obtained through documentary sources and direct observation, clarify grey areas and fill in gaps of knowledge, and identify networks (Pierce 2008, p. 118). In total, 9 interviews – exploratory and in-depth – were conducted with staff from women's groups operating at the EU level.

In-depth interviews (staff of EU institutions)

The interviews with EU civil servants from relevant DGs and from relevant parliamentary committees were conducted with two related but distinct purposes. On one hand, I wanted to assess the awareness and commitment to gender mainstreaming in these institutions through uncovering the informal rules that permeate those particular units and how those can relate to how gender mainstreaming is received and implemented. This information helped me to start identifying political opportunities for women's groups in each policy field. On the other hand, it was important to have their point of view on their interaction with women's groups, which would signal whether they consider them to be relevant actors, potential allies, providers of services (i.e. knowledge, reports on implementation of policies, benchmarking, etc.). Interviews were conducted with people responsible for gender mainstreaming in the relevant DGs and also with policymakers that were directly involved in the policy cases analysed in greater detail for each case study. With these interviews, the intention was again to fill in gaps of knowledge left by my documentary analysis, to confirm information from documentary sources, to

corroborate findings from other interviews (i.e. triangulate data) (Pierce 2008, p. 118), and to trace the legislative process of each policy case. In total, 14 interviews were conducted with EU policymakers.

4.2.5. Participant observation

In order to have a close contact with the organisational culture and characteristics of the women's groups I use as case studies, direct observation proved to be a very useful tool. The aim was to understand the dynamics involved both within the organisations' daily work, and between the organisations and the EU institutions. In practice this meant observing meetings within the organisations and relevant events organised on the issues I focus on. The observation was participative insofar as questions were asked throughout the observation in order to make sense of it when appropriate.

Conventional ethnography is a time-consuming method that generates a very large amount of data. Due to the time and resource limits of a PhD research project, I decided to undertake participant observation in five specific meetings and events organised by the organisations I was analysing. Instead of open-ended interviews and explorative observations, the goal was to conduct interviews and observations that are more focused on specific propositions or topics of interest previously identified in the literature. Meetings within the organisations and events about relevant policy issues were particular settings chosen to conduct the observations. Appendix 3 is a list of events where I conducted participant observation.

4.3. Reflection on challenges and solutions

The data collection process presented a few challenges that slightly changed the course of my research from what I had originally designed. The most significant modification was the reduction of the case studies from four to three. Initially I had included the European Women's Lobby as one of the organisations to study. As the most prominent women's organisation that works with the EU it seemed a foregone conclusion that it should feature in a thesis about the impact of gender mainstreaming in transnational women's rights' organisations. As I progressed with the exploratory interviews and the document analysis in order to choose the specific cases of policy I would research in depth, it became clear that I would either have to cut down the number of organisations

I was studying or the number of policy cases to focus on. Neither was appealing: all three single-policy organisations were quite salient in their areas and the EWL was a clear case of an insider in the EU policymaking process, and featuring three policy cases for each seemed like the least to cover a broad range of successful and unsuccessful examples of gender mainstreaming. In the end the generalist and over-prominent nature of EWL meant that it was a clear outlier in my case study set so it was cut from my research. The choice seemed easier considering the fair amount of research that had targeted EWL compared to the other organisations. Nevertheless, this meant reducing the policy fields I focused on; in order to maintain the coherence of organisations and EU policies, I had to abandon employment and macroeconomics.

Originally one of the aims of this research was to analyse gender mainstreaming implementation in several policy areas as a whole, which meant looking at respective DGs, European committees and Council configurations. It would also provide me with a way of comparing the receptiveness of the Commission, Parliament and Council to women's groups' lobbying efforts. However, again limited time and resources that are a staple of doctoral research meant that I had to circumscribe my analysis if I wanted to investigate different policy areas and maintain a good level of detail that makes qualitative research worthwhile. For logistical reasons that mostly had to do with responsiveness to my initial contacts I decided to limit my analysis to Commission DGs responsible for the policies each women's group advocates for: DG Environment, DG Development and Cooperation, DG Research and Innovation, and DG Justice. A full list of interviews is given in Appendix 3.

As data collection progressed, I noticed a pattern of longer and more detail-rich interviews whenever the encounter was face-to-face rather than over the phone or by Skype. Therefore, and despite these organisations being based in diverse European cities, an effort was made to conduct them in presence as much as possible. 23 interviews were conducted in total from June 2015 until October 2016 and they were recorded and fully transcribed when participants consented to this. In the case of the 6 interviews whose participants did not consent to recording, notes were taken during the interview and added on straight after. I aimed for a good balance of interviews with each of the three organisations I focused on. In the end I was able to interview members of staff from WECF and EPWS three times for each organisation but for WAVE I only managed to conduct one interview. Nevertheless, I conducted extensive participant

observation for WAVE, having met several of staff members and having had the opportunity of speaking to them informally about the issues I was focusing on. This offsets the reduced number of interviews compared to the other organisations.

Initially, the intention was to use participant observation to witness women's groups' daily work, their interactions with EU policymakers, and to uncover hidden rules and expectations in a few units that were specifically responsible for mainstreaming gender into their DG's work. Due to logistical challenges of time and money resources to spend relevant amounts of time in Brussels observing several settings, and the difficulty in getting access to them in the first place (Bryman 2008, p. 405; Chappell & Waylen 2013, p. 600; Kenny 2014, p. 681) meant that participant observation was used entirely to witness two of the groups' general meetings and discussions about the topics they covered. This proved very useful to complement information on interviews and documents on their policy positions and organisational structure. On the other hand, direct observation of informal rules and daily working in the EU institutions was not possible.

The next chapter will open the empirical section of this thesis with a comprehensive overview of the EU's current priorities for gender equality and institutional apparatus for this policy area. It will then describe and analyse how gender mainstreaming is incorporated in the institutional arenas under scrutiny in this research: DG Justice, DG Research, DG Environment and DG Development and International Cooperation. Three chapters will follow on each of the three women's organisations that are the focus of this thesis: Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE), European Platform of Women Scientists (EPWS), and Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF).

CHAPTER 5. GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE EU: INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS, IMPLEMENTATION AND FRAMES

This chapter opens the empirical section of this thesis. To understand political opportunity structures, we need to analyse the characteristics of political institutions on one hand and the characteristics of interest groups on the other. This chapter focuses on the former. Receptiveness to gender mainstreaming and consequent implementation of the mechanism is expected to be an important indicator of an institution's receptiveness to women's groups. Institutional venues that take the equality mechanism seriously are ones that are expected to welcome gender equality data and best practices as valuable information to improve their policymaking efforts and produce robust and equality-oriented policies. Access criteria in these institutional settings are expected to be favourable to women's groups.

The present chapter will open with an exposition of the overall gender equality strategy in the EU: the documents that guide it, the established political priorities and the frames used to justify them. It will also analyse the priority issues of the funding programmes designed for organisations working towards gender equality to draw inferences on the types of issues that are acceptable at the supranational level. The following sections will focus on the three specific policy areas that correspond to the policy issues that the three women's groups under scrutiny in this thesis most lobby for: justice, science and research, and sustainable development. For each of these policy domains one directorate-general of the Commission is chosen – or two, in the case of sustainable development – to be looked at in detail in terms of their institutional structure, the strategies and instruments used to promote gender equality, and the results of gender mainstreaming implementation. These dimensions follow loosely Abels and Mushaben's set of questions with which to analyse gender in EU policy domains (Abels & Mushaben 2012b, p. 16).

The goal is to ascertain the different institutional cultures of these policy domains in order to understand the circumstances under which gender mainstreaming is taken seriously. This exploration corresponds to the analysis of the meso level in the multi-level

framework of analysis of opportunities and obstacles to gender change and advocacy: the institutional level (see Chapter 3). The first section on the overall EU strategy for gender equality will also be an attempt to build on our comprehension of the structural opportunities and obstacles for gender equality in the EU, in what corresponds to the macro level (see Chapter 3).

5.1. Gender equality strategy in the EU

This section will provide an overview of the documents orienting the strategy for gender equality in the EU in the current period until 2020. The priority areas for action that were politically designed are analysed, along with the way that they are framed and how they relate with other EU political projects and priorities. This section will also analyse one of the most important political opportunities for women's groups in the EU – its funding programmes for gender equality – to see what the priorities, frames and conditions for the application to these funding streams say about acceptable gender equality issues at the supranational level.

5.1.1. Goals and frames

The general strategy for gender equality in the European Union is currently guided by two main documents: the European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020, adopted by the Council (Council 2011), and the Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019, adopted by the Commission (EC 2015c).

In the European Pact, the Council states three main goals for achieving gender equality in the EU: 1) 'close the gender gaps in employment and social protection'; 2) 'promote better work-life balance for women and men', and 3) 'combat all forms of violence against women' (Council 2011). These three goals, which constitute the highest political commitment to gender equality at the EU level, denote a strictly economic-based rationale of gender equality, not just because two of the three goals relate directly to employment matters and social protection (e.g. welfare benefits and pensions) but also regarding the frames used to justify this commitment. The document repeatedly brings up the connection between achievement of gender equality and the Europe 2020 Strategy, the economic blueprint of the Union for the period. Gender gaps in employment and in pay are meant to be closed 'with a view to meeting the objectives of

the Europe 2020 Strategy', while the promotion of work-life balance is meant to 'increase women's participation in the labour market and contribute to meeting the demographic challenges' (Ibid.). Even the goal of combating violence against women, the only non-economic-related goal in the document, is bent to serve the purpose of growth: 'combat all forms of violence against women in order to ensure the full enjoyment by women of their human rights and to achieve gender equality, including with a view to inclusive growth' (Ibid.). Notably, in the introductory paragraph of the Pact, the Council justifies its commitment to equality between women and men due to its status as a fundamental value of the Union and also because 'gender equality policies are vital to economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness'. It states that 'a new impetus is needed, particularly in order to reaffirm and support the close link between the Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015 and "Europe 2020: the European Union's Strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth"'. Following the classifications of Lombardo et al. (2009) set out in Chapter 4, the concept of gender equality suffered a process of shrinking to mean mostly equality in employment terms, and also bending to serve the higher purpose of economic growth and competitiveness, even when the gender equality goal is not directly related to economic terms, as is the case of violence against women.

The wording of the European Pact for Gender Equality is in line with the bending of gender equality to economic growth that has been identified by several authors in recent years: recently the EU has justified gender equality in terms of the economic benefits it brings, regardless of the policy issue in question (Allwood 2017; Elomäki 2015; Reis 2017). Elomäki argues that the EU has intensified 'the explicit development and propagation of a market-oriented gender equality discourse' in recent years, which is part of a global tendency by international organisations to move away from rights-based approaches of gender equality towards arguments based on the economic growth and efficiency that it brings (Elomäki 2015, p. 289). This shift in the gender equality rhetoric is part of the need to translate gender equality policies into financial calculations as part of good and efficient governance, and by preference of evidence-based policymaking (Elomäki 2015). It is therefore a way of selling gender equality in a neoliberal context where economic growth is increasingly prioritised. Recent examples of gender equality policies beyond strict employment issues, such as the Commission's proposal for gender quotas on corporate boards (EC 2012b), reflect this shift of discourse. For this directive, a topic that can be constructed as an issue of (economic) decision-making

parity, the European Commission actively argued for it on the basis of the benefits of gender parity for business and economic health (Ibid., p. 3; EC 2012a). So, although there is nothing new about gender equality policies being narrowed down to employment considerations, using Lombardo et al.'s typology of gender equality meanings (see Chapter 4), the novelty is that gender equality is now bent to the EU's economic growth and competitiveness goals in a systematic way (Elomäki 2015; Lombardo et al. 2009; Lombardo et al. 2010).

The Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019 produced by the European Commission is a working document that goes into much more detail on the specific goals for equality for the period stated, concrete activities to achieve them, and the lines of funding available to finance said activities. Contrary to the 2010-2015 Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men that preceded it, the strategic engagement is a Commission working document, and therefore does not carry a binding weight for the whole Union, politically or policy-wise. This demotion in document hierarchy was criticised as a reflection of a lack of political will towards the EU's commitment to gender equality (EWL A interview), despite the Parliament's call for a 'practical action plan' reinforced with 'legislative inputs in order to strengthen the legal framework for gender equality' (EP 2015).

In this working document five goals are identified as 'key areas of action' for the EU to achieve gender equality:

- 'equal economic independence for women and men;
- equal pay for work of equal value;
- equality in decision-making;
- dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence; and
- promoting gender equality beyond the EU.' (EC 2015c, p. 2)

Beyond these goals, which relate mostly to employment matters, representation, justice and external affairs, there is also reference to the need of 'integrating a gender-equality perspective into all EU activities and policies' i.e. gender mainstreaming (Ibid., p. 12).

5.1.2. What funding frames say about acceptable issues

The Strategic engagement estimates an allocation of EUR 5.85 billion to gender equality under the European Social Fund and the Regional and Development Fund, with issues relating exclusively to employment matters: 'access to employment, career progression, reconciliation of work and private life, equal pay for equal work, the labour-market integration of migrant women and investment in the provision of childcare infrastructure' (EC 2015c, p. 12). This is by far the greatest bulk of funding reserved for achieving the EU's strategy for gender equality. Other funding instruments include the Development Cooperation Instrument, with EUR 100 million allocated to improve the lives of women and girls in third-countries (empowerment and child well-being, including tackling FGM and child marriage); the Horizon 2020, with EUR 40 million allocated to 'projects promoting awareness and implementation of gender equality in the research system and research organisations' (Ibid., p. 33); and the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme, with EUR 150 million allocated to gender-equality specific objectives (gender equality and preventing and combating violence against women, children and young people).

Money allocated to gender equality (EU budget 2014-2020)

- European Social Fund & European Regional Development Fund
- Development and Cooperation Instrument
- Horizon 2020
- Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme
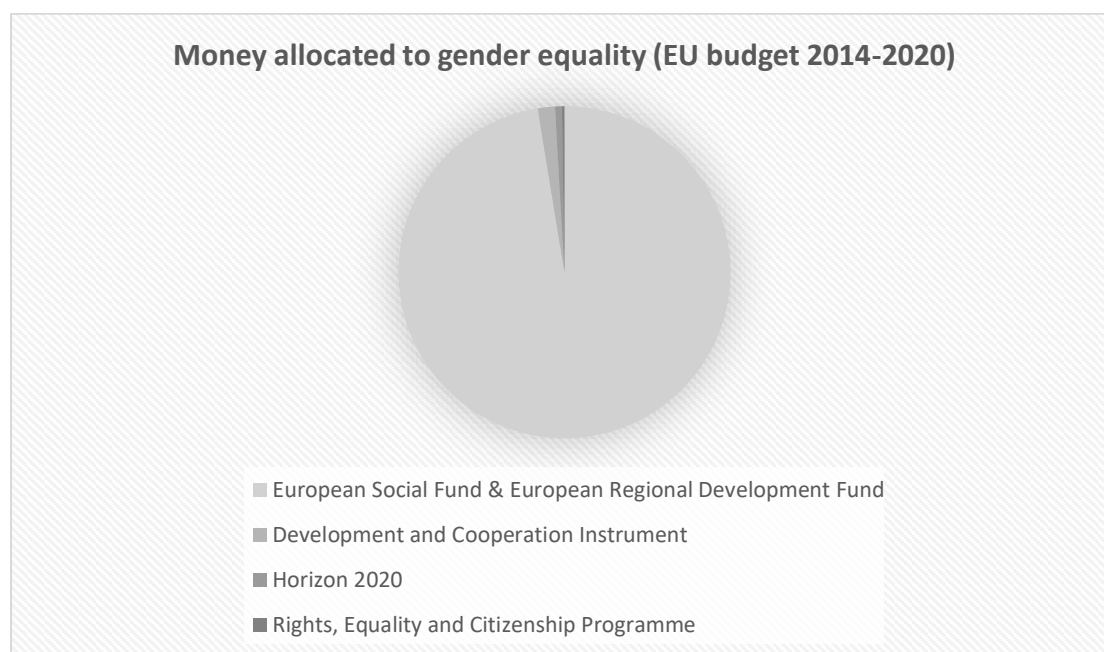
Figure 1. Money allocated to gender equality (EU budget 2014-2020) (source: EC 2015c)

From the frames employed to set out the commitment of the EU towards achieving gender equality, and the proportion of funding allocated to specific topics, it becomes clear that equality between women and men in the EU still has a very strong narrow economic rationale attached to it. For stakeholders willing to work on gender equality

this limits the choice of activities and topics they can both advocate for and undertake projects on. EU funding can be obtained more easily for activities connected with equality in employment-related matters and, to a lesser extent, with research and science, with projects in developing countries, and with combating violence against women. Coherently, these are the areas that the EU has chosen as its priorities in achieving equality between women and men. This might be a constraint on topic-specific women's groups that are working on bringing gender notions into other policy fields, such as the case of WECF and the environment, but also poses important limits on what a general women's group such as the European Women's Lobby can advocate for and work on.

The EWL is substantially funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme of DG Justice, and is the only European network to be awarded a medium-term grant (for 2015-2017) under the heading of 'equality between women and men' of the same programme. This reinforces its status as the main stop-shop for the European Commission whenever it needs to consult civil society on gender equality matters but is also telling of the obstacles women's groups face when trying to access EU funding. Beyond the limited topics that the EU prioritises, the activities eligible for financing are also quite specific:

- informing national members about gender equality developments at EU level;
- implementing EU Strategy for gender equality and identification of remaining challenges for future;
- 'promoting the economic and business case for gender equality across the EU' (European Commission's DG Justice 2014, p.15);
- contributing to gender mainstreaming in EU and national contexts;
- knowledge production about discrimination (intersectional as well) and public awareness raising;
- legal protection against discrimination (but strictly forbidden the financing of legal actions before national or international courts).

So, in a few words, networks must have the following responsibilities (and it is important to note that they do have to conduct several types of activities to have a chance of being awarded the grant as the Commission evaluates the priorities, the quality of the plan, the European added value, the dissemination and the cost-

effectiveness): intermediation between national and EU levels, policy and knowledge production, and public awareness raising. These activities reflect a demand for quantifiable knowledge; they require the use of what Judith Squires calls the language of 'rational empiricism' (Squires 2007, p. 143). Coupled with an incentive for networks to actively inform their national members of EU developments and vice-versa, in a role of monitoring intermediary, these groups ultimately suffer a loss of political edge. There is a bureaucratisation of their work and a potential disengagement from the publics they claim to represent (Silliman 1999, p. 25).

5.2. Gender mainstreaming in DG Justice: coordination efforts and combatting violence against women

The first policy domain analysed is justice. One of the constant priorities of gender equality in the EU and one of the five specific priority issues for the 2015-2019 period is combatting violence against women. This field of action is mostly under the responsibility of DG Justice, although DGs such as Home Affairs (for migrant and refugee women and issues of trafficking) and Development and Cooperation (for third countries) also share responsibility for this policy domain. It is within DG Justice that the Gender Equality unit of the European Commission is also located, a unit whose tasks include the coordination of the Commission's mainstreaming efforts.

5.2.1. The role of DG Justice's Gender Equality unit in the coordination of gender mainstreaming efforts

The specific DG in the European Commission responsible for gender equality legislation has changed over the decades that the policy has been in place at the EU level. Gender equality was previously overseen by the directorate-general responsible for social affairs and employment and several pieces of legislation directly relevant for equality have been argued for within this work remit. For instance, when revising the provisions afforded to pregnant women and recent mothers in the EU, including maternity leave provisions, the proposal for the revising directive was included under the legal heading of 'health and safety', something which was criticised by the FEMM committee and by the EWL as weakening the real purpose of the legislation, which was to improve gender equality in the field of reconciliation of work and family life (Reis 2011). This encroachment of the unit for gender equality within employment and social affairs also attests to the

predominant economic rationale attached to EU gender equality policy for most of its existence (Kantola 2010; Lewis 2006; Ostner 2000; Stratigaki 2004; Young 2000); measures to achieve gender equality were measures to improve women's employability and their capacity to participate in the labourmarket on a par with their male counterparts (Elomäki 2015). ECJ case law from 1989 – the Achterberg ruling – made this extremely explicit by stating that Community competences consisted in '[realising] equal treatment between men and women, not in a general fashion, but only as workers' (quoted in Jacquot 2010, p. 128).

GE unit's migration to DG Justice: consequences and new work remit

In 2011, however, the Equality Between Men and Women Unit moved from DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities to the newly-created DG Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, where it was re-baptised as the Gender Equality Unit (GE unit). According to Baumgartner and Jones (1993), radical policy change is sometimes instigated by a shift in the institutional venue that is responsible for an issue. The change of policy area that deals specifically with gender equality policy in the European Commission might have been a corollary of the fact that gender equality at the EU level had for quite some time transcended the employment-related provisions that it was initially bound to. In fact, the moved GE unit now has a broader policy remit: it became in charge of the Daphne file, which has been the funding programme for actions on combatting violence against women since 1997, while it kept the EU 2020 Strategy priorities it already had under DG EMPL (JUST D interview). Moving the GE unit to a directorate-general responsible for justice, fundamental rights and EU citizenship signals a recognition of gender equality as a matter of human rights, rather than simply a means to improve economic performance of the EU's single market. In this line of thought, Markus Thiel (2014) argues that the creation of a directorate-general specifically dealing with questions of justice and fundamental rights in itself signals a need to counterbalance the suspicion for an 'economically oriented integration preference' (Thiel 2014, p. 439). This new individualised portfolio can represent an opportunity for civil society groups advocating for human rights (Ibid.). The same could be argued for women's rights organisations about the shift of policy area to which the GE unit belongs.

Having said this, it is important to note that in 2015, with the new Commission led by Juncker, the directorate-general responsible for justice, fundamental rights and citizenship changed its formal name to 'Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers'. This reveals a tendency to see the work of this EU institution as mostly concerned with justice affairs, as Markus Thiel had argued about the previous 'Justice Commissioner' Viviane Reding, and only secondarily about fundamental rights and gender equality (Thiel 2014, p. 439). Moreover, some authors have pointed to the seriously negative impact that the shift of GE unit to DG Justice has had in old gender equality networks: pushing the gender equality team out of employment affairs has further removed gender experts from economic governance, with new macroeconomic mechanisms such as the European Semester impervious to civil society involvement (Jacquot 2017; O'Dwyer 2017). The potential benefits of symbolically recognising gender equality as a fundamental rights issue might thus not offset the loss of power of this unit in economic governance.

The Gender Equality unit coordinates work on gender equality in the European Commission. In the current Juncker Commission, this unit is nested under Directorate D – Equality and is staffed by 15 civil servants, including head of unit, policy officers and administrative staff. The gender mainstreaming mechanism in the Commission is also formally coordinated by this unit. The GE unit coordinates an Inter-Service Group for Gender Equality that gathers together members from all DGs and services that are responsible for coordinating the actions for equality between women and men in each of their respective policy areas. These gender focal points are meant to serve as ambassadors of gender equality in their own DGs, and as monitors and reporters back to the Inter-Service Group on what is being done to promote gender equality in their own fields. The effectiveness of this process very much depends on the position that a particular gender focal point occupies in their own DG: some focal points have gender equality responsibilities back in their DGs (e.g. DG Research or DG DEVCO) and therefore it is easier for them to both make the case for gender equality and to monitor developments on it. However, others just accumulate gender mainstreaming on top of other often competing responsibilities. These focal points are usually part of DGs that find it harder to understand the relevance of gender mainstreaming to their own work, meaning that most of their efforts are spent trying to make the case for gender equality to colleagues (JUST C interview).

To mitigate the lack of awareness on gender mainstreaming, the Gender Equality unit of DG Justice, in cooperation with DG Human Resources, provides training for Commission personnel on gender mainstreaming. This training consists of basic information about gender mainstreaming as well as specific applicability of gender in different policy areas. It is open to all interested staff and has been considered successful by the GE unit's staff, since it is usually attended by staff from different hierarchy levels and with different responsibilities (JUST C interview). Finally, the GE unit is also responsible for the elaboration of the gender equality strategy of the Commission every five years, after consultation of every other policy area for specific input on gender equality priorities of each DG.

Gender mainstreaming coordination at the policy proposal stage

The fact that the implementation of gender mainstreaming does not follow a uniform and prescribed procedure means that each policy area chooses how to consider gender in their own terms. As far back as 1998, the European Commission published guidelines on how to produce impact assessments that are mindful of gender in order to help the diverse policy areas to be more aware of how their proposed policies impact women and men's lives differently. The latest strategic engagement for equality between women and men incorporates gender mainstreaming as a stand-alone goal for gender equality in the Commission, reiterating once more the importance of including gender in impact assessments and evaluations throughout all policy areas, and the monitoring role of the Inter-Service Group on equality between women and men of the integration of gender equality in all Commission work (policy, legal and spending activities across all areas) (EC 2015c).

However, research has shown that the strategy of combining impact assessment with monitoring and evaluation has not helped to mainstream gender in all EC programmes in the past (Smismans & Minto 2017). Nevertheless, there are two novelties in the period 2015-2019 on gender mainstreaming general commitments. First, the strategic engagement commits the European Commission to publish in 2017 the first ever report on how gender mainstreaming has been implemented in each policy area of the Commission's responsibility (EC 2015c, p. 12). Secondly, the interservice consultations within the Commission, whereby each DG is invited to add comments and suggestions to any piece of legislation before it is formally proposed, requires that input by other DGs

is now given at a much earlier stage, with more potential for significant improvement of proposals before they are drafted. Previously, the GE unit used to comment on the gender dimension of certain Commission proposals through the interservice consultations, although a significant obstacle for the effectiveness of this as a gender mainstreaming mechanism was that input was sought only when proposals were already drafted. By moving this consultation a few steps back in the proposal process, chances for improvement in the gender dimension of important pieces of legislation are heightened. However, due to the relative reduced number of staff within the GE unit, this remains a limited mechanism and very much up to the initiative and willingness of individual members of staff to undertake this work (JUST C interview).

5.2.2. Mainstreaming gender into justice policies: the issue of violence against women

Gender mainstreaming in justice affairs has led to successful results. In 2012 the victims' rights directive (EP and Council 2012a) was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council and was hailed as an example of a piece of legislation that took the gender dimension seriously and accounted for it in its provisions (DG IPOL 2014). This piece of legislation recognised the special needs of victims of gender-based violence (overwhelmingly female) and provided specific mechanisms for the protection of this type of victims. The role of the FEMM committee of the European Parliament, as a joint committee responsible for this piece of legislation along with the civil liberties, justice and home affairs (LIBE) committee, was crucial to force the latter to include a gender approach from the start in the amendments for this directive (Ibid., p. 17). This piece of legislation, and the specific frames used to incorporate gender equality, is analysed in depth in Chapter 6.

There is no one stop-shop institution in the EU responsible for the issue of violence against women nor any piece of binding legislation specifically addressing it. Rather, the EU has engaged with the issue in a myriad of ways: (1) through binding pieces of legislation meant to protect and support victims of crime, (2) funding of projects, campaigns and organisations working with victims of gender-based violence through the Daphne programme, (3) by organising and encouraging good practice exchange, (4) through a commitment to end female genital mutilation, and (5) by pushing for the collection of more and better evidence on the phenomenon of violence against women.

The EU has adopted several directives that aim to protect and support general victims of crime and victims of a number of specific types of crime. The most important one is the 2012 directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (EP and Council 2012a) (for a detailed analysis of the gender dimension of this directive see Chapter 6). This piece of legislation has just recently (2015) entered into force and is a considerable effort to ensure that all victims of crime have the same minimum level of protection and support throughout the EU. Although it establishes rights for victims of all types of crime, this directive has important considerations on victims of gender-based violence and it is the first legally binding text at the EU level to include a definition of gender-based violence:

Violence that is directed against a person because of that person's gender, gender identity or gender expression or that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately, is understood as gender-based violence. (EP and Council 2012a, preamble)

and a definition of violence in close relationships:

Where violence is committed in a close relationship, it is committed by a person who is a current or former spouse, or partner or other family member of the victim, whether or not the offender shares or has shared the same household with the victim. (Ibid.).

Importantly, the victims' rights directive also refers back to the EU's commitment to eliminate violence against women, specifically to the EP's resolution on a new EU policy framework to fight violence against women of 2011 (EP 2011), as well as to international regulations on the matter such as the Council of Europe's 2011 Istanbul Convention and the United Nations' 1979 CEDAW (EP and Council 2012a, preamble). The EU has also adopted binding measures to prevent specific forms of violence that affect women disproportionately and protect its victims, such as the ones stipulated in the trafficking in human being's directive (EP and Council 2011a), the directive on fighting child sexual abuse and pornography (EP and Council 2012b), and the European protection order directive (EP and Council 2011c) (for a detailed analysis of the gender dimension of the European protection order directive see Chapter 6). In the directives concerning the granting of international protection (EP and Council 2013a) and the reception of applicants for international protection (EP and Council 2013b) there are also important

measures stipulating the protection and interviewing procedures of women and girls victims of violence that are seeking asylum, and their safety from sexual harassment and assault within accommodation centres.

Violence against women, or gender-based violence, has been one of the top priorities in the current (2015-2019) and previous (2010-2015) EU strategies for gender equality. This has been matched with the allocation of funding for transnational NGO projects and national government campaigns to prevent this type of violence and protect and support its victims. The specific funding programme to end violence against women and children, Daphne, was created in 2000 and underwent three funding cycles before being incorporated into the Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme of DG Justice. This programme has EUR 150 million allocated to gender-equality specific objectives for the period of 2014-2020, including:

to prevent and combat all forms of violence against children, young people and women, as well as violence against other groups at risk, in particular groups at risk of violence in close relationships, and to protect victims of such violence (EP and Council 2013d)

The EU also encourages and sometimes sets up networks for the exchange of good practices on preventing, collecting information, and supporting victims of gender-based violence. An example of this soft-measure approach is the Mutual Learning Programme on gender equality, a series of seminars organised once or twice every year on different topics of gender equality that bring together national government representatives, experts and other stakeholders to share actions that worked and learn from each other. In 2016, for instance, the seminar topic was on discussing good practices to tackle female genital mutilation, forced marriage and other harmful practices, and in 2013 the seminar participants discussed measures to fight violence against women (DG JUST 2013). The European Institute for Gender Equality's (EIGE) website has also a collection of good practices, literature and legislation, administrative data sources, and organisations working on the field for consultation by stakeholders.

In recent years, the EU has made a series of commitments to end female genital mutilation both within and outside EU countries (EC 2013; EP 2012a; EP 2014a). In 2013 the European Commission released a communication towards eliminating female genital mutilation detailing practical actions that the institution pledged to undertake to

this end (EC 2013). The actions included getting more and better data and understanding about the problem, encouraging both EIGE and the member states to collect data on this phenomenon within Europe, recognising that cooperation among practitioners from several fields is needed to better combat this (health practitioners, border and immigration officers, child protection and education services), and ensuring the protection of victims and potential victims of FGM (Ibid.). The communication also includes a commitment to promote the elimination of female genital mutilation in non-EU countries, by raising the issue in international fora such as the United Nations and the African Union, by supporting local projects to end this practice, and by providing training to staff in EU delegations on the issue (Ibid.).

Similar to the case of female genital mutilation, one of the core preoccupations of the EU in terms of gender-based violence is to improve the understanding of the phenomenon in order to more efficiently combat it. Data on the prevalence of gender-based violence is often patchy, not comparable between member states and underestimated due to a lack of reporting and no recording of the relationship between victim and perpetrator (Walby et al. 2017). EIGE is the main EU institution concerned with encouraging the improvement of the collection of data on gender-based violence and it does so by divulging good practice methods and tools, by informing about data sources in each member state, and by conducting its own reports and studies on the issue. The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) also conducts its own research on the phenomenon, with the most important report released in 2014, an EU-wide survey across the 28 member states with 42,000 women on their experience of gender-based violence (FRA 2014).

In March 2016 the European Commission launched a formal proposal for the European Union to access the 2011 Istanbul Convention (EC 2016e), a comprehensive Council of Europe treaty to combat violence against women. All of the EU's member states have signed the convention, and although it is unlikely that the EU's own accession would create new obligations to those member states, the EU's signing of the Istanbul Convention would signal a strong political commitment to eradicating violence against women, as well as improve policy coherence between the national and EU levels (Ibid.).

5.3.   Gender mainstreaming in DG Research: 'research by, for and on women'

DG Research has been considered a pioneer in gender mainstreaming within the EU institutions (Abels 2012; Cavaghan 2010) and one of the policy areas where the gender mainstreaming apparatus is more developed (Mergaert & Lombardo 2017; Rees 2005). Nevertheless, the optimism is often taken with a pinch of salt when authors describe the practical challenges that gender mainstreaming in DG Research still faces. There is a series of resistances, both institutional and individual (Mergaert & Lombardo 2017), including gender blindness and incomprehension (Cavaghan 2013), that result in a gap between strong rhetoric supporting gender mainstreaming in science and research and its actual implementation in everyday policy practice. The awareness of how gender imbalance plays out in science both as a problem of lack of presence of women and as a problem of the gender bias of research content is thus very uneven across the policy disciplines that EU research policy spans (Cavaghan 2012). In the next two sections I briefly describe the institutional apparatus for mainstreaming gender within DG Research, and analyse the main frames used to talk about gender inequality within science.

Institutional context

The creation of the Women in Science Unit within DG Research in the mid-1990s reflected the significant focus on gender balance in science and research that the Commission initiated around that period. In the preceding decades, research policy in the EU did not include any considerations on the issue of women in science and there was a consensual understanding that science was a gender-neutral and predominantly technical subject (Abels 2012). However, in the mid-90s a set of circumstances created a window of opportunity for the issue of women in science to be brought to the political agenda in research (Abels 2012, Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000). In the mid-90s the EU formally adopted gender mainstreaming as an instrument to shape all its policies, and the new research Commissioner Edith Cresson took the idea of a more socially-responsive science very seriously (Abels 2012). Moreover, the goal of transforming the EU into a competitive knowledge-based society created the need to increase the number of qualified researchers and scientists and therefore to encourage more women

into science and retaining them, tapping into what was viewed as a pool of wasted talent (Abels 2012; Cavaghan 2012).

The Women in Science Unit (currently the Gender Team) attempted to create institutional structures that could insert this new perception of gender inequality into different areas and multiple levels of policymaking process of science and research policy (Cavaghan 2012). It remains 'the key actor holding together top-down and bottom-up networking' on the issue of women and science, although it had its name and location within DG Research changed throughout the successive Commission cycles (Abels 2012, p. 194). Currently, the team responsible for gender mainstreaming in DG Research, the Gender Team, is nested under the Science with and for Society Unit, under the Open Innovation and Open Science Directorate. The team is composed of seven staff members, and their broad remit is to promote structural change and to bring about gender balance in research institutions in Europe (RTD A interview). The Gender Team is in charge of a set of instruments designed to encourage staff within DG Research to mainstream gender into their own work. These include designing and delivering training programmes to educate staff on gender provisions in the current funding science programme, Horizon 2020, and training on the importance of the gender dimension in the knowledge produced through funded projects (RTD A interview). By the instigation of the current Commissioner, the briefing given to evaluators of funded projects will soon include gender guidelines to help them to be attentive to whether projects have gender-balanced teams and to evaluate whether the research proposed includes a gender dimension as well (RTD A interview). This is something that the Gender Team had pushed for years and to which they held on to when a window of opportunity was opened (RTD A interview).

There is no binding legislation on the issue of women and science; no directive and no European Court of Justice case law on the matter. Therefore, the Gender Team must rely on soft measures to try to incorporate understandings of gender into research policy, like the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) (Abels 2012). To this end, several advisory groups have been established throughout the last two decades as a way of giving expert input into the EU's science and research policy, and to exchange best practices between member states on women and science. Some of these platforms include the Horizon 2020 Advisory Group on Gender, the Helsinki Group, the Working

Group on Women and Science, the COST Action, the GenderSTE, and the GenPort. I briefly explore the first two groups.

The Helsinki Group was created in 1998, to work as an advisory group of national experts and civil servants to the European Commission on matters of women and science. The purpose of the Helsinki Group is to work as an advisory board to the Commission and to monitor the progress of gender equality and gender dimension in science within the member states, particularly through the collection of data for the She Figures, a report published every three years on the situation of women in science in Europe (HG A interview). Member states are responsible for appointing their representatives to the Helsinki Group and there is a mixture of university-based practitioners and researchers, along with civil servants representing their own governments. Different levels of practical knowledge about the problems faced by women in science and different expectations about the role of the Helsinki Group exist between members with the two different backgrounds (HG A interview): often, the remit of a representative is understood as restricted to reporting between the national and the European level, whereas for other representatives the role is understood as about providing recommendations at the EU level and making decisions on what is desirable to implement nationally (HG A interview). Indeed, the place of the Helsinki Group within the EU's women in science policy machinery is often not clear to its members and therefore doubts arise about the efficacy of the group's influence (HG A interview). However, some authors have been more optimistic about the kind of soft influence that the group has had on the women in science agenda on member states: Rees concludes that the Helsinki Group's sharing of information, benchmarks and best practices have impelled national changes more easily than what might have happened otherwise (Rees 2007).

The Horizon 2020 Advisory Group on Gender (AGG) is part of a collection of advisory groups established at the beginning of the current funding programme for science and research, Horizon 2020 (2014-2020), for each of the disciplinary areas covered by the programme. These groups are composed of experts on their fields appointed by the Commission to work as advisors to policymakers on the research priorities for each field. The AGG is unique in terms of its cross-cutting nature. Its experts are members of other Horizon 2020 advisory groups as well, therefore being simultaneously experts in women in science and in a particular scientific field such as the environment, space engineering, robotics, and so forth. The aim with the double membership is that these experts

function as ambassadors for gender equality within their own fields (RTD A interview). The overall responsibility of the AGG is to mainstream gender into Horizon 2020. The Gender Team works closely with the AGG to facilitate gender mainstreaming, namely by producing guidelines to avoid gender bias on candidate selection and on checklists to find out whether projects have a gender dimension (not just a gender balanced team) (RTD A interview).

Commission's frames on research and gender in research

The history and progress of EU research and science policy has been closely tied to economic integration efforts of the Union throughout the decades. Although the EU has funded research projects since its earliest decades, research and science policy gained significant momentum in the mid-80s with the creation of the Single Market. With the Single European Act in 1986 that effectively established the Single Market research and science were given a legal basis as an instrument to increase the competitiveness of Europe's industries (Abels 2012). Thus, the driving force behind EU research and science policy has largely been to secure the competitiveness of the European industries and subsequently the European economy (Ibid.). Science policy in the EU is first and foremost represented as an instrument to secure economic competitiveness (Cavaghan 2012).

Originally, science and research policy in Europe did not engage with the issue of gender equality at all since science was constructed as a gender-neutral and technical domain (Abels 2012). Things began to change at the end of the century when the EU started to reconceptualise the link between science and society and to view the integration of different social actors and their user perspectives as essential for scientific and technological innovation (Ibid.). Additionally, in 2000 the EU created the European Research Area (ERA) with the aim to transform the EU into the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010. ERA was one of the central pillars of the 2000 Lisbon Strategy for Economic Growth and Jobs, reflecting again the instrumentalisation of science and research to the purpose of increasing Europe's economic competitiveness. But the new understanding of the nexus of science and society combined with the goal of creating a knowledge-based society directed attention to the issue of women in science.

Before the implementation of gender mainstreaming at the end of the 1990s, several studies were conducted to assert whether there was in fact a problem of gender inequality in the field of science, since the perception was that there was not (Cavaghan 2013). These studies relied mostly on quantitative data and methods to determine the number of women working in scientific fields and the positions they occupied. Once the perception of gender imbalance in science was established, the argument to engage with gender in science was framed around the 'waste of talent' problem. This was the frame most congruent with the economic competitiveness frame that dominated science and research policy at the EU level. 'Including women in science, therefore, is seen as improving efficiency and the EU's economic competitiveness' (Abels 2012, p. 188).

The new understanding of the need to make sure science was responsive to societal problems that arose at the end of the century, along with the pressure to include a broad range of stakeholders, meant that there were additional dimensions to the Commission's discourse on the need to engage with gender in research. In 1999 the Women and Science document was published in which DG Research explicitly commits to gender mainstreaming. It included the phrase: 'research *by*, *for* and *on* women' that remains the motto of gender equality in science policy in the Commission (EC 1999, p. 10, bold and italic original). This illustrates the need to not just attract more women into scientific and research careers and allow them to progress, but also of making sure that science decision-making is gender-balanced, and, more elusively, to ensure that research includes the interests of both women and men and considerations of how it will affect both sexes. Nevertheless, the main frame continues to be one of human resources and this is reflected in the amount of resources that the Commission devotes to the development of indicators, statistics, benchmarks and reports on the presence of women in scientific and research careers and education (Abels 2012).

In the current funding programme for science and research, Horizon 2020, gender is a cross-cutting issue in the sense that there is no budget line allocated to projects working specifically in the women and science topic. Instead it is referred that all projects under Horizon 2020 should contribute to gender equality:

The activities developed under Horizon 2020 should promote equality between women and men in research and innovation (EP and Council 2013c, p. 25)

Horizon 2020 should have due consideration for equal treatment and non-discrimination in research and innovation content throughout all stages of the research cycle. (Ibid., p. 30)

Horizon 2020 stresses two dimensions where gender should be taken into account in relation to science and research: presence and content. Presence refers to gender balance in decision-making (where the goal of 40% of women in expert groups and panels and 50% in advisory groups is established) and gender balance in teams throughout the whole research cycle: advisory groups, general introduction of the 2016-2017 work programme, proposal template, expert evaluators, evaluation process, grant agreement and negotiations, monitoring (DG RTD 2016, p. 2). Content, often referred to as the gender dimension, is about the priorities of the projects and whether they take into account the interests and impacts on both sexes. This has been the hardest topic to implement and to see significant changes on throughout the funding programmes (HG A interview; RTD A interview), although assessments of the last two bi-annual working programmes have shown a tentative increase in the number of projects that have gender considerations (RTD A interview). A novelty in Horizon 2020 has been the possibility to include costs of training on gender expertise on the application for the projects, which reflects a desire from the part of the Commission to see gender being properly mainstreamed into funded projects by giving applicants the tools to do so.

Nevertheless, challenges for gender equality that were noted in previous funding programmes remain in Horizon 2020. The budget priorities in Horizon 2020, as in the previous programmes, are dominated by natural sciences and engineering, 'disciplines that traditionally engage fewer female researchers and present less gender awareness' (Abels 2012, p. 201). There are disparate levels of gender-awareness across disciplinary areas, as noted by both academics and policymakers (Abels 2012; Cavaghan 2012; HG A interview; RTD A interview). In addition, scarce human resources in the Gender Team means that there are not enough staff members with expertise on all the topics covered by Horizon 2020 that are able to monitor and convince experts about the relevance of gender in their fields (RTD A interview). Therefore, and notwithstanding the 'science for, with and on women' slogan, there is a preponderance of the presence dimension of gender balance, since it is easier to understand, implement and quantify. The lack of proper leverage from the part of the Commission to ensure that gender considerations are taken into account is considerable since gender

mainstreaming is not a prerequisite for a project to receive funding (HG A interview). Change is therefore slow and reliant upon the good-will of the stakeholders involved.

In sum, gender equality in science is an issue that in the last two decades entered the EU research and science agenda which is heavily geared towards concerns of economic growth and competitiveness. Although there is some acknowledgement by the Commission of the gendered nature of research and science's various components such as the peer-review system, empirical indicators and assessment criteria (Abels, 2012), the gender equality problem in science is seen first and foremost as one of women's under-representation (Cavaghan 2012). The lack of women in science is framed as a problem of inefficiency (a human resource problem) within a neoliberal discourse (Abels 2012). Congruently, the heavy focus is placed on presence, so the vast majority of actions, resources and reports are geared towards gender balance in teams, decision-making processes, and careers. The attention on the gendered content of science, through instruments like gender budgeting, could have significant redistributive effects since research is the third largest chunk of funding in the EU budget (Ibid.). In addition, the issue of gender equality in science is reliant on soft measures such as the OMC, since there are no directives or ECJ court rulings on the matter. This makes progress on the topic dependent on the good-will of governments and private stakeholders. Indeed, progress on gender mainstreaming has often been subject to the action of particularly powerful individuals who have taken interest in the issue of gender equality in science and thus created a window of opportunity for gender advocates to act on, such as the recent case of Commissioner Moedas's desire to develop gender guidelines for evaluators (RTD A interview), or Commissioner Cresson's interest in the nexus science-society in the 1990s (Abels 2012).

5.4. Gender mainstreaming in sustainable development: gender frames in DG ENV and DG DEVCO

This section will analyse the two main DGs in the Commission that are responsible for the broad sustainable development policy remit: DG for Environment (ENV) and DG International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO). The two institutional venues are quite disparate concerning their traditional consideration of gender equality and in their institutional cultures. Both are important points of engagement for Women in Europe for

a Common Future (WECF), one of the women's groups analysed as a case study in Chapter 8.

5.4.1. Gender mainstreaming in DG ENV – frames and institutional context

The Directorate-General for Environment is the leading institution of the EU's action and efforts to protect, preserve and improve the environment, as well as the quality of life of EU citizens, and it is also the institution that represents the EU in international meetings on environmental matters. Gender equality is supposed to be mainstreamed into environmental policy proposals, as it is mandatory in all EU policies. However, the environmental discourse, as attested in analyses of the main documents produced in the context of EU environmental policy, is gender-blind (Allwood 2017; Locher & Prügl 2009; Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000; Reis 2017). For instance, any reference to gender, gender equality, women or men is absent from the annual activity report of 2014 (DG ENV 2015a), as well as the management plan for 2015 (that sets out the priorities for the year) (DG ENV 2015b). In what concerns impact assessments conducted by DG ENV, there is a gap between guidance and practice: even though gender is included in the impact assessments guidelines it then evaporates when impact assessments are actually conducted. This mismatch reveals informal institutional rules at play. Interviews conducted for this research with staff from DG ENV reveal that gender impacts are not considered relevant to the policy issues at stake nor to the level at which legislation is proposed (i.e. the EU level) due to the principle of subsidiarity (ENV A interview). However, existing research reveals that gender is not being considered at all in the first place to assess whether it might be relevant or not (Mergaert & Minto 2015, p. 11).

There is strong evidence that DGs that are more market-oriented, including DG ENV, are less likely to take into account gender mainstreaming and other market-correcting objectives (Locher 2012; Locher & Prügl 2009; Mergaert & Minto 2015; Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000). The logic of appropriateness in DG ENV, an institution with a strong regulatory penchant, determines the type of frames through which environmental policy and climate change can be envisaged: these are mostly about competitiveness, as attested by the ubiquitous presence of economic costs and the regulatory burden in impact assessments overall (Mergaert & Minto 2015). The problem definition in economic terms means that the solutions proposed exclude people from the equation, which means that gender is not seen as a relevant dimension of the problem or the

solution (Allwood 2017). The logic of appropriateness in this policy area thus impels that personal characteristics such as gender are not seen relevant as a dimension to be considered in the formulation stage of policies or in impact assessments. Overall, the logic of appropriateness of DG ENV is permeated by gender-blindness.

One exception is the policy on chemicals. The document that guides the EU's environmental policy until 2020 contains no mention of gender or gender equality, but it mentions (pregnant) women in the context of protecting especially vulnerable groups from chemical hazards (ENVI 2013). This exception on the inclusion of differentiated impacts of a policy on women is confirmed in the European Parliament as well. Between 2011 and 2013, only 7.7% of the work of the EP ENVI (environment, public health and food safety) committee included a gender dimension, and the work that did refers only to public health.[9] Indeed, often when environmental policies have a perceived direct impact on individuals and/or on different social and economic groups, the gender variable enters the equation, as is the case of endocrine disruptors. In the environmental field, it is not necessarily a division between gender-blind and gender-aware policies, but one between technical-oriented targets and people-impacting measures that seems to permeate the logic of appropriateness of thinking about environmental problems and solutions.

5.4.2. Gender mainstreaming in DG DEVCO – frames and institutional context

EU development policy is often lauded as a good example of strong institutionalised gender mainstreaming in the EU (Allwood 2017; Debusscher 2017; Locher & Prügl 2009; Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000), although the same research often mentions lingering obstacles in its effective implementation in practice (Debusscher 2017; Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000). Notwithstanding these obstacles, commitment is reflected in the frames used to discuss development and gender equality and, increasingly, in the resources allocated to gender mainstreaming. DG DEVCO has a sub-unit responsible for gender. The DG devotes time and money to training staff on how to include a gender dimension into their own work, spreading the responsibility of mainstreaming to virtually all staff members. Interviews conducted for this research with staff from DG DEVCO and

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[9] One example of the reports that included a gender dimension was the European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (2013) "Report on the Protection of Public Health from Endocrine Disrupters."

its sister DG ECHO (Humanitarian Action) reveal that they are well informed, aware and committed to gender equality, in contrast with some staff from other DGs.

An analysis of recent guiding documents on EU development and cooperation policy conducted for this research reveals that documents produced in the context of this EU policy contain impeccable understandings of gender equality and women's empowerment. The Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 (EC and FASP 2015), for instance, is a high-level political commitment to promoting gender equality in the EU's external relations and the gender equality actions laid out in this document have been allocated specific lines of funding from a variety of EU external action instruments and aid lines, suggesting that resources are being allocated towards gender mainstreaming in this policy area (EC 2010a, p.12-16). The document that guided EU actions on gender equality within development and cooperation policy between 2010-2015 refers to gender equality as 'a core value of development policy' and frames it as a matter of human rights and social justice (Council 2010a, p. 3). Objectives laid out in the Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2010-2015 mainly involve obtaining gender-sensitive indicators for funding and sex-disaggregated statistics, including on issues traditionally considered gender-neutral (energy, climate change, infrastructure), and also gender expertise training for staff on EU delegations. This reveals, above all, an effort to monitor the situation and progress on women's status in partner countries by increasing the level of information and expertise available.

However, there is a considerable gap between political commitment and implementation in practice, as the annual reports on the implementation of the GAP attest: gender-sensitive indicators remain mostly in traditional areas such as education and health, and gender mainstreaming, although included in an increasing number of projects, is still far off target (EC 2015b). Explanations for this mismatch can be found in research that suggest that gender concerns are often instrumentalised towards economic goals (Debusscher 2017), due to the overall orientation in the EU to free market economic goals. Power asymmetries in EU delegations, the sites responsible for the execution and supervision of local development projects, means that gender mainstreaming is often the responsibility of low-ranking female staff, who lack decision-making power (Ibid.). However, interviews conducted for this research with staff from DG DEVCO also denote awareness of and an effort to close the capacity gap on gender that previous research mentions (DEVCO A interview).

5.5. Conclusion

Gender equality priorities in the EU remain, for the most part, tied with Single Market concerns. This is due both to the EU's policy competences and to the preponderance of the language of benefits to economic growth and competitiveness frames as justification to pursue gender equality. Violence against women is an exception as it is an issue that has received considerable and constant attention for the last decades. In recent years, it received renewed legislative attention and it is in the criminal justice policy field that we can observe some of the most serious attempts to mainstreaming gender into binding legislation. Outside of DG Justice, gender mainstreaming implementation has generally been fickler. Science and research is often lauded as one of the policy pioneers in gender mainstreaming in the EU and DG Research has an institutional apparatus that reflects a long-standing commitment to gender equality. DG DEVCO is also an example of political commitment and resources allocated to this goal. Nevertheless, in both institutions mainstreaming efforts are often optional and, in the case of DG Research, not a requirement for funding projects to be successfully financed. Gender mainstreaming remains the job of specialised and small units and not a structural part of the policymaking process in those DGs. In environmental policy gender equality does not appear at all as a political commitment and gender is simply ignored throughout, with the exception of a few issues such as endocrine disrupting chemicals. Even in institutional arenas where gender equality is fairly familiar and somewhat considered, it has to compete with other goals such as efficiency or economic competitiveness.

The next chapter inaugurates the case study analysis with the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) organisation and its interaction with the EU institutions, including a detailed analytical section on utilised frames and WAVE lobbying in three salient pieces of legislation.

CHAPTER 6. WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE EUROPE (WAVE)

This chapter launches the case study part of the thesis. Chapter 5 investigated the characteristics of different policy fields in the Commission that were more or less conducive to a proper integration of gender considerations into their policymaking process and, in tandem, to the receptiveness of women's groups' expertise on gender equality in their specific fields. Chapters 6-8 focus on the three single-topic women's groups that were chosen as case studies: Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE), for fighting violence against women, European Platform of Women Scientists (EPWS), a group working on the status of women in science and gendered research, and Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), an environmental organisation that seeks to put gender equality at the core of sustainable development.

The next three chapters follow an identical structure; a useful organisational method for extracting comparisons that will be laid out in Chapter 9. They are structured according to the theoretical framework that guides the empirical research of this thesis. Each chapter opens with the organisational context section that describes the history and structure of each women's group and lays out key considerations about their relationship with the EU institutions. This is important because, as explained in Chapter 3, the characteristics of an interest group are key in determining that group's ability – and willingness – to take up political opportunities as they appear. A data-rich section follows on specific political opportunities: it looks closely at a few illustrative examples of specific policymaking moments in which these groups lobbied the EU institutions. These policymaking moments can be pieces of legislation to which the groups presented their position and tried to influence policymakers, public consultations in which they participated, or projects led by these organisations that were co-funded by the Commission. Policy tracing, critical frame analysis and in-depth interviews with women's groups and EU civil servants were the methods utilised to trace the negotiations of these policies and ascertain the influence of women's groups. In other words, to assess the extent to which each women's group was able to take up these political opportunities. Following that is a section that reflects on the policy cases presented and on the characteristics of the organisations and that describes challenges, opportunities and adaptation strategies that the women's groups use in their engagement with the EU.

This section is guided by Table 4, making a distinction between women's groups' *processes of adaptation* to EU preferences in terms of discourse and policy priorities, and women's groups' *processes of proactivism* in shaping political opportunities for themselves within the EU institutions (see Chapter 3, Table 4). The chapters close with a synthesis of the opportunities and obstacles for gender equality advocacy and a reflection on the approach to gender mainstreaming that was used for the policy cases analysed in each chapter.

6.1. Organisational context

For the first part of this chapter, I analyse the characteristics of WAVE, an umbrella organisation that fights violence against women, to ascertain how they facilitate or hinder the organisation's interaction with the EU institutions.

6.1.1. History and goals

The organisation Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) is a network of national organisations that works to eliminate violence against women and to support its victims. It is the only transnational Europe-wide network that focuses specifically on combatting violence against women and it has considerable experience of engaging with the European Union institutions on the topic in multiple ways. The organisation's headquarters is located in Vienna. WAVE's goal is stated in its website as 'to promote and strengthen the human rights of women and children in general and to prevent violence against women and children in particular' (WAVE 2015).

WAVE was created in 1994 as an informal network and its first workshop was organised in the background of the preparation for the UN Fourth Conference of Women, which became known as the Beijing Platform for Action. The informality of the network was maintained for twenty years, but in 2014 WAVE became a European legal entity with formalised and defined structures. This was driven in great part by the EU funding rules for civil society organisations that require that applying candidates be legal entities according to the laws of the countries where they are established.

The WAVE network has an explicit feminist understanding of its work (Lang 2013), in contrast with other women's organisations analysed here, like WECF, for instance,

which does not (see Chapter 8). The feminist element is at once apparent on the subtitle that the organisation appends to its name: 'Feminist network promoting human rights of women and children'. Gender equality is stated as one of its fundamental aims: 'It aims at establishing gender equality by eliminating all forms of violence against women' (WAVE 2015). The organisation links its vision and values to the United Nations and related conventions, such as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1994), and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), reinstating its own understanding of violence against women as a holistic phenomenon, to be tackled in its public and private spheres' manifestations (WAVE 2015).

There is some evidence of intersectionality in WAVE's work. Several of its national member organisations are specialists in providing support to disabled, ethnic minority or migrant women who are victims of gender-based violence. One of WAVE's most prominent and recent campaigns, Step Up!, focuses specifically on addressing the disadvantages of victims of violence who face multiple discrimination. The campaign strives to make victim services accessible for disabled women, minority women and undocumented women (WAVE 2015).

6.1.2. Membership and functioning

As noted above, WAVE was an informal network established in Vienna for the first twenty years of its existence, up until 2014. This meant that the organisation's structures were more fluid and casual than is currently the case, following WAVE's establishment as an Austrian legal entity. Previously, the informality of the organisation also meant that it had more difficulty getting access to funding grants, since often applications had to be submitted by a member organisation on behalf of the network (WAVE 1 observation). Currently, and similarly to other umbrella organisations, the WAVE network is constituted by the Advisory Board, the Board, and the Office. The WAVE Advisory Board is the broadest structure of the organisation and its intent is to represent on an equal footing the different European countries where WAVE has members. The Advisory Board meets twice a year and is the formal connection between WAVE and its members. It has a delegate per country that is chosen among the member organisations of each country, thus attempting to ensure equal regional representation in the bi-annual meetings. The meetings of the Advisory Board are meant to support the work of the

WAVE's Board, a smaller organ comprising eight members elected every two years by the Advisory Board. The WAVE Office is the administrative organ of the network that undertakes most of the activities that the Advisory Board and the Board tasks WAVE with.

The organisations that are members of WAVE include national NGOs, networks, and individual members from across 46 European countries. One of WAVE's main stated aims is 'to empower women's organizations that also fight for women's rights and especially organizations that directly provide services to women survivors of violence' (WAVE 2015). This reflects the network's position that services that have a gender-specific approach, ones that focus on empowering women, are best suited to assist women and children victims of violence (WAVE A interview; WAVE 2015). The members of WAVE are crucial in providing the network with information about violence against women in their countries and in functioning as expert sources in events such as the annual WAVE Conference.

Information gathering and dissemination is thus one of the activities of the network. This is done by providing statistics, drafting country-based reports and by hosting an information centre on the issue of violence against women in Europe. Since one of the goals of WAVE is to assist organisations that provide gender-specific services to women victims of violence, there are also training manuals available for staff and volunteers of these organisations. The network also engages in advocacy and lobbying activities towards national governments and international organisations such as the European Union and the Council of Europe, with the aim to raise the issue of sustainability of women-specialist victim support providers and ensure that victims of violence receive quality support (WAVE 2015). Finally, WAVE also organises campaigns whose goal is to educate the public and raise continued awareness on the problem of violence against women.

6.1.3. Involvement in EU policymaking process

One of the main tasks that WAVE undertakes is lobbying national governments and international organisations to secure victim's rights, support and legislation that protect women and children victim of violence. The circumstances of the network's origins very much reflect this. WAVE was formed during the preparation talks for the 4th UN World

Conference on Women in 1994, and the aim was for civil society organisations working to combat violence against women to get their voices heard and have the problem raised in the international stage. One of the raisons d'être of WAVE from the start was thus advocating on behalf of women-specific victim support providers and for the victims themselves. As a European transnational network, and considering the EU's increasing competences in home and justice affairs, particularly since the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union institutions are an obvious and inescapable site for WAVE to target its lobbying efforts. The European Union is often seen by women's organisations as a way of escaping constraints of the nation-state; as a policymaking stage where more respect for human rights and better standards of support and protection could be granted to victims of violence against women (WAVE A interview). There is thus an expectation by organisations such as WAVE that the 'boomerang pattern' of lobbying the supranational level will strengthen the situation of victims in the member states via imposition from the EU level, bypassing national governments' reluctance in acting on their own (Keck & Sikkink 1998).

One of the characteristics of the EU's action on violence against women is its scattering across different policy fields and institutions. There is no institutional unit solely responsible for EU policy on violence against women; DGs such as Home Affairs and Migration, Justice, Development and Cooperation, all deal with a dimension of violence against women and a specific type of victim. This means that WAVE's advocacy is potentially spread across different sectors. In reality, by virtue of the recent spurt of EU legislation on victims' rights and support, the main points of engagement for WAVE in the EU is DG Justice in the European Commission, along with the FEMM and LIBE committees in the European Parliament. These different institutions also display different levels of position-mirroring of WAVE, based on their slightly different understandings of the legal basis for the EU to act on violence against women: the FEMM committee is seen as a stronger ally of WAVE in its calls for binding and specific legislation on violence against women to be proposed at the EU level, whereas DG Justice is more cautious on the legal pertinence of EU-level directives or regulations on violence against women (WAVE A interview). This caution is also a consequence of the lack of political will from the part of member states to have strong legislation on the issue at the EU level. The Council is seen as harder to access for its lack of formal civil society engagement mechanisms and due to its nature as the representative structure of 28 member states (WAVE A interview). Lobbying 28 different governments is thus seen as

much more time- and resource-consuming than other EU institutions and therefore not as easy to focus efforts on (WAVE A interview). EIGE is another EU institution with which the WAVE network engages frequently, although its location in Vilnius is seen by the women's organisation as severely hindering its ability to put pressure on policy and decision-makers in Brussels to consider gender equality seriously (WAVE A interview).

In the beginning of 2010s, WAVE was involved in lobbying efforts for two legislative initiatives in the field of criminal law: the victims' rights directive (EP and Council 2012a) and the European Protection Order directive (EP and Council 2011c). In both legislative proposals, the network was engaged with the rapporteurs in the FEMM and LIBE committees, as well as, to a smaller extent, with staff from the Commission responsible for the legislative pieces. Especially in the case of the victims' rights directive, due to its wide-ranging application to different areas of the criminal justice system (police, courts, prosecutors) and auxiliary practitioners (victim support providers, health staff, legal advisors), there was a wide range of stakeholders involved in the policymaking process of this directive. There were some tensions between WAVE and general victim support organisations due to their different understandings of the needs of gender-based violence victims – women, in their great majority – which hindered the presentation of a united front of victim support organisations, mainstream and gender specific, to the discussions around the legislation proposals (WAVE A interview). However, WAVE works frequently with other women's transnational organisations, particularly the European Women's Lobby, in advocating for the rights of women victims of violence, as was the case of the concerted lobbying efforts of 25 organisations[10] to make 2017 the European Year to eliminate violence against women (WAVE A interview; WAVE 1 observation), and the current joint advocacy to make the EU accede the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (i.e. Istanbul Convention: CoE 2011).

One of the key goals of WAVE is to lobby national and international decision-makers to guarantee the sustainability of gender-specific victim support services. Funding, through application for operating grants and project grants, is thus another area of engagement for WAVE with the EU, specifically with DG Justice. The network ran several projects co-

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[10] These 25 civil society organisations included trade unions, organisations working with migrant women, organisations working with LGBTQ people, with families, and organisations working on human rights in general. The initiative was entitled 'The European Coalition to End Violence Against Women and Girls'.

funded by the Daphne programme, the Commission's specific funding stream for actions related to combatting violence against women and children (see Chapter 5). In the first years of the network's existence, WAVE ran a EU co-funded project a year (from 1997 until 2000) and with less frequency in subsequent years (2003, 2004, 2008, 2010) (EC 2016c). These projects were mostly about exchanging good practices and raising the capacity of women victim support organisations in Europe by strengthening an aspect of their operation. In 2014, WAVE was successful in its application for a framework partnership agreement for 2015-2017 under the strand RDAP-Daphne-Combating violence & RCHI-Rights of the Child, both belonging to the programme Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of DG Justice. The framework partnership agreements are specifically meant 'to support European networks' active in certain areas, including violence against women (DG JUST 2015). Their longer duration in comparison with the yearly operating grants allow NGOs to plan their activities for the medium term with a higher degree of financial certainty.

6.2. Advocating for the end of gender-based violence

Aspects of gender-based violence or violence against women (both terms are used interchangeably by the EU institutions) are dealt with at the EU level in different directives and within different policy areas (for more details see Chapter 5). There is no comprehensive piece of binding legislation that addresses the issue although two salient directives were proposed and adopted in 2011-2012 that are highly relevant for victims of gender-based violence in Europe. Both the European Protection Order (EPO) directive and the victims' rights directive were negotiated within the criminal justice policy field and gender was an aspect present and discussed in both pieces of legislation to a considerable extent. Both were possible due to new dispositions introduced by the Lisbon Treaty: the EPO was a Council proposal under a new mechanism foreseen in Article 76 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and the victims' rights directive was a result of increased EU competences in justice. WAVE lobbied EU policymakers intensively during the negotiation of both directives from proposal to implementation, so these were chosen as sub-case studies for a more detailed analysis in this section. The proposal for the EU's accession to the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention is currently being discussed within the EU institutions and it is a curious and extraordinary case of an international organisation ratifying an international law convention under its own legal identity. This

presents interesting reflections on the EU's political will to tackle the issue of violence against women and its understanding of the problem and solution. Since this was also something that WAVE advocated for, it will be analysed as the third sub-case study in this section.

6.2.1. The gender dimension in the victims' rights directive

The directive

The victims' rights directive was the product of extended competences granted to the EU by the Lisbon Treaty in the field of criminal justice. The proposal for a directive was based on Article 82 of TFEU, which refers that the Commission and the Parliament may establish minimum standards on matters of the rights of victims of crime '[t]o the extent necessary to facilitate mutual recognition of judgements and judicial decisions and police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters having a cross-border dimension' (EU 2007, Art. 82(2)). The proposal for a directive on victims' rights was thus an effort of 'Lisbonising' the 2001 Council Framework Decision on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings (Council 2001), a non-binding document that made recommendations to member states on best practices for the status of victims of crime within the judicial system.

One of the two most frequently used frames to justify EU action on this issue is to realise freedom of movement through judicial cooperation: 'to facilitate the establishment of a European area of freedom, security and justice and the development of mutual trust between criminal justice authorities.' (EC 2011b, p. 4). Common minimum rules lead to increased trust and confidence in member states' justice systems, which leads to increased cooperation between the countries, which in turn reduces obstacles to freedom of movement (EC 2011a). The other frame used to justify EU intervention on the rights of victims of crime is the fundamental rights frame: 'Crime is an offence against society as well as a violation of the individual rights of victims.' (Ibid., art. 14(5)) Victims' rights are understood as fundamental rights, hence victims need and deserve a certain level of respect, protection and support. The disparate levels of support and protection that victims receive throughout Europe, despite previous EU recommendations, and the cross-border dimension of many crimes, justifies the action at the EU level for binding legislation.

The directive covers several dimensions of the ordeal that victims of crime face: information rights, participation in the proceedings, support services and protection rights. Granting minimum standards on all of these dimensions involves a wide range of stakeholders, from the police and judiciary system to auxiliary stakeholders such as translators, legal advisors, victim support practitioners, etc. An omnipresent preoccupation of the Commission team that proposed this comprehensive piece of legislation was to strike the right balance between being ambitious in getting sufficient standards for victims of crime and the financial and logistical burden that would be imposed on the member states (JUST E interview). The new proposal had to respect the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality while still adding value. This means that the new directive had to establish minimum standards, as opposed to more ambitious golden rules. These were drafted after a process of public consultation, informal meetings with experts and stakeholders, desk-research and an impact assessment exercise. The impact assessment included a quantification of costs of victimisation as well as financial costs for member states of proposed measures. This quantification of costs, albeit a required institutional practice to justify legislative action by the EU, proved challenging for the Commission's team due to the nature of the issue (i.e. justice and fundamental rights) (JUST E interview). The cost and administrative burden was indeed the main point of contention between the Council, on one hand, and the Commission and the Parliament on the other (FEMM A interview; JUST A interview). The main feature of the directive, the fact that it covered all victims of crime with no a priori identification of special categories of victims, was an important point of discussion among the different EU institutions involved and between generic and women-specific victim support organisations (JUST A interview; JUST E interview; WAVE A interview).

Gender considerations

In the proposal for the directive, the goal of the Commission was to establish minimum standards for all victims of crime, regardless of the type of crime they suffered, and their personal characteristics and circumstances. The idea was that if all victims were covered then specific groups of victims would be well served as well (JUST E interview). The Commission's proposal took this approach based on the idea that the impact of victimisation is a very personal and individual process, so the best way to ensure that every victim gets the support and protection necessary is to conduct an individual needs

assessment for each person victimised. There was therefore no hierarchizing of groups of victims a priori. However, at the same time, the proposal recognised that some crimes are very prevalent (e.g. violence against women) and that these victims might need specific support and protection. This proved a difficult balance to strike and a contentious issue during negotiations between the Parliament and the Council (JUST E interview). The Council rejected any identification of vulnerabilities and categorisation of victims whatsoever on the directive, something which struck some policymakers as odd because categorising victims a priori might facilitate the work of the member states' authorities (JUST A interview). Instead, individual impact assessments would have to be conducted for all victims. The Parliament, through the FEMM committee, had a different mind and wanted recognition of specific categories of victims that would need special measures. The compromise between the Council's and the Parliament's positions came back to the Commission's original proposal (JUST A interview): no special measures but assumption that certain types of victims may have 'considerable needs'. The result was no special rights for specific types of victims but a reference to certain groups of victims (e.g. gender-based violence victims, victims of sexual exploitation, victims of terrorism) was included in the preamble section of the directive.

This was a discussion that matters when assessing the gender-sensitivity of the directive because it reveals the different perspectives of the EU institutions on how gender should be mainstreamed into the legislation: the Commission's approach was that 'if you get it right for all victims, you get it right for specific victims', while the FEMM committee's desire was to have a stronger focus on gender-based violence victims (JUST E interview). This disagreement also stems from the differing understandings of the Commission and the Parliament on the EU's legal base to act on violence against women. While the Commission is wary of acting with binding legislation on the issue, stating that combatting violence against women is a shared competence between the EU and member states and therefore that the principle of subsidiarity should be respected, the Parliament, through the FEMM committee, argues that there are enough grounds for legal action (JUST A interview; WAVE A interview). The Commission's strategy in this case was to wait for the Parliament's help in pushing for more ambitious provisions: 'the original directive adopted by the Commission did not necessarily go as far as we wanted it to go ... But we were also conscious that the European Parliament had new powers under the Lisbon Treaty' (JUST E interview). The Commission knew that the Parliament, through FEMM, would have a hard stance on women's rights so

they knew that the issue would be pushed forward, even if it was not present in the proposal from the beginning.

The desk research conducted by the Commission's team prior to the proposal involved looking at research on different groups of victims, including types of gender-based violence, and consulting the Council of Europe and UN instruments. Interestingly, existing research and data on violence against women and the needs of its victims, along with costs and benefits of action and inaction, which was more available and developed than information on other types of crimes, was used as a starting point by the Commission to justify what to choose as minimum standards for all victims. This extrapolation of existing evidence-based research on violence against women to other types of crimes did not result in a particular article for gender-based violence victims but inspired a much stronger directive for victims overall (JUST E interview).

The unusual attribution of the victims' rights directive to two parliamentary committees, LIBE and FEMM, is credited with the significant provisions on gender-based violence that the directive gained (FEMM A interview; JUST A interview; WAVE A interview; DG IPOL 2014). Both rapporteurs were gender-sensitive, as both were members of the FEMM committee, and both were very clear about the need to have a stronger focus on VAW issues on the directive (JUST E interview). Their belonging to different political groups secured wide support within the Parliament for the directive (FEMM A interview). A considerable amount of the EP amendments were on gender-based violence – including on the definition of concepts, on specialised support services and special needs, and on the training of practitioners and public-awareness raising (LIBE and FEMM 2012). Nevertheless, most of these amendments were considerably watered down from the FEMM's original proposals and the plenary vote of the Parliament. This period included the multiple trilogue meetings where the Parliament negotiated with the Council its position and agreed on a final text (JUST A interview). Concessions were made by the Commission on the obligation to report data on gender-based violence victims and specialist services in the implementation phase of the directive, the need for victims of certain crimes (sexual abuse and gender-based violence) to deal with same-sex practitioners if they chose so, and the need of member states to collect gender-disaggregated data on crimes and victims (EP and Council 2012a). These were parliamentary suggestions that were included in the final text. Interestingly, the victims' rights directive became the first binding piece of EU legislation to include a definition of

gender-based violence and of violence in close relationships, although these were included in the recital section, rather than in the body of the directive as the initial FEMM amendment proposed, and thus legal compliance during implementation is not required (FEMM A interview).

WAVE's advocacy

The involvement of civil society was considerable during the proposal and negotiation stages of the victims' rights directive. The perceived strength of the final adopted provisions was credited by interviewees at least in part to this strong civil society engagement: 'without the civil society organisations ... I don't think there would have been many amendments from the Parliament' (JUST A interview). Women's groups targeted mostly the FEMM committee, while generic victim support organisations and fair trial organisations were clustered around LIBE. Civil society groups were viewed by interviewees as 'absolutely key to shape EU legislation. I don't think it can be done without having civil society organisations - especially in these areas where it involves citizens' rights' (JUST A interview). Women's groups were quite committed and involved in this legislative piece: they distributed statements and public positions to committees, there were meetings with MEPs and hearings with experts. WAVE was involved from the very beginning, even before the Commission launched its proposal: they were involved in informal discussions with the responsible Commission team (JUST E interview), present at conferences, and issued their formal position.

The Commission's approach of not recognising specific groups of victims was a point of contention with WAVE and other women's organisations from the start. It also proved an obstacle in forming alliances with general victim support organisations that shared the Commission's non-prioritisation approach (WAVE A interview). In their preoccupation with getting a stronger recognition of the specific needs of gender-based violence victims, the FEMM committee proved a closer ally to WAVE. Indeed, one of the first actions that WAVE undertook regarding the victims' rights directive was to lobby for FEMM to have joint committee responsibility for the directive for there to be a higher chance of the legislation having a strong gender perspective (WAVE 2011). The rationale for this action was validated as the FEMM committee took up many of WAVE's proposals as amendments; although most of them were watered down in the trilogue negotiations with the Council (WAVE A interview; JUST A interview; LIBE and FEMM

2012). In this sense, even though WAVE concedes that the adopted text has some provisions that reflect a gender perspective, overall the gender mainstreaming outcome was not enough (WAVE A interview).

The main problem for the network is the absence of recognition of violence against women as a structural problem, as a reflection of gender inequality (WAVE A interview). This is revealed in the scope of the directive itself, which only covers victims of crime. This means that rights foreseen in the directive are only granted when the violence is considered a crime in the country where it was committed. The criminalisation of certain types of gender-based violence, such as sexual harassment and stalking, varies greatly across the 28 member states, which leaves many victims of gender-based violence unprotected. The protection of victims is understood in a narrow way, only when the victim participates in legal proceedings, which does not consider the dynamics of violence in close relationships. But the strongest point of contention for WAVE was the lack of recognition of women's victim support services in the directive and the absence of a proper recognition of the specificity of gender-based violence victims and their need for specialist services (WAVE A interview).

In sum, the women's organisation was not satisfied with the final text of the directive, although it recognised that the Commission had launched a good implementation guidance paper with guidelines on how to ensure that the needs of victims of gender-based violence were considered, as well as creating important awareness-raising workshops on the topic (WAVE A interview).

6.2.2. A gender-specific mechanism: the European Protection Order

Origins

The European Protection Order directive (EP and Council 2011c) is an instrument of mutual recognition of national protection orders among member states that was proposed in 2010 by the Council. This was done through an unusual mechanism introduced for the first time by the Lisbon Treaty, which provides that a quarter of the Member States may initiate legislation in the field of judicial cooperation in criminal matters and police cooperation (under article 76 of TFEU). It is an exception to the Commission's sole right to initiate legislation and as such it introduces a different

dynamic and balance of power to the negotiation process of this type of legislation. A pertinent and important difference from the other legislative cases is the role of the Commission, which is reduced to that of advisor only, and the lack of formal civil society engagement mechanisms as a consequence. For this initiative, there was no launching of a public consultation by the Commission before the proposal of the legislation. Nevertheless, the European Protection Order is a unique example of a binding legislative mechanism that from the start had at its core the protection of victims of violence against women.

This directive was initially proposed by a group of 12 member states[11] in January 2010 under the initiative of Spain, the country that held the Council's presidency at the time. Both rapporteurs from the LIBE and FEMM committees at the European Parliament were also Spanish, and there was political will from the Council and rapporteurs to get this piece of legislation discussed and adopted swiftly, as tackling gender-based violence was one of the priorities of the Spanish presidency (JUST B interview; Lambermont 2012). As mentioned above, the Commission's role in legislation proposed under Article 76 of TFEU is very limited, but doubts emerged over the scope of the Council's proposal: European Protection Orders could also apply to protective measures made by civil courts and, in that case, the directive would go beyond criminal matters into civil justice ones too. Since article 76 of TFEU only allowed proposals that covered cooperation in criminal justice matters, the Commission intervened as the 'guardian of the treaties', threatening to take the Council to the ECJ over its intention to go beyond the legal scope of Article 76 in this initiative.

The turf war between the Commission and the Council took several months and absorbed much of the political effort put into this piece of legislation (JUST B interview). In the meantime, the victims' rights directive had been proposed by the Commission and this diverted much of the political attention in this policy field (JUST B interview). These circumstances led to a rather confusing legislative text, which contains a few contradictions and repetitions in legal terms (JUST B interview). The general idea is that victims who have received a national protection order in a member state (MS A) can apply for a European Protection Order, which will then be taken to the member state to which the victim has moved (MS B). Upon receipt of this European Protection Order,

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[11] Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Finland and Sweden

MS B has then to search for an equivalent protective measure under its national legislation to put in place for the victim. One of the main objections to the adopted directive is the limited number of cases to which it applies (lack of research evidence on the number of victims who would be in a position where the EPO would apply), as well as its limited added value over applying directly for a new national protection order in the country to which the victim has moved (Van der Aaa & Ouwerkerk 2011). However, the strongest objection is the very nature of the instrument, which is meant to be based on recognition instead of harmonisation. This has important consequences for the effective protection of victims since the EPO can only be applied if two conditions are met: the crime for which the victim received the protection order in the first place is also a crime in MS B, and whether the law in MS B foresees protection measures for victims of that crime. However, and interestingly, there has been anecdotal accounts by the Commission's team responsible for monitoring implementation of member states upgrading their national legislation to extend the pool of crimes to which protective measures are available for victims, as a result of the adoption of the European Protection Order directive (JUST B interview).

Gender considerations

A gender dimension was included in the EPO directive from the very start. The very raison d'être of this instrument is to protect victims of violence against women, the overwhelming majority of victims that have applied for protection measures. This is reflected in the frames used to justify such a proposal by the Spanish presidency: 'The Union's capacity to eradicate gender-based violence should be improved. The creation of a European Observatory ... as well as the adoption of a European Protection Order for the victims, will be two essential initiatives that will be advanced by the Spanish Presidency to achieve concrete progress on this matter.' (Council Spanish Presidency 2010)

Furthermore, the proposal for the directive's strong focus on gender-based violence is reflected in the several violence against women international conventions mentioned in the Council's explanatory statement. This includes the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of 1993 (Article 4 of which states that countries should take measures to protect women against any form of violence and ensure that re-victimisation does not occur); UN CEDAW of 1979 stating that gender-based violence is

a breach of several fundamental rights; and a reference to the UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign (2008-2015). The explanatory statement also mentions the Council of Europe's repeated calls for states to commit to end violence against women, the European Parliament resolution of 1997 to establish a European-wide campaign for zero tolerance against violence against women, and the European Parliament resolution of 2006 to the same effect (Council 2010b).

The right to free movement of people once again appears as the main frame justifying EU action on the protection of victims of crime; the aim is to ensure that the right to movement and to reside freely in another member state does not result in a loss of security to citizens (Council 2010b). There is a recognition that victims of gender-based violence are particularly at risk of repeated victimisation by the same offender (along with victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors) and therefore establishing a European Protection Order is a practical action contributing towards the elimination of violence against women (Ibid.). Once again, this was a directive allocated to joint committees in the European Parliament – LIBE and FEMM – and to rapporteurs who shared gender-sensitive concerns, as both were members of FEMM (FEMM A interview). Interestingly, in this case, it was the European Parliament that amended the text to reiterate that the European Protection Order was an instrument meant for all victims of crime, thereby extending the scope of the directive from its violence against women original concerns.

Albeit with a limited formal role in the negotiations for the EPO directive, the Commission's position was crucial in one aspect. There was a need to coordinate the different pieces of legislation that were being negotiated at the same time on the issue of victims of crime (the victims' rights directive, the EPO criminal and civil) and to ensure that all victims were covered, while also recognising the prevalence of gender-based violence in re-victimisation cases, for instance (JUST E interview).

WAVE's advocacy

The exceptional circumstances of the proposal of this directive meant that there was no formal public consultation launched by the Commission. This in turn determined a reduced engagement of civil society overall, compared to the one prior and during the negotiations of the victims' rights directive. However, WAVE staff members indicated

that the network was much more involved in the policymaking process of the European Protection Order than in the victims' rights directive one (WAVE A interview). This is due to the focus of the former in victims of violence against women from the start. The involvement of WAVE was for the most part through close work with the MEP rapporteurs, who sought and welcomed the information and expertise of the women's network on the issue of victims of violence against women (WAVE A interview). WAVE's main goal in its lobbying was to ensure that the process of applying for and obtaining a European Protection Order was as simple and accessible as possible, while making it free for the victim money-wise (WAVE A interview). The frame used by WAVE to justify EU intervention on this matter was very similar to the one used by the EU institutions: freedom of movement without a loss of security. WAVE's construction of the necessity for the EPO instrument is the geography of Europe: the EU has many small states and therefore women can be in and out of their country very quickly. The European Protection Order is thus necessary to protect women's freedom of movement (WAVE A interview).

In terms of WAVE's interaction with the European Commission regarding the EPO directive, it happened mostly after adoption and during implementation monitoring. Commissioner Reding's turf war with the Council was met with some level of dismay on the part of WAVE. This was seen by the women's organisation as diverting the political will and efforts of negotiators into petty discussions over the legal basis instead of focusing on establishing a strong instrument to serve victims (WAVE A interview). In the implementation stage, WAVE's work on educating and raising awareness on the new instrument to judges and victims is mentioned as very important by Commission staff (JUST B interview). The Commission also recognises the importance of WAVE's efforts on the European Protection Order to keep it on the political agenda of member states (JUST B interview). Nevertheless, the Commission staff members also mention the mismatch that sometimes was notorious between women's organisations' high expectations for this new instrument and the limited feats that an instrument of mutual recognition could achieve in practice (JUST B interview).

6.2.3. Reinforcing existing competences: the EU accession to the Istanbul Convention

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women (i.e. Istanbul Convention) is the first comprehensive international document that legally binds its signatories to take action in fighting types of violence that disproportionately affect women – rape, stalking and domestic violence – to take measures to effectively protect its victims and to punish the perpetrators (CoE 2011). It came into force in 2014. All 28 member states have signed the Convention and, as of September 2017, it had been ratified by 14[12] (EP 2017a). Innovatively, this convention makes for the possibility of the EU to accede to it under its own legal identity and according to the EU's competences (CoE 2011, Art. 75).

Origins

From the very start of the Convention's mandate there was pressure from the European Parliament and from women's groups for the EU to accede to the Istanbul Convention and to ratify it. In 2014, the European Parliament issued the Parvanova report, nicknamed after its FEMM MEP rapporteur, where it urged the Commission to initiate the legal steps for the EU to accede to the Istanbul Convention (EP 2014b). The report also called on the Commission to issue a legislative proposal on violence against women that would step up efforts to combat this type of violence and harmonise assurances for its victims in all member states (by harmonising rape definitions, for instance) (MEP in WAVE 1 observation). As a justification for the legal competence of the EU to accede to this international convention, comparisons were made to the UN Convention on People with Disabilities, the first and only international convention to which the EU had acceded under its own legal identity (JUST B interview). Nevertheless, the Istanbul Convention is a much broader and ambitious legal document, and there were uncertainties regarding the EU's competences on the topic, which are shared with the member states, and the new obligations that would be created upon the EU's accession and ratification of this convention (JUST B interview).

Since all 28 member states had signed the Istanbul Convention, the EU's own accession would not create new legal obligations on the member states. The added value of the EU accession would mostly be political in nature: it would send a stronger message of the EU's commitment to the issue. It would also strengthen the EU's efforts on

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[12] Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden

monitoring, funding, coordination and data collection. More importantly perhaps, it would add a new parameter with which to interpret EU law (EWL in WAVE 1 observation).

In 2016 the Commission launched two proposals for the accession and conclusion (i.e. ratification) of the Istanbul Convention by the EU (EC 2016d; EC 2016e). The main topic of discussion, both prior to the proposal and during negotiations in the Council, was one of the technical legal details of accession (JUST B interview; WAVE A interview): the majority of member states only wanted the EU to act on its exclusive competences (data collection and asylum) and not on shared ones (non-discrimination) (MEP in WAVE 1 observation). This reluctance had two consequences: there was no appetite whatsoever at the Council for a violence against women specific piece of legislation at the EU level, and the political effort of negotiating EU accession to the Istanbul Convention went exclusively to discussions of the nature of the EU's legal competences on the issue of gender-based violence (MEP in WAVE 1 observation; JUST B interview). The main fear in the Council was that EU accession to the Convention would result in strengthening the Commission's hand in an area of shared competence (JUST B interview).

The result was that in May 2017 the Council adopted two decisions regarding the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention: one on the accession related to cooperation in criminal matters (Council 2017a) and another on the accession concerning matters of asylum and non-refoulement (Council 2017b). This limited any legal obligations that might arise from the EU's accession to the Convention to these two areas of action:

This applies, in particular, to certain provisions of the Convention relating to judicial cooperation in criminal matters and to the provisions of the Convention relating to asylum and non-refoulement. The Member States retain their competence insofar as the Convention does not affect common rules or alter the scope thereof. (Council 2017b)

Frames used

The Council's decisions justified the EU's signature of the Istanbul Convention on frames of fundamental rights and on a recognition that violence against women stems from structural inequalities:

Violence against women is a violation of their human rights and an extreme form of discrimination, entrenched in gender inequalities and contributing to maintaining and reinforcing them. By committing to the implementation of the Convention, the Union confirms its engagement in combating violence against women within its territory and globally, and reinforces its current political action and existing substantial legal framework in the area of criminal procedural law, which is of particular relevance for women and girls. (Council 2017b)

These are progressive frames that mirror WAVE's own discourse and that take into account, at least rhetorically, what had been one of the strongest critiques of WAVE to the gender dimension of the victims' rights directive: no recognition of the structural dimension of gender inequality and its links to gender-based violence. In 13 June 2017 the EU Commissioner for Justice, Vera Jourova, signed the Istanbul Convention on behalf of the EU, opening the path to its ratification and adoption at the EU level. Nevertheless, the potential of the EU's signing was severely restricted by its circumscription to asylum and judicial cooperation matters. This was something criticised by the European Parliament in a parliamentary resolution launched in September 2017:

[The European Parliament w]elcomes the signing of the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention on 13 June 2017; regrets, however, that the limitation to two areas, i.e. matters related to judicial cooperation in criminal matters and asylum and non-refoulement, raises legal uncertainties as to the scope of the EU's accession, as well as concerns regarding the implementation of the Convention. (EP 2017b)

WAVE's advocacy

WAVE's efforts to instigate the EU to accede to the Istanbul Convention date back from the 2014 Parvanova report and were usually made in concertation with other civil society organisations, including the European Women's Lobby (EWL 2017). WAVE members of staff identified several challenges in their communication with the EU institutions on this matter: they mentioned that it was not easy to get in touch with officials, as the working group responsible for elaborating the Commission's proposal for accession worked behind closed doors, and there were no invitations from the part of the EU policymakers to external stakeholders to express their views (WAVE A interview).

The women's groups expressed doubts about the political will for the EU's accession, propelled by fears that the discussion of the technical and legal details would go on indefinitely but that it be used as proof that something was being done about it (WAVE A interview).

To strengthen their case and influence – and because the organisation knew that the genuine opposition would be found in the Council – WAVE's efforts included spurring its national organisations to put pressure on their own member state governments to approve the decision, since it was in the Council that member states would have to agree (Domestic Violence Intervention Centre, Vienna at WAVE 1 observation).

The next step, as of November 2017, is the ratification of the Convention by the EU, so that it can enter into force in the areas specified in the Council's decisions. This is something that has been pushed for by the European Parliament, specifically through the adoption of the 2017 resolution on the Council's decision on the conclusion by the EU of the Istanbul Convention (EP 2017b).

6.3. WAVE and gender mainstreaming: organisational and discourse adaptation

6.3.1. Organisational adaptation

WAVE's origins during the UN Beijing Platform negotiations determined the organisation's penchant for advocacy work. Since the very beginning WAVE has interacted with the EU institutions in one form or another. Lobbying has always been an important activity for WAVE, increasing in relevance as the EU has seen its competences on criminal justice and home affairs expand. The EU has legislated recently on minimum standards for the treatment of victims of crime and on the recognition of protection measures transnationally, and this has important consequences for women victims of domestic violence in each member state. The EU is therefore a significant actor currently shaping the protection, support and rights of WAVE's target group. WAVE thus directs a considerable amount of lobbying and advocacy efforts towards this supranational political organisation. Interestingly, the network's advocacy strategies are shaped by the multi-level nature of the EU's policymaking process. WAVE relies on its national member organisations to put

pressure on their own national governments, while the network's administrative team based in Vienna is responsible for liaising with the Commission and the MEPs. WAVE's advocacy strategy is thus a consequence of the EU's complex and multi-level nature.

It is not just because the EU legislates on the rights of citizens that WAVE has a stake in EU policy. The development and often long-term survival of WAVE's member organisations - organisations that for the most part provide specialist support to victims of violence against women and children - depend to an extent on the EU's provision of funding and hence on its policy priorities. When it comes to building the capacity of WAVE and its member organisations, either through the training of staff or through the provision of particular mechanisms of support, or when it comes to information sharing and networking, WAVE has relied substantially on EU funding. Several of WAVE's projects have been co-funded by the EU throughout the years, such as the 2000 project to create a European Information Centre on Violence Against Women (EC 2000), or the 2003 project to publish guidelines for setting up a women's refuge (EC 2016c). This means that virtually all of WAVE's activities are shaped to some extent by the EU.

The most glaring example of organisational adaptation undertaken by WAVE as a direct consequence of the EU was the transformation of the network into a legal entity in Austria in 2014 (see section 6.1.). Up until then WAVE had been an informal network with looser hierarchical structures and rules, and it was usually one of its member organisations that applied formally to EU funding programmes as leader of a grant project in WAVE's name. In 2014, the network decided to establish itself as a legal entity to be able to apply to the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of DG Justice, for a framework partnership agreement. This type of funding would run for three years and intended to support the operational costs of European networks working in specific fundamental rights areas, including combatting violence against women (for details see DG JUST 2015). The ability to get such a framework partnership agreement with the EU therefore impacts directly on the financial viability of the network.

6.3.2. Frames and discourse adaptation

Violence against women is a unique sub-field of gender equality in that it features as a stand-alone goal of the EU gender equality strategy (Council 2010a; EC 2015c). In this sense, it has been explicitly a priority of the EU for several years, contrary to other

gender equality topics which are often subject to an ebb and flow of political interest. As a reflection of this prioritisation, specific funding for the issue of violence against women has been stable across the years, with the Daphne programme running uninterruptedly for 20 years.[13] The current funding stream for the issue refers back to the EU's priorities to combat violence against women and declares that organisations applying for it should address the EU's priorities for that area, including 'encouraging attitudinal and behavioural changes with regards to harmful practices', 'increasing the level of perpetrator programmes and of tailored and specialised support services for female victims of violence', and 'building the capacity of professionals in contact with victims of all forms of violence against women' (DG JUST 2014). The EU's priorities on capacity building of support services for victims of violence against women are aligned with WAVE's own goal of improving the provision of violence against women specific victim support. In this regard, the network's own discourse in terms of goals and mission is easily adaptable when applying for EU funding programmes.

Despite the long-standing status of combatting violence against women as an EU priority in the field of gender equality, this is an issue dispersed across different DGs and pieces of legislation, dealt with through a piecemeal approach under various policy fields. Justice and fundamental rights, but also migration and home affairs, as well as development and cooperation, are three broad policy areas that deal with different dimensions of violence against women. This is perhaps a result of the question of the EU legal competence on the issue, which is shared with the member states. As a result, there has been no comprehensive piece of binding EU legislation addressing the problem of violence against women, something which WAVE laments (WAVE A interview). Nevertheless, the frames used by the EU and the women's network to talk about the problem are quite similar. The fundamental rights frame is the predominant lens through which the EU sees violence against women. A very illustrative example is the survey conducted by FRA – the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union – into the types of violence that women across the 28 member states suffer (FRA 2014). Documents pertaining to the legislative process of both the victims' rights directive and the EPO directive are dotted with understandings of alleviating the ordeal of victims of crime as a matter of protecting their fundamental rights. Equally, WAVE's own stated

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[13] The Daphne programme was incorporated into the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020, although the Commission decided to maintain its name due to the recognisability of the long-standing programme.

goal is 'to promote and strengthen the human rights of women and children in general and to prevent violence against women and children in particular' (WAVE 2015). In the case of the victims' rights and EPO directives, a justification for EU action given by both the EU institutions and WAVE, was the protection of the freedom of movement for victims of crime.

Notwithstanding this almost seamless framing match, points of contention remain between the EU's legislative approach to victims of violence against women and WAVE's own understanding of what they need. Although the EU recognises violence against women as 'a cause and consequence of gender inequalities, a form of discrimination and a violation of women's fundamental rights' (Council 2010a), the steps it took in addressing it with binding legislation – most notably in the victims' rights directive – has not, from WAVE's point of view, been enough (WAVE A interview). For the women's network, EU legislation does not consider and deal with violence against women from a holistic point of view nor does it sufficiently address the specificity of this type of crimes, and the specialist support and protection its victims need (WAVE A interview). This means that, although this is a promising area of cooperation due to the close match of frames used by the EU and WAVE, there are still considerable points of contention between the European institutions and the women's network.

6.3.3. Processes of proactivism

The legal competence of the EU on matters of violence against women is also a point of discord between WAVE and the European Commission in particular. What this means in practice is the reluctance of the Commission to propose binding legislation that specifically and comprehensively addresses gender-based violence; something that WAVE and MEPs on the FEMM committee have been pushing for several years. WAVE's alternative strategy – and arguably the Commission's too – has been to push for gender to be mainstreamed into general legislation. This was the case of the victims' rights directive, when one of the onset activities conducted by WAVE was to lobby the European Parliament to make FEMM a joint committee to deal with the directive proposal (WAVE 2011). The rare attribution of joint committees was denoted by several interviewees as the source of the victims' rights directive considerable gender awareness (FEMM A interview; JUST A interview; WAVE A interview; DG IPOL 2014).

A recent lobbying endeavour for WAVE has been the EU's proposed accession to the Istanbul Convention. This is a significant case of an attempt to change the EU's legal ability to deal with the problem of violence against women since, as seen above, it is a constant struggle point between Commission, Parliament, and WAVE. The Istanbul Convention's holistic approach towards tackling violence against women would provide the EU with a renovated political impetus to force member states to act on the issue and reinforce the EU's competence to bindingly legislate on it. The EU accession to the Istanbul Convention was thus a clear window of opportunity for stronger efforts at EU level on violence against women, and consequently for WAVE's engagement. However, the EU's accession to the Council of Europe's convention was limited to matters of judicial cooperation and asylum and re-foulement, as member states were reluctant to allow the EU to expand its competences on an issue that might involve adding an administrative and financial burden to public authorities. WAVE has lamented the closed-door negotiations and difficulty of accessing policymakers, something that, at the time of interview (2016), added to the uncertainty from the point of view of the women's group of the accession ever happening (WAVE A interview).

Table 8 is a synthesis of some of the processes of adaptation and processes of proactivism that WAVE undertook in justice policy.

	Processes of adaptation	Processes of proactivism
Discourse (Framing)	Using the frame of violence against women in Europe as a curtailment of women's freedom of movement within EU, alongside the fundamental rights frame.	Lobbying for the EU accession to the Istanbul Convention in order to strengthen the EU's political and legal commitment to combat violence against women.
Actors (Institutional allies)	Lobbying for FEMM as joint committee for the victims' rights directive. Keeping in touch with rapporteurs on EPO and victims' rights directive.	Organising workshops for judges and other judicial practitioners on EPO during implementation stage.
Resources (Funding programmes)	Changing the organisation's legal status to be able to apply for certain EU funding programmes.	n/a

Table 8.WAVE's strategies for take-up and creation of political opportunities in EU justice policy

6.4. Conclusion

The issue of violence against women enjoys a special status in the European Union in the sense that it has been a consistent priority for gender equality over the last two decades. Funding has been allocated for this priority through Daphne and now the Rights, Citizenship and Equal Rights Programme of DG Justice. Since the EU does not have an exclusive competence there is no binding piece of legislation specifically on violence against women; instead, it is dealt with by various DGs through a piecemeal approach. Criminal justice, in particular with the victims' rights and the European Protection Order directives, is an extraordinary example of a policy field that took gender seriously and consistently into mainstream legislation. This use of gender mainstreaming can be seen as a solution to bridge the gap between the EU's strong rhetoric on violence against women and its incapacity to legislate directly on it due to national reluctance. The frames used to justify EU action on this relate to the protection of fundamental rights and freedom of movement of people, and the EU's commitment to gender equality is specifically alluded to in justifying policy action in criminal justice matters, even in pieces of legislation that are aimed at all victims of crime. Nevertheless, WAVE points to the limited protection that these pieces of legislation afford to victims of gender-based violence, since not all of this violence – stalking, for example – is considered a crime in all member states, and there is no sufficient recognition of the structural dimension of violence against women.

Opportunities and resistance in justice policy

Based on the multi-tiered approach developed in Chapter 3 and on the findings drawn from the present chapter, the following table summarises some of the opportunities and obstacles that the implementation of gender mainstreaming faces in the field of justice policy, along with opportunities and challenges for women's groups' engagement in this field.[14]

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[14] Determining whether an opportunity or obstacle is structural or institutional is often not clear-cut; they can straddle both tiers. Table 9 thus aims to be a simplified illustration of gender mainstreaming in EU justice policy. For full discussion see Chapter 10.

	Opportunities	Resistance/obstacles
Structural	Complex policymaking process, with multiple points of access and opportunities to influence institutions with different preferences.	Subsidiarity and proportionality principles (minimum standards only). Limited EU competence on matters of violence against women.
Institutional	Long-standing commitment to ending VAW, with consistent funding streams for women's service providers and women's advocacy groups such as WAVE.	Strong institutional opposition in Council for EU binding legislation on VAW. Commission's reluctance to propose binding legislation on VAW.
Individual	Commissioner Viviane Reding prioritising victims' rights and gender equality. LIBE and FEMM rapporteurs of victims' rights and EPO directives with feminist preferences.	n/a

Table 9. Multi-tiered approach to opportunities and obstacles to gender change and gender equality advocacy in EU justice policy

The greatest hurdle for advancement of a gendered approach to victims of violence, that is, tackling violence against women, is the limited competence of the EU to legislate on it: the EU shares it with member states and thus the subsidiarity principle applies. There is thus both a structural and an institutional resistance to pursuing gender change in justice policy reflected in the limited EU competence to legislate bindingly on the issue of violence against women and institutional averseness for this to happen. The EU accession to the Istanbul Convention was a case in point: after negotiation in the Council, member states limited the EU's accession to this comprehensive international legal instrument to just two matters – criminal justice cooperation and asylum and re-foulement. Yet due to the expressed and long-standing EU commitment to end violence against women, there are still opportunities for committed individuals to advance policy actions, as was the case with commissioner Viviane Reding and victims' rights, and opportunities to involve institutions, such as the FEMM committee, that will push strongly for gender considerations to be included into criminal justice matters.

Moreover, opposition and support to legally binding mechanisms with a gender component in justice cannot simply be drawn along institutional lines. The European Protection Order, an explicitly gender-specific instrument, was an initiative that originated entirely from the Council, through the priorities of Spain, the country holding the presidency at the time. This nuances the war over legal competence between member states on one side and Parliament and Commission on the other in this subject, although the rule continues to be of member states' reluctance for EU legally binding action on violence against women. The main point is that justice is a policy field with considerable structural, institutional and individual opportunities for gender change and gender advocacy.

What kind of gender mainstreaming approach?

In Chapter 2 a distinction was made between one approach to gender mainstreaming that was participative and democratic in nature, seeking the input of a broad range of stakeholders into the process and in the re-definition of policy paradigms, and another that was more of a top-down process of using gender equality considerations in a narrow way or as a means to achieve other policy goals, such as economic growth or competitiveness (see section 2.4.1). The question was ultimately whether gender mainstreaming was a bureaucratic exercise or a democratic endeavour. Considering how gender mainstreaming was conducted in specific policy actions is more instructive and useful than starting with a sweeping generalisation, since the implementation of the mechanism is strongly uneven in different policy fields and institutional arenas. In fact, the process of mainstreaming gender can vary even between policy actions within the same sub-field, as was the case among the three pieces of legislation considered in this chapter.

The openness of the policymaking process to civil society was different in these three cases. Opportunities to participate in the victims' directive policymaking process were varied and abundant, at virtually every stage of the process, especially the pre-proposal stage through informal meetings and a public consultation, and the negotiation stage at the European Parliament through contacts with rapporteurs and other MEPs via amendment suggestions. The Council, on the other hand, proved much harder to access. In this case, a participative-democratic approach to gender mainstreaming can

be discerned, albeit one with limitations. However, when it comes to the European Protection Order and the negotiations for the accession of the EU to the Istanbul Convention, civil society was much more reduced, particularly at the pre-proposal stage. In the EPO case, it was due to the use of article 76 of TFEU that gives the Council powers of legislative proposal and thus limits the Commission's role and consequently shuts down formal mechanisms of external stakeholder engagement. In the case of the Istanbul Convention accession, no public consultation was opened and talks were conducted behind closed doors without input from civil society. The gender mainstreaming method taken in these two cases resembles much more the expert-bureaucratic approach.

The next chapter will continue the analysis of the case study women's organisations, with the focus switching to the European Platform of Women Scientists and EU science and research policy.

CHAPTER 7. EUROPEAN PLATFORM OF WOMEN SCIENTISTS (EPWS)

7.1. Organisational context

This section describes the history and the characteristics of the European Platform of Women Scientists (EPWS), an organisation that seeks to work as a representation group for women that work in science and research, and that lobbies the EU for policy on research and innovation to have a gender dimension and for the EU to promote the status of women in this career field. It also analyses the involvement of EPWS in the EU policymaking and its main contacts in the EU institutions.

7.1.1. History and goals

The European Platform of Women Scientists had its origins in a call for proposals published by the European Commission for the set-up of a European network of organisations supporting women scientists. This call was published in 2003 and reveals the interest of the Commission at the time to establish an organisation that would 'empower women scientists to participate in the research policy debate and to enhance their professional and career advancement' (EC 2008). In other words, the Commission was looking to establish a one stop-shop for the representation of the interests of women in scientific careers in Europe, credible and representative enough to participate in the EU policymaking process in research and science. This is a practical example of the Commission's penchant for setting up and supporting European networks representing public interests with a view of lending legitimacy to its policy proposals, particularly in topics where its competences might be more debatable (Bouwen 2009). This was the case in the area of gender equality, where the Commission encouraged the establishment of women's networks partially to legitimise its going beyond employment-related gender equality issues (Mazey 2012, p. 131 but see also Hoskyns 1996; Mazey 1998; Zippel 2004). The European Platform of Women Scientists was formally signed into being at the end of 2005 and its secretariat, established in Brussels, started work at the beginning of 2006. The set-up of the organisation was funded under the 6th EU Framework Programme for Research, a financial support that ran until October 2008.

Representativeness was at the heart of EPWS's concerns since the very beginning. The Centre of Excellence Women and Science (CEWS) in Bonn, Germany, the organisation that won the call and was responsible for setting up the platform for women in science at the EU level, contacted several high-ranking women scientists from all over Europe to support the establishment of the EPWS and to make sure that the different perspectives and needs of the diverse EU member states regarding women in science were represented (EPWS A interview). Care was also taken to ensure that different fields of science were represented within the organisation, with a fair balance between social science and humanities, and natural science and engineering representatives (EC 2008). The mission of the organisation is 'to give women scientists a voice in European research policy' by 'building a structural link between women scientists and European and national research policy-makers' (EPWS 2015) The goal is to ensure that women participate equally and fully in science and that their voices are heard in science policy.

7.1.2. Membership and functioning

The organisation took inspiration from the European Women's Lobby to establish its own structure and statutes (EPWS A interview; EPWS B interview; EPWS C interview). The organisation took the form of a network of national organisations – just like the EWL – that worked for the advancement of women in science and/or promoted the interests of women scientists. Its main goal is to serve as a link between these organisations and the EU-level policymaking process in what concerns women in science and research. As was mentioned above, there was a particular care to represent women scientists from across Europe and, from the beginning of its functioning, EPWS included a representative in its membership base from each member state (EC 2008). Currently (2017), EPWS has member organisations from more than 40 countries. These member organisations participate in the life of the platform by being a part of the General Assembly and engage proactively with the platform by participating in the policy debate, promoting women scientists, or by providing information and help with the promotion of the platform. The Board of Administration, composed of representatives elected by the General Assembly, is in charge of deciding the work programme with the approval of the General Assembly, and of adopting policy statements and position papers on behalf of the organisation. The Executive Committee is the body responsible for the daily management of the organisation and, among other responsibilities, is in charge of the relations of the organisation with third parties (EPWS 2013).

During the first four years of its existence, EPWS had a secretariat in Brussels that was responsible for the daily workings of the organisation. There were six full-time staff members working in Brussels, each in charge of one aspect of the organisation's work (i.e. policy research, networking, and information management). There was close engagement with the EU policymaking process during that period, with representatives from EPWS participating in conferences organised around the issue of women in science and meeting regularly with Commission officials and MEPs responsible for that topic. EPWS's secretariat would issue policy positions and statements regarding the advancement of women's presence in research policy and women's careers in science. The team drafted reports taking stock of the situation of women in science and research in Europe and collected best practices among the member organisations. The regular and close engagement with the EU policymaking process suffered a setback when, in 2009, the platform was forced to close down the secretariat due to an inability to secure a contribution from another source, as required by the Commission's rules for attribution of co-funding projects. The double struggle of being a voluntary organisation with no working presence in Brussels means that it became much harder for the EPWS to maintain close contact with EU policymakers and other civil society organisations since it now involves scheduling and purposefully travelling to Brussels (EPWS A interview; EPWS B interview). Contacts are harder to establish and maintain, and keeping track of policy developments is also more difficult without a physical presence in the European capital (EPWS B interview).

Nevertheless, the raison d'être of the platform continues to be to bring the voices of women scientists to the EU decision-making table on questions of science and research. Maria Cristina Antonucci (2014) argues that its mission, together with the circumstances of its creation, mean that the platform should be described as a purposeful European advocacy and lobbying group instead of being merely seen as a European civil society organisation participating in the EU policymaking process. The platform has a mixture of characteristics from different types of organisations. It is simultaneously a professional order, since it is a congregation of people working in a specific profession and represents their interests, but different in the sense that it seeks a much broader membership base. It is a public interest group since, although its goal is gender- and career-specific, achieving a more balanced integration of women and men in science could be argued to be beneficial to all. And it is a promotional group

(Salisbury 1975) since it works specifically for a cause and is open to anybody willing to fight for that cause (Antonucci 2014, p. 93).

7.1.3. Involvement in EU policymaking process

By virtue of its origins and its original funding, the EPWS had close links with the EU institutions from the start, particularly with the Women in Science Unit of DG Research. The situation of women in science was an issue already salient in several EU documents prior to EPWS's birth in 2006. The topic was also fostered by a slew of other promotional groups such as the Helsinki Group, the European Centre for Women and Technology, and the European Association for Women in SET, so it can be argued that there was already a favourable institutional context for the promotion of the issue of women and science within the EU institutions (Antonucci 2014, p. 94). The proactiveness of the Commission in seeking the establishment and funding of an organisation representing the interests of women in science is also a reflection of the favourable institutional environment for this issue.

A big portion of EPWS's activities therefore relates to direct lobbying of the EU institutions (Antonucci 2014), particularly the European Commission and the European Parliament. This involves meeting with civil servants and policymakers to share the platform's positions on specific issues, as well as issuing own-initiative policy positions and statements or as contributions to public consultations launched by the European Commission. DG Research is one of the main points of access of EPWS into the EU policymaking process, due to its responsibility for the science and research policy of the Union. The interdisciplinary nature of the issue of women in science is stated as a difficulty in presenting it to policymakers because the expertise is split across different units. In the European Commission, topics related to including a gender dimension into research were addressed to DG Research, while issues of increasing the presence of women in scientific careers were dealt with by DG Employment and Social Affairs, since it was there that gender equality policy of the Union was designed (since 2011 a policy field under DG Justice) (EPWS B interview). In the European Parliament, the work of EPWS is spread between two committees – FEMM (women's interests and gender equality) and ITRE (science and research) – and MEPs are often knowledgeable about one part of the topic but not the whole issue: MEPs from the FEMM committee have expertise on gender equality but not on scientific careers and the research panorama,

whereas MEPs from ITRE have a good knowledge and interest in science and research but not necessarily on the need to bring a gendered perspective into these policies (EPWS B interview).

Apart from direct lobbying activities, the platform also works on increasing the visibility of the issue of gender-balance in science by organising campaigns, events, workshops, conferences, etc. This grassroots technique can be seen as an indirect form of lobbying since the goal is to raise the public's awareness of the issue and thus to force politicians to acknowledge it and include it in the political agenda (Antonucci 2014). The combination of direct lobbying and grassroots techniques, plus the relative salience of the issue of women in science in the EU agenda, accounts for the receptiveness of EU institutions towards EPWS. The ability to conduct constant dialogue with the European Parliament and Commission, at least in the first phase of its existence, coupled with the production of effective position papers that carefully employed the EU jargon and formal structure, meant that EPWS could successfully and effectively replicate what was 'in many people's brains at the same time' and thus serve as a link between women scientists and the EU policymaking level (EPWS A interview; EPWS B interview). The EU institutions are often receptive to EPWS input and the Commission in particular is a willing interlocutor of the platform. This is in part due to the fact that participation of a civil society organisation with a broad geographical and a specific career-oriented base is perceived as closing the democratic gap in the European policymaking process (EPWS B interview but also Antonucci 2014, p. 92). Whether this receptiveness translates into influence is another matter (see section 7.2. and 7.3. for a more detailed analysis).

7.2. Advocating for gender mainstreaming in science and research

7.2.1. FEMM report and EP resolution *Women and Science* (2008) – an EPWS collection of best practices

EPWS members suggest the struggle that the platform often faces is due to its working on an issue that spans two different policy areas (EPWS A interview; EPWS B interview). In the European Parliament, this is quite notorious, with expertise on gender equality and

expertise on research and science divided between the FEMM and the ITRE committees, respectively. This means that the platform has often struggled to convince MEPs on both committees of the importance of the subject of women and science, since they lack expertise on one or the other side of the issue (EPWS B interview). There are exceptions and this section describes such a case. The exception below is justified by the individual interest of the MEP in question, Britta Thomsen, and her being a pioneer in the topic of women and science within the FEMM committee at the time (EPWS B interview).

In 2008 EPWS was approached by Britta Thomsen MEP, a member of the FEMM committee at the time, for help with data and best practice collection on the status of women in science and research careers. The aim was to produce a FEMM report on the issue, which would include data as well as recommendations according to the best practices implemented on member states. Upon being contacted by the MEP, EPWS decided to turn its contribution into a membership exercise and invited all its member organisations to submit best practices from their countries (EPWS 2008; EPWS B interview). In March 2008, the women's platform published its own document with the best practices gathered from members. The document consisted of examples of specific measures taken by research institutes, universities, and public authorities in several European countries that worked in attracting and retaining women in scientific careers. The best practices included:

- Avoiding gender stereotypes in teaching and avoiding the propagation of career stereotypes;

- Emphasis on the importance of measures to facilitate work-family balance ('integration of the family perspective') (EPWS 2008, p. 1) such as flexible working hours, part-time work, childcare for employees, extra financial support for childcare costs during conference attendance, participation in training seminars while pregnant or working part-time;

- Extra encouragement in hiring practices (e.g. adding sentence on female applicants in job ads);

- Promotion of women's networks and networking events, as well as establishment of mentoring schemes and increasing the visibility of role models;

- Research funds targeted specifically at women;

- Reintroduction of Gender Action Plans in the 7th Funding Programme Framework (FP7) as they were an important good practice in the previous one, FP6;

- Removal of age restrictions in applications for grants.

In April 2008, the FEMM committee launched an own-initiative report (FEMM 2008) on the same topic, with Britta Thomsen MEP as rapporteur, that mirrored very much the best practices presented in EPWS's own report. The FEMM report on women and science aimed to 'identify social, cultural and other kind of barriers that account for the under-representation of women in science' and to 'point to possible solutions and best practices for solving the situation' (Ibid., p. 9). The report identifies two reasons that explain why gender segregation is problematic in science and research: one is about fields with higher status having less women (female scientists thus end up with lower status than men scientists) and the other is about a lack of scientific personnel (Ibid.). The last one ties in with the 'waste of talent' frame that is dominant in EU research and science policy and, in fact, the FEMM report opens with a statement of research as 'crucial sector' for the economic development of the EU and the consequent need to find extra researchers in order to accomplish the Lisbon Strategy (FEMM 2008). Gender segregation in science fields and the leaky pipeline phenomenon are seen as the result of a complex interaction of reasons, and the report urges member states to consider these in their complexity and not as merely a reflection of women's lack of interest in scientific fields (Ibid.). Gender stereotypes are identified in education, hiring and funding practices: they 'support the continuity of specific gender roles and occupational gender segregation' based on simplistic characteristics that are often attributed to the feminine and the masculine (Ibid., p. 10) and there is an understanding of certain academic institutions such as the evaluation of excellence and recruitment practices as gender-biased. There is also repeated stressing of work-life balance measures as crucial to increasing women's participation in science-related careers (EPWS 2008), including the need to end age restrictions on funding applications since women tend to follow different career trajectories to men. The Gender Action Plans are referred to as an important part

of EU research policy that should be given more prominence in FP7 and future EU funding frameworks. ITRE's opinion on the report also stresses the importance of work-life balance, as well as mentoring networks and even positive action to attract and keep women in scientific careers. ITRE also mentions the need to revise of concepts needed to ensure no gender bias. The justification of ITRE's position is permeated by the 'waste of talent' frame, explicit in the reference that the Lisbon Strategy requires increasing by 700,000 the number of researchers.

The FEMM report of 2008 on women and science mirrors very closely the EPWS's own best practice collection document; all the ideas are included in the FEMM report and it even praises EPWS's work at the end:

[The report] [w]elcomes the activities carried out by the European Platform of Women Scientists, which aim to enhance the participation of women in science and increase the number of women scientists in decision-making positions (FEMM 2008).

The FEMM report included a motion for a resolution of the European Parliament, which is a statement that carries heavier weight due to being voted on and approved in plenary by all MEPs. A European Parliament resolution was then adopted in May 2008 with slight differences from the original motion within the FEMM report, including not mentioning EPWS anymore, suggesting instead:

[The motion] [w]elcomes the activities carried out by NGOs and agencies at European and national level which aim to enhance the participation of women in science and increase the number of female scientists in decision-making positions; (EP 2008, italic mine)

Nevertheless, the spirit of the FEMM report did not change and for EPWS it remained a ground-breaking moment to be singled out for a contribution to an EU report on the issue of women and science (EPWS B interview) and an opportunity to have its position almost *ipsis verbis* amplified by one of the EU institutions.

7.2.2. Involvement of EPWS in negotiations around Horizon 2020

Every six years, with the new budgetary cycle, the European Commission launches a new funding programme that is aimed at supporting research and scientific projects across the EU. In order to establish the research priorities and funding requirements for applicants, the Commission launches public consultations to receive input from external stakeholders. Every two years there is a work programme that further specifies the funding priorities for the following bi-annual period, and a consultation is also launched to gather stakeholders' opinions on what these should be. Investing in the production of innovative research has been one of the key overall goals of the EU in the last decades as a way of increasing the competitiveness and efficiency of the European economy. Therefore, the revision of the EU's strategy until 2020 and the public consultations to that end were also an important point of engagement for EPWS.

Public consultation on the EU 2020 Strategy (January 2010)

At the end of 2009 the European Commission launched a public consultation for stakeholders to give their input into what they consider should be Europe's priorities for the next decade. The aim was to replace the Lisbon Strategy 2000 that expired in 2010. Even though it does not relate directly and specifically to research and science policy, the intended grand-strategic-nature of the consultation meant that potentially every single stakeholder could have something to add. EPWS responded to the consultation in January 2010. The women's platform was very critical of the dominance of economic growth in the consultation text, stressing rather that economic growth should be embedded in other goals such as political coherence, equal opportunities and social integration (EPWS 2010). EPWS talks about the need for quality science and good scientists to be taken into account by policymakers in order to guarantee 'a better predictability of their consequences' (Ibid., p. 1). EPWS also stresses the need to invest in science and research to achieve the goal of a 'smarter and greener social market' and to realise the objective of turning Europe into a knowledge-based society (Ibid.). This is where women come in: to achieve these ambitious goals Europe needs to maximise the contribution of all its potential talents, particularly by ending the gender imbalance in research and scientific careers (EPWS 2010). Work-life balance is cited as a specific issue for the EU to focus on to tackle this imbalance.

The frames so far are congruent with the EU's own framing of the lack of women in science as a problem of waste of talent and inefficiency. However, correcting the issue

of gender imbalance in research careers is only part of the proposals advanced by EPWS in its consultation response. The women's platform also criticises the fact that '[t]raditionally, research agendas have not taken the specific needs of women into account', and is highly critical of the gendered scientific institutional culture, focusing particularly on the concept of excellence and the subjective and often gender-biased criteria used to assess it (EPWS 2010, p. 2). Gender diversity is mentioned as conducive to more creative and innovative research, and considering the gender dimension in research ensures that knowledge production matches the interests of all EU citizens (Ibid.). Again, economic growth is not mentioned nor taken as an implicit goal for achieving gender equality in science and research, contrary to the dominant frame in EU policy in this field.

Public consultation on Horizon 2020 (May 2011)

In 2011 the Commission opened a consultation to gather input on priorities for the next multi-annual programme of research funding (2014-2020). EPWS was one of the stakeholders that provided input for the 'Public Consultation on the Green Paper "From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation Funding"' in May 2011. Bearing in mind that the Council had already published the Europe 2020 strategy by then with the EU's priorities for growth for the next 10 years, EPWS acknowledges in its response to the consultation on the future of research that science is part of the EU's growth strategy and therefore there is a need to maximise the contribution of women to it (EPWS 2011). Once again, work-life balance measures are mentioned as the key to ensuring that the gender imbalance in research careers is corrected and to ensure that mobility of researchers happens across academic institutions and countries within the European Research Area (Ibid.).

As in its response to the consultation on Europe's 2020 strategy, EPWS takes the issue of women and science in its double meaning, focusing also on the gender dimension of science and proposing measures to ensure that it is taken into consideration. Again, the concept of excellence is heavily criticised as incomplete and gender biased, since it does not take into account the different career trajectories that women take and which often include career gaps due to caring responsibilities (EPWS 2011). After the new funding framework programme was proposed, EPWS again stresses in a position paper in 2012 that the gender dimension should be considered a key component of excellent

research, particularly crucial in scientific research where humans are subjects or end-users, such as drug tests, but also in business-driven activities where the output is a commercial product (Ibid.). This is part of the need to make sure that research and science are responsive to the needs of all citizens.

One of the recurring stances of EPWS in the consultation that led to Horizon 2020 is penalisation and sanctions for projects that do not consider gender at all. The idea is that gender indicators should be clearly set, both for women participation in research teams and for the gender dimension in the project content, and that the absence of a strategy to achieve those should drive down the overall evaluation mark and therefore the chances of that project to be funded. This requires also that evaluators are given clear gender guidelines to properly assess whether the indicators are met. There is also a proposal for the results of the gender indicators to be published, in the hopes that peer-pressure encourages member states and institutions to move forwards.

Finally, the women's platform voices its concern about the challenges that NGOs face when trying to participate in EU projects. The rule that all funding from the EU should be matched to a certain extent by co-funding from other sources (often in an 80%-20% share) means that EU funding is geared towards big institutions with a long and stable financial history. In addition, the fact that the vast majority of funding is provided through action projects, means that applicants have to have their daily running costs secured from other sources, something which non-profit organisations, particularly smaller and newer ones, find hard to achieve. This severely hinders the participation of these civil society organisations in EU projects, even though they often possess a high level of European expertise on the issue at hand. There is also the recurrent complaint, both in the consultation of 2011 and in a position paper of 2012 in reaction to the recently adopted Horizon 2020 programme, that the EU is very often unresponsive to the input mechanisms that it creates for civil society. The women's platform mentions that interaction should be improved for stakeholders to feel that their contributions are valued (EPWS 2011; EPWS 2012).

Work programmes of Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 is the funding framework programme for research and science in the EU for the period of 2014 to 2020. Every two years the Commission launches a work

programme that includes the specific priorities for the following two years in terms of research funding. A public consultation is usually launched to gather input from stakeholders and each work programme is debated in the responsible European Parliament committee, ITRE. Therefore, the involvement of EPWS in the Horizon 2020 programme did not stop when the programme framework was adopted; there is a constant engagement of the women's platform with each work programme proposal out of fear that gender drops out of the agenda (EPWS A interview; EPWS B interview; EPWS C interview). A great amount of effort is thus spent on arguing for the maintenance of basic gender equality considerations in Horizon 2020 since they have not achieved an obvious and guaranteed place in it. This is very much the feeling expressed by members of the Gender Team: the need to constantly try to convince colleagues of the importance and relevance of a gender perspective in science and research, a work described as almost like 'lobbying' (RTD A interview).

One example of EPWS's monitoring and action on the priorities of the bi-annual work programmes was their efforts to pressure the Commission into acknowledging and mentioning concrete actions to take on the issue of gender equality in science in the work programme 2016-2017. Concretely, the problem was that the Research and Innovation part of Horizon 2020, where social science aspects that could be horizontally integrated are listed, there was no mention of gender in early versions of the Work Programme (EPWS C interview; Tarabella 2015). Here the chosen course of action by EPWS was to write to MEPs asking them to pressure the Commission on this. This reflects EPWS's understanding of the European Parliament as the gate into the negotiations around Horizon 2020 and its work programmes (EPWS C interview). A few MEPs replied positively and Marc Tarabella took the initiative of submitting a formal parliamentary question to the European Commission flagging the superficial mention of gender in earlier versions of the work programme and asking about their plans for inclusion of more research topics focusing closely on gender issues (Tarabella 2015). For EPWS this was a significant achievement since parliamentary questions posed by MEPs to the Commission have to be given a reply by a high-level politician – in this case, by the Commissioner Moedas himself – since they are taken as an accountability mechanism of the Commission to the European Parliament. In the end, the work programme did contain two sections devoted specifically to projects on gender issues. One section was on the ERA-NET Co-Fund, aimed at promoting gender equality in

Horizon 2020 and ERA, and the other was on projects to support research institutions to implement gender equality plans (EC 2017).

7.2.3. Failed campaigns and unresponsiveness from Commission

One of the goals of EU's research and science policy in its endeavour to reduce the gender imbalance of women in scientific careers is to attract more girls into this type of education pathway (EP 2008). This is also one of the recommendations that EPWS makes in their position papers and consultation responses (EPWS 2008; EPWS 2011). In 2012 the research Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn launched a campaign entitled 'Science: it's a girl thing!' as part of the Commission's initiative on Women in Research and Innovation. The campaign ran from 2012 until 2015 and consisted mostly of a website with sections showcasing several female scientists and their work through short videos, curiosities and facts about science, information on jobs with a scientific nature, and videos displaying inventions made by women. The campaign also included the organisation of several events throughout Europe aimed at encouraging girls to pursue scientific courses in university and attracting them to scientific careers later on.

However, the campaign started off on a wrong footing and was badly criticised by several civil society organisations and female scientists for its stereotypical outlook. The event in the European Parliament where the campaign was officially presented and launched included the presence of many teenage girls and they were given lipsticks, facial creams and other beauty products with the campaign logo, reinforcing the stereotype that girls only care about beauty-related products. The very campaign logo added to the stereotype that girls only care about things insofar as they are connected to make up and beauty, since one of the 'i's was a lipstick and the campaign title gave off the effect of having been written with a pink lipstick.

The launching video of the campaign was what attracted the heaviest criticism, since it depicted girls and their interests in a highly sexist and stereotypical way, sexualising women scientists in a lab context. There was a civil society outcry against the campaign and several organisations contacted the Commission in a formal way to express their anger about the depiction of female scientists and girls in the campaign launching video. EPWS sent a letter to the commissioner immediately after the video was released expressing its strong disagreement, referring that they were 'upset by the spirit' of the

campaign (EPWS C interview). This was exacerbated by the fact that EPWS knew that the Commission was planning an action on this topic and so members of the board had offered to help, an offer that was rejected by the Commission. Other gender experts had offered their help on ways to attract young people to science, to no avail (EPWS C interview). This meant that the backlash came from several organisations and people from different backgrounds, which reinforced the idea that the essence of the video was wrong, and which led the Commission to quickly react by taking it down from the campaign's website within three days of its launching. There was no response from the Commission or public statement on the matter, the reaction was 'to suppress the reason for the complaints' (EPWS C interview). The 'Science: it's a girl thing!' campaign continued its course since attracting girls to science was one of the EU's goals in the issue of women and science. Nonetheless the website layout was modified and its most stereotypical features were abandoned, including the pink layout, the lipstick-drawn logo and the criticised video.

This episode reflects some interesting dynamics between EU research and science decision-making institutions, namely DG Research, and civil society organisations involved in the issue of gender equality in science. There are repeated complaints from the part of civil society stakeholders, and from the part of members of advisory groups on the topic, both in the interviews for this research (EPWS A interview; EPWS C interview; HG A interview) and through more formal channels such as public consultations on the topic (EPWS 2011; EPWS 2012). These complaints refer to the unresponsiveness of the EU that makes it hard for organisations and advisory groups to understand whether their input is valued or even listened to at all. The general feeling of these organisations is that they are often impotent to influence the Commission's decisions on the priorities on the issue and the course of action to take to achieve them. Much like Lut Mergaert and Emanuela Lombardo noted in their study of gender mainstreaming in DG research, 'gender-expert voices were not allowed to influence the policy process' (Mergaert & Lombardo 2017, p. 116) and EPWS's expertise on the topic of attracting girls into science was rejected when offered (EPWS C interview). In this context, very well illustrated by the 'Science: it's a girl thing!' debacle, the only option left for stakeholders is to react to things when they are launched, proposed or adopted.

7.3. EPWS and gender mainstreaming: organisational and discourse adaptation

7.3.1. Organisational adaptation

The European Platform of Women Scientists is an interesting organisation to categorise. It was created by instigation of the European Commission to represent the voices of women scientists in Europe to the EU institutions (EC 1999; EC 2003a). In this sense the platform was created with the purpose of lobbying at heart, and getting its voice heard in the form of position papers, consultation responses, recommendations and the organisation of conferences on the topic is still a core occupation and one of the raisons d'être of the organisation. But apart from its advocacy work, the platform is also an important site of networking, functioning in some ways as a professional order to forward the status of women scientists and to connect women working in scientific and research careers who share a particular concern of improving gender balance in science (Antonucci 2014). At the same time, its heavy focus not only on achieving greater numbers of female scientists and improving the career prospects of women working in science, but also on the gender dimension of research content, means that the organisation also has characteristics of a public interest group, since one of its main goals is to ensure that research and scientific innovation takes into account the needs and interests of women as well as men. Its concern is not restricted to female researchers but focuses also on the responsiveness of science to society and aiming to spread the benefits of science and research to all citizens, a defining characteristic of a public interest group.

The organisational development of EPWS has been closely linked to the EU institutions since its very start. The women's platform was born in response to a call from the Commission whose goal was to create a one-stop shop transnational organisation capable of providing expertise and representative input on the topic of gender balance in science (EC 2003a). Representativeness was a strong preoccupation from the beginning and so the women's platform took the form of a European umbrella of existing national organisations that worked on the topic (EPWS A interview). This is in line with both the EC's objectives laid out in the 2001 Action Plan in Science and Society and with its overall aim of including civil society voices in the policymaking process in general

(Antonucci 2014, p. 92). The European Commission, therefore, had an interest in the existence of the organisation and, for the first phase of its existence, was its main funder. At this stage, between 2006 and 2009, EPWS worked closely with the EU institutions from its office in Brussels, presenting its positions and recommendations on the topic of women and science through meetings with policymakers, organisation of conferences on the issue, liaison with other civil society organisations, and through responses to formal public consultations (EPWS A interview; EPWS B interview). The close cooperation of this time was clearly illustrated by the EP resolution on women and science adopted in May 2008 (EP 2008), which mirrored very closely EPWS's best practice collection on attracting and retaining women to scientific careers (EPWS 2008), which was drafted at the request of a FEMM committee member, Britta Thomsen MEP (EPWS A interview; EPWS B interview).

However, the women platform was not able to secure the percentage of funding from other sources required by EU co-funding rules, which meant that EPWS could not apply for EU funding programmes anymore. The organisation became voluntary-based, had to forgo its working office in Brussels and had to significantly scale back its activities (EPWS A interview; EPWS B interview). Establishing and maintaining contacts and working relationships with other stakeholders in Brussels and with the EU institutions is now significantly harder, as is keeping up with policy developments and responding to them. This was due to the double hurdle of no longer being based in Brussels and no longer having full-time dedicated staff for this work (EPWS A interview; EPWS B interview). The EU co-funding rules have been criticised by EPWS multiple times (EPWS 2011; EPWS 2012) as disadvantaging recently-established non-profit organisations that, although possessing important representative expertise on the topics the EU legislates on, are unable to contribute to the policymaking discussion and to projects and campaigns funded by the EU often due to their inability to secure private-sourced funding (EPWS 2011; EPWS 2012). The nonchalance of the EU to these NGO struggles, and in particular to the survival struggle of an organisation whose origin was fomented by the Commission in the first place, raises doubts about the seriousness of the EU's commitment to the inclusion of civil society voices in its policymaking process.

7.3.2. Frames and discourse adaptation

EPWS's characteristics as a professional order, namely its representation of women scientists' voices, concerns and interests in Europe, make it clear that one of its strong preoccupations is with improving the status, career opportunities and visibility of women working in science and research. This was indeed one of the reasons for the Commission to assign funding for the creation of such an organisation:

to establish the European Platform of Women Scientists as a structural link between women scientists and policymakers … in order to - represent with democratic legitimacy and transparent decision-making structures the concerns, needs, aspirations and interests of European women scientists in dialogue with national, European and international institutions and … to make them better understand the role they can play in the policy debate. (EC 2003a, p. 1)

In this sense, one of the strongest goals of the platform is to work for the achievement of gender balance in research and scientific institutions in terms of women and men scientists, decision-makers, project evaluators and supporting staff. Representation is therefore a key concern of the women platform, as it is to the EU institutions working on the issue of women and science. However, EPWS justifies the importance of increasing the number of women in science and research careers not quite in the same way as the EU. As it was detailed in Chapter 5, the dominant frame that the European Commission uses to justify the need to attract and retain women in science is the 'waste of resources' frame in a context where EU research and science policy is geared towards improving the competitiveness of the European economy (Abels 2012; Cavaghan 2012). Increasing the number of women scientists is thus a necessary precondition to reach the estimated number of researchers and scientists necessary to achieve the economic growth goals that the EU established for itself. The discourse of EPWS, although congruent with the 'waste of resources' frame, is essentially different. EPWS does suggest that maximising the contribution of women to science is paramount to improving European research, but, for the women's platform, the goal is not and should not be economic growth for its sake. Indeed, EPWS is quite critical of the dominance of economic growth in the EU's priorities beyond 2010, and urges the Union to consider the importance of innovative science in informing policymaking decisions, achieving sustainable development, and transforming Europe into a knowledge-based economy as well (EPWS 2010).

Perhaps more significantly, the women's platform heavily highlights the contribution for science creativity and innovation that more women bring, and a potential for broadening science's responsiveness to the problems and interests of all citizens, women and men. This is why EPWS repeatedly refers to the importance of the gender dimension of the content of research: so as to make sure that science addresses the interests and concerns of men and women equally (EPWS 2011; EPWS 2012). Additionally, the organisation is highly critical of institutions within scientific culture such as the concept of excellence and the recruitment process as gender-biased since they do not take into consideration the different career trajectories that women often take due to caring responsibilities (EPWS 2008; EPWS 2010; EPWS 2011). Increasing the number of women in science careers is to increase gender diversity and consequently the creativity and the innovative nature of the science produced. It is also a matter of non-discrimination, ensuring that career opportunities for women exist and that they have a fair chance of progressing. The contribution of this to economic growth can sometimes be inferred although it is never the ultimate goal in EPWS's discourse on the topic (EPWS 2010). In sum, the 'waste of resources' frame is sometimes implicit but not instrumental to economic growth, as recurrently happens in the EU's own discourse.

EPWS has repeatedly mentioned that the cross-disciplinary nature of the topic of women and science is a challenge when it comes to liaising with politicians and policymakers due to their often partial expertise or interest on the issue (EPWS A interview; EPWS B interview). This is understood as a difficulty, rather than an opportunity to get more potential allies and venues to liaise with. Venue shopping is done mostly between EU institutions: from Commission to Parliament, but not so much across fields. This is in great measure due to the current circumstances of the organisation, voluntary and without a working office in Brussels, which hinder its flexibility and quickness of response to policy developments. The European Parliament is generally seen as more amenable to EPWS's demands – and, in fact, both tangible advocacy successes explored in the previous section relate to the action of MEPs. However, this amenability is very dependent on the gender-awareness of an MEP – and their assistants – and therefore the personal agendas of each politician (EPWS C interview). The Gender Team at DG Research is also the venue with which the EPWS has the closest connection, in part due to its origins and evidently due to the remit of their work.

7.3.3. Processes of proactivism

The current status of the organisation, voluntary-based and without a working office in Brussels, is a challenge for EPWS's ability to regularly and promptly engage with EU policy developments on gender equality in science (EPWS A interview; EPWS B interview). Meetings with policymakers and other civil society stakeholders are much more difficult to arrange as they now involve long-distance travelling and therefore more time and costs than before. Presence at conferences and workshops is now also costlier and thus rarer. Its capacity to shape the debate is therefore significantly limited due to the circumstances of the women platform. But opportunities to do so are also limited on the part of the EU institutions. It is true that EPWS has had some successes when it comes to shaping the way the EU institutions justify the problem of gender imbalance in research careers and the solutions proposed. The EP resolution, to which the expertise of the women's platform was actively and enthusiastically sought by the rapporteur, is the most relevant example (EP 2008). The 2014 parliamentary question of Marc Tarabella MEP on the Commission's plans to incorporate gender in the 2016-17 work programme of Horizon 2020 was also a successful pressure to DG Research on the issue and contributed to make sure that gender did not slip off the EU research agenda for a couple more years. EPWS members are nonetheless careful to see these successes as illustrative of their own influence on the EU discourse, suggesting that EPWS merely articulated what was on many people's minds at the time on this issue (EPWS A interview). The distinction between having their voice heard and having influence is therefore important, but a difficult one to make.

Notwithstanding the EPWS's few successes in getting its voice heard with tangible consequences, there were also instances where the EU institutions, most notably the Commission, were significantly inattentive to civil society and even national representative's expertise. The 'Science: it's a girl thing!' launching fiasco was such an example of a campaign designed without taking into account recommendations from experts on the field. This also illustrated that, since there are limited opportunities to shape things as they are being thought of and prepared, often the only possible course of action is to react when things are already done. In the case of this campaign, the barrage of negative reactions from female scientists, gender experts and civil society stakeholders from diverse backgrounds led to the embarrassing backtrack on several campaign materials.

For the most part, opportunities to change the terms of the debate or to even shape them are restricted to public consultations launched by the Commission. But these have often been criticised in general as seeking too restrictive replies on very specific topics, hindering the ability of stakeholders to introduce new priorities to the Commission's agenda (see for example WECF 2016a). EPWS has also complained about the lack of responsiveness on the part of the Commission to the input received by stakeholders that leaves contributors unaware of whether their expertise was valued or even taken into consideration by the relevant DG when proposing a new policy activity (EPWS 2011; EPWS 2012). These concerns mirror the sentiment of members of advisory groups, such as the Helsinki Group, that often feel that the Commission is unresponsive to their recommendations and input (HG A interview), as was the case when the Helsinki Group's criticism of plans to shrink gender equality activities in FP7 was ignored, as were recommendations not to drop Gender Action Plans in FP7 (Mergaert & Lombardo 2017), and the Helsinki Group's participation in the design of the 'Science: it's a girl thing!' campaign (HG A interview).

Table 10 is a synthesis of some of the processes of adaptation that EPWS undertook in research and science policy. Instances of proactivism were very much absent or unsuccessful in this case study, which is in part a reflection of the reduced resources of the women's platform as a voluntary-based organisation.

	Processes of adaptation	Processes of proactivism
Discourse (Framing)	Using the frame of waste of resources to justify EU action to attract more women into science and research careers, while criticising its narrowing down to the goal of increased competitiveness and economic growth.	n/a
Actors (Institutional allies)	Switching between FEMM and ITRE MEPs to try to find the ones whose expertise/interests bridges the fields of science and women's interests.	Linking up with feminist allies MEPs in FEMM at the Parliament to put pressure on the Commission to mainstream gender into work programme of Horizon 2020.
Resources (Funding programmes)	Trying to find private sponsors to be able to fulfil the co-funding rule of EU funding application (unsuccessfully).	Criticising formally the co-funding rule of 80-20% to apply for EU funding programmes to influence Commission into changing it (unsuccessfully).

Table 10. EPWS's strategies for take-up and creation of political opportunities in EU research and science policy

7.4. Conclusion

Although EPWS was the product of a Commission initiative, the continued support that the organisation received was lacklustre and it resulted in the women's platform losing its Brussels-based secretariat and its full-time employed staff. These circumstances severely hindered the ability of the organisation to interact with EU policymakers, monitor the process and produce responses with the speed that is required for it to exercise greater influence. Nevertheless, a few successful instances of advocacy were analysed, both in relation to the European Parliament and the FEMM committee specifically. The Gender Team in DG Research is identified by the group as their closest contact within the EU institutions, although the often powerlessness of the unit within DG Research means that, although access is easy for EPWS, influence is another level of engagement that is significantly harder to achieve. Even in a DG that is considered one of the good ones when it comes to gender mainstreaming, gender equality is a goal that

constantly must be argued for and care taken by its advocates, both within the Gender Equality unit and in EPWS, for it not to fall off the agenda.

Opportunities and resistance in research and science policy

	Opportunities	Resistance/obstacles
Structural	Complex policymaking process, with multiple points of access and opportunities to influence institutions with different preferences. Commission's penchant for setting up European groups representing public interests to further its own competences.	Limited EU competence on science and research matters (mostly 'soft' measures at EU level). Economic growth and competitiveness master frames in EU discourse, permeating women and science policy actions.
Institutional	Long-standing rhetorical commitments to women and science, giving discursive backing to efforts from gender advocates to increasing presence of women in research and science careers and projects.	Unresponsiveness to gender experts and reported reluctance in actively consulting them. Gender equality in research and science still a niche goal that has to be argued for time and again by Gender Team to main echelons of DG Research.
Individual	Commissioner Carlos Moedas's interest in increasing number and quality of financed projects that mainstream gender.	n/a[15]

Table 11. Multi-tiered approach to opportunities and obstacles to gender change and gender equality advocacy in EU research and science policy

Science and research is one of the policy fields that pioneered gender mainstreaming in the EU. There is thus a significant number of rhetorical commitments to improving gender equality in the scientific field that provide a relative welcoming environment to gender advocates, since formal rules to act on this are in place. Institutional opportunities exist for mainstreaming gender into science and research policy, including space for senior policymakers to further this topic according to their own political

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[15] But reported in previous research: see Lut & Mergaert 2017

preferences, as was the case with Commissioner Carlos Moedas and the guidelines on gender mainstreaming for evaluators of research projects. The Commission's general attempts to prompt the formation of European organisations representing public interests, illustrated here with the creation of the European Platform of Women Scientists in the first place, is also a significant opportunity for the engagement of gender equality advocates in the policymaking process.

These opportunities, however, appear to be offset by significant resistances. Notwithstanding the Commission's initial drive to set up EPWS, space for civil society is often limited to reactive interventions or public consultations, with no proper engagement from the part of the European Commission with external stakeholders advocating for women's rights. The critiques of EPWS and Helsinki Group members on the unresponsiveness of the Commission to expert voices, coupled with the need to constantly justify the importance of taking into account women's voices, presence and interests in research and science, means that the goal of gender equality in this policy field is far from being a given in practice. This is compounded by the narrowing of the issue of women and science to one of presence, and the efforts to garner more women into scientific careers a means to achieve the higher goals of economic competitiveness and growth. Significant also is the fact that EU actions on science and research are considerably redistributive, through the allocation of significant funds to projects for research institutions based in the member states, but also soft in legal terms when it comes to incorporating gender considerations into the projects it funds.

What kind of gender mainstreaming approach?

The initiative of the Commission to launch a call to civil society in 2003 for the creation of a formal network of women scientists funded by the EU was a strong signal of its serious intention to engage with experts on women and science. Advisory structures around the issue exist, including the Helsinki Group, formed by national representatives appointed by member states to counsel the Commission on the subject of women and science. Public consultations are launched every time a new six-year funding cycle is approaching and before establishing the research priorities for each bi-annual period within the broader funding cycles. However, the policy case studies analysed in this chapter, chosen for the relative salience and success of EPWS's engagement, paint a somewhat different picture. The formal mechanisms for consultation and participation

exist but their feeding into the policymaking process is limited. By its own initiative, the Commission does not always actively consult with external stakeholders or the experts from the channels it helped to set up. This was extraordinarily clear in the 'Science: it's a girl thing!' video debacle. The Commission's approach to gender mainstreaming in research and science policy thus resembles much more a top-down process, the expert-bureaucratic approach to gender mainstreaming. In the European Parliament, and particularly in relation to members of the FEMM committee, is where we find a closer cooperation between policymakers – in this case, MEPs – and external experts, as was most prominent with the FEMM report of 2008 on women and science and consequent EP resolution on the topic.

CHAPTER 8. WOMEN IN EUROPE FOR A COMMON FUTURE (WECF)

8.1. Organisational context

The first section of this chapter highlights the characteristics of Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), a transnational organisation advocating for women's rights and gender equality in the field of environment, that are conducive to its capacity to engage with the EU institutions – in other words, characteristics that determine WECF's ability to take up political opportunities presented by the EU.

8.1.1. History and goals

WECF is an umbrella organisation established officially in 1994 in the Netherlands. Its main goal is to work towards sustainable development by 'taking the different needs and perspectives of women and men into account' (WECF 2015d) Gender equality is the grand vision of the organisation, being simultaneously an end in itself and a means to achieve a 'healthy environment, and a just and sustainable world' (Ibid.).

As the name indicates, Women in Europe for a Common Future has a specific focus on women's interests ('women's priorities' [WECF 2015d]) and on bringing the voice of women to the decision table on issues of climate change, aid and sustainable development. Indeed, the organisation came from an initiative of women from the wider European region that participated in the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. These women saw the catalysing effect that their cooperation had had on policies to achieve sustainable development around the world and recognised that women's voices were important in achieving change locally. They aimed to formalise this cooperation into an established institution. WECF was thus registered officially as a foundation in the Netherlands in 1994 with the double purpose of advocating for political change and implementing local development projects.

There is a recognition that women are still underrepresented at the environmental policy table and that this denotes both a waste of potential talent, since women can work as 'agents of change' in their local areas and as such are crucial actors in the

implementation of development projects, and also a loss of representation of diverse interests. Women are identified in the WECF's website as often having different interests in development from men, a consequence of gender inequality, the distinct roles and tasks attributed to women and men, and the discrimination that women still face in many countries around the world (WECF 2015b). This means that women's priorities are often in health issues and issues related to 'sustainable livelihoods' (WECF 2015b). Moreover, women are disproportionately affected by poverty and by the effects of environmental degradation. It could thus be argued that they have a special stake in participating in policy decisions aiming to mitigate climate change or to adapt to it. Therefore, although WECF mentions the need of involving everyone in the environmental policymaking process with the global aim of having 'all women, men and children live in dignity, and share responsibilities for a healthy environment and a just and sustainable world' (WECF 2015d), the goal of involving women's organisations in this process is highlighted as particularly important due to both their underrepresentation and their potential for change. The nature of WECF's work means that the organisation focuses on disadvantaged women across the globe and therefore, although WECF is not explicit on this, there is an intersectional approach to the work of this women's group.

8.1.2. Membership and functioning

WECF's work is coordinated at present by three offices based in Europe: one in Utrecht, the Netherlands; other in Munich, Germany; and the other in Annemasse, France. Two country-specific offices are also present in Georgia and Switzerland. The formal headquarters of the organisation is in the Netherlands and it is this office that manages the projects, the networking and the finances of WECF. The organisation is led by an international board of trustees composed by three to seven members and which has the responsibility of overseeing the strategy and the financial management of WECF. Along with this leading body, there is an international advisory board that advises the organisation on the issues affecting the regions and the member organisations. The international advisory board is the body that represents the member organisations of WECF and, as its name indicates, has an advisory responsibility on the organisation's work strategy and priorities. Executing the strategy defined by these two boards is the staff working at the three WECF offices. The roughly 40 part-time staff (WECF 2015c) are responsible for the daily work of the organisation.

WECF's focus has traditionally been on the wider European region (including Western and Eastern Europe but also the Caucasus and Central Asia). Since 2010, however, the organisation has added an international division that extended its project implementation and membership base to other continents: the Women International for a Common Future (WICF). This extension meant that WECF saw its member organisations increase to 150 in 50 countries worldwide, and that it participated in the implementation of projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America, in addition to Europe.

The website of the organisation lists three areas as the main activities that WECF engages in: capacity building, policy advocacy, and outreach campaigns. In the field of capacity building, WECF helps to assess and monitor the capacity of partner and member organisations, providing training as needed. It also works closely with local women's organisations to help them develop sustainable solutions based on their own priorities. In the area of policy advocacy, the goal is to strengthen women's organisations' capacity to have a voice in national policies and plans, as well as participating in the global women's movement to ensure that its advocacy has an impact internationally. Finally, in what concerns outreach campaigns, the goal of WECF is to raise the awareness of the public and policymakers on issues of sustainable development and women's participation in the environmental decision-making process in order to 'help create an enabling environment' (WECF 2015a). The thematic areas in which WECF specialises are indicated as: 'gender equality in sustainable development policies' (including the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals post-2015), 'creating sustainable and safe circular economies' (with an emphasis on food, water and energy), and on 'equitable mitigation strategies and plans' (that include an attention to women's health impacts from chemicals and women's priorities for sanitation and menstrual hygiene) (Ibid.).

Due to its focus on the implementation of development projects in tandem with local organisations, WECF makes a clear distinction between members and partners, the former being civil society organisations whose membership to WECF was approved by the international advisory board, and the latter being the local organisations that work with WECF on the field to implement specific projects.

What we can conclude from WECF's activities is that this organisation is not geared exclusively towards lobbying and advocacy work but can also be described as a

service-provider to local women and environmental organisations, by assisting with project-implementation, training and capacity assessment. WECF also participates in international networks of environmental policy that are gender-aware, such as the Women and Gender Constituency in the Climate negotiations of UNFCCC,[16] and on the Women's Major Group of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) (WECF 2014). Its focus is thus wider than a strictly European one.

8.1.3. Involvement in EU policymaking process

Like all organisations in this research, the WECF is partly funded by the European Union. The overall budget of WECF for all its offices and international operations has been between two and three million euro annually for the most part of the last decade. The proportion of EU funding has oscillated between a lowest of 13% of all financing of WECF in 2010 to a highest of 37% in 2011.[17] The expectation is to keep EU's proportion of funding at roughly 20% in the coming 2016-2020 period. EU funding comes in two forms: operating grants (financial resources for general costs of organisation subsistence, such as office rent, staff salaries, equipment, etc.) and action grants (money for specific projects to be implemented for a certain amount of time). The money for the action grants came from the application of WECF to general calls for actions published by DG Environment and DG DEVCO. These include several projects financed by the Life+ Programme of the European Commission, DG Environment.[18] There were also projects funded by DG Development (e.g. Building local capacity for domestic solar heating, hot water and insulation for rural and remote areas in the EEC region [2011-2015]) which reflect the WECF's operation in non-EU member countries as well.[19] The annual operating grants were granted by the LIFE+ project of DG ENV, which has roughly EUR 9 million to award annually to non-governmental climate or environmental organisations in Europe.

One key area of interaction of WECF with the EU institutions is thus application, management and reporting of funded projects. Demands for co-financing of EU project

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[16] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
[17] Calculated through Sources of Funding WECF 2010-2015 p. 59 in WECF 2015e.
[18] Baltic Info Campaign on Hazardous Substances (2011-2015); ChildProtect-Life project (on protecting children's health from endocrine disrupting chemicals) (2014-2016); Reducing exposure to EDCs especially pregnant women and children (2014-2015)
[19] Please see WECF 2015a for a full list of on-going and past projects that WECF coordinated or in which it was a partner.

funding applications (i.e. the funded organisation having to cover part of the cost, usually 15%-20% of the total) are a source of concern for WECF. This is something that features in WECF's Strategic Planning 2016-2020 as something to be thought about strategically, since it means that funds have to be secured from other sources, namely private entities. This is described and analysed in more detail in the following sections of this chapter, with illustrative and concrete examples.

Although the focus of this research is the interaction of women's organisations with the European Union institutions, it bears mentioning that the EU is but one of political institutions that WECF works with. The UN is frequently mentioned as a strategic partner, a forum to share knowledge and expertise in the field of gender and environment, and an international organisation to lobby (WECF A interview). It is also a source of funding, albeit proportionally much smaller than the EU. 'Governments' represent the largest category of funding for WECF (WECF 2015e), with the Dutch and German governments two of the largest contributors.

There are no staff exclusively responsible to interact with and monitor the EU institutions. Each department keeps up to date with policy developments and news in their area of specific expertise and that includes monitoring the EU. There is also a gender coordinator in the organisation whose responsibilities include monitoring specific EU developments on gender equality, such as Gender Plans. Beyond application and reporting of co-funded projects, interaction with the European institutions takes the form of meetings with heads of units at the Commission, roundtables with MEPs, policy recommendations, and participation in public consultations launched by the Commission (WECF A interview). WECF is also part of the European Environmental Bureau, so they participate in its lobbying activities, such as drafting advocacy letters.

One thing specifically mentioned in interviews as being an obstacle in maintaining a frequent and strong relationship with the EU institutions was not being based in Brussels (WECF A interview; WECF B interview; WECF C interview). Not being physically present in Brussels makes it more difficult to meet with EU civil servants and politicians, and also to organise events on expert topics for networking and debate, since WECF staff have to travel there, with the associated travel and time costs (WECF A interview).

Interestingly, the UN is seen as a much more approachable partner than the EU, with WECF staff suggesting that the interaction with the former is made on a much more 'equal footing' (WECF A interview). WECF's interaction with national governments is seen as similar to the one with the EU in terms of approachability: it is relatively easy to get meetings with staff (i.e. access) but there is not much capacity to get its concerns taken seriously and they are limited in what they can do (i.e. influence) (WECF A interview).

8.2. Advocating for sustainable development that promotes gender equality

In contrast to WAVE and EPWS, the field of action of WECF spans several policy fields in which the EU has competence. The women's group interacts with several DGs in the European Commission, including DG ENV, DG DEVCO, DG for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) and DG for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). The following policy analysis will focus mostly on DG ENV and DG DEVCO, two institutional venues on opposing sides of the gender-awareness scale, although the other two will be briefly mentioned. Three cases of WECF engagement with the EU institutions will be analysed in detail: one on endocrine disrupting chemicals, a second on a DG DEVCO-funded project, and finally an attempt of instituting gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament's environmental policymaking. These were chosen as cases where gender was a dimension considered and where WECF contributed to the policymaking process.

8.2.1. WECF and chemicals: a policy exception

One of the areas where WECF engages with the EU more systematically is chemicals policy. This is an issue within the broader environmental policy where differentiated impacts on women and men are largely acknowledged, if not always addressed in legislative terms. Chemicals span a very wide range of substances and products that are present in virtually all aspects of individuals' lives, from their food to their hygiene, from their home to their work environment, from the clothes they wear to the hobbies they pursue and the modes of transport they use. There are several pieces of European legislation that deal with specific types of chemicals, including pharmaceuticals, toys, cosmetics, electronics, pesticides and biocides.

The REACH regulation is the most comprehensive and important piece of legislation in the field of chemicals since it sets up an EU-wide system of registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals (forming the acronym REACH) encompassing hundreds of thousands of substances traded in the European Union. Endocrine disrupting chemicals, a specific group of substances that affect the hormonal system of humans, is also a salient topic in the field of chemicals in the EU. Here greater attention is given to the particularities of female physiology due to its importance in reproduction, and to the hormonal differences of women and men and consequently the disparate impacts of endocrine disrupting chemicals in individuals of each sex. In the past decade WECF has engaged at different moments and in a myriad of ways with these policy topics – REACH regulation and endocrine disrupting chemicals – at the EU and national levels. We now take a closer look at the policy action on each of these topics, the frames used by the EU to discuss these issues, and WECF's own work and advocacy efforts.

WECF's advocacy on the REACH regulation

The REACH regulation was proposed in 2003 by the European Commission with the intention of creating a centralised and EU-wide system to regulate chemical substances traded within the European Union, evaluate the ones considered to have potential hazardous effects for human health, and restrict the use of the ones that pose a threat to humans and to the environment. Indeed, one of the frames used to justify action at the EU level was the protection of human health and of the environment (EC 2003d). The then-existing system of chemical registration and evaluation, one in which member states were responsible for conducting the necessary tests to assess the safety of chemical substances, was deemed too time- and resource-consuming, ineffective, and bureaucratic. So the new REACH regulation was framed also as a way of improving the cohesion of the EU internal market, by creating an EU-wide and unique database of chemical properties and use instructions for all chemical substances traded within the EU, and also as a way of improving competitiveness of the chemical industry by ensuring that the registration and evaluation process ran much more smoothly (EC 2003d). Therefore, we find three main frames that underpin the reason for action and the EU's aims for legislating in this field: protection of human health, protection of the environment, and enhancement of economic competitiveness. Interestingly, although

the protection of human health and the environment are referred to throughout the recital of the regulation, only the competitiveness frame is translated into a legal basis for the regulation through reference to article 95 of the Treaty Establishing the European Community (TEC), which is about the harmonisation of laws with the objective of improving the internal market (EC 2003d, p. 1; EP and Council 2006, p. 1). This was something that the FEMM committee unsuccessfully proposed to alter, adding reference to article 175 TEC, a provision specifically on EU goals for environmental policy, as a legal basis for the REACH regulation (FEMM 2005).

The REACH regulation is a complex, extensive and detailed piece of legislation that took over three years to negotiate. It shifts the onus of proof to industry, meaning that now it is the responsibility of manufacturers and traders to prove that the substances they use are safe and to identify and manage the risks of the manufactured and marketed substances. One of the core issues during negotiations was therefore the costs that this new regulation would entail to companies (ENV B interview), since chemicals are omnipresent in the industrial sector and in countless other downstream businesses. The goal was to strike a fair balance between economic burden and human health and environmental protection. This concern was something already reflected in the extended impact assessment conducted by the Commission prior to proposing the legislation, which includes a very large and detailed section assessing the economic contribution of the chemical industry (e.g. in terms of percentage of GDP generated, employment rate, levels of production), and of the costs that REACH is estimated to have on it (EC 2003b). In contrast, the section assessing the health and environmental impacts is much smaller, reflecting at least partially a lack of information and scientific knowledge on the impact of chemicals on health that the new legislation itself was supposed to fill (Ibid.). Another concern was reducing the number of chemical tests on animals, something accomplished to an extent by allowing companies to share test results and avoid duplication of registrations.

When it comes to gender considerations, REACH's legislation itself does not address differences of chemical impact to women and men save for a few exceptions. The adopted text includes some references to vulnerable groups that may be more affected by chemicals than the deemed safe dose, and pregnant women and children are explicitly included as such groups. The FEMM committee made a contribution for this recognition, since the reference to pregnant women and children as vulnerable groups

was something that appeared repeatedly in the amendments tabled by this committee to the original Commission's proposal and was later included in the final legislative text (FEMM 2005). From FEMM there was a general recognition that chemicals affect women differently due to their different physiology (i.e. more fat tissue and more hormonal changes throughout life with pregnancies and menopause, but also recognition that certain chemicals lead to a decrease of male fertility) (Ibid.). Children are also declared as more susceptible to chemicals in lower quantities, whose exposure from an early age may restrict their development (Ibid.). For FEMM, therefore, the main frame underlying the reason for action is solely the protection of human health and of the environment, something reflected, for instance, in their insistence that article 175 TEC on EU environmental policy be added as a legal basis for the directive (Ibid.). Although the regulation does not explicitly reflect preoccupation with differentiated impacts of chemicals on women and men and how this should be remedied, it is important to note that the guidance for the testing of chemical substances, which was developed later on, has some references that sex differences should be considered, in the design of the tests and the consideration of results (for instance, testing of chemicals should include animals of both sexes) (ENV B interview).

WECF participated in the negotiations for the REACH regulation mostly as a member of an alliance of diverse NGOs working in environmental affairs, consumer rights and human rights (Long & Lörinczi 2009; WECF B interview). The goal of WECF and its unique contribution was to highlight the women's perspective when it came to chemicals, based both on their biology (e.g. lower tolerance to chemicals, and different impacts from certain substances, particularly endocrine disruptors) and on their social roles (e.g. segregated labour market and different patterns of time use mean women and men are exposed to different chemicals in different environments). This was often not an easy task since most NGOs with a stake in chemical policy were not used to working with a gendered perspective. On the other hand, feminist advocates from general women's groups and feminist policymakers did not always possess the technical expertise to understand the synergies between chemical policy and gender equality (WECF B interview). Despite these obstacles, chemical policy in general is seen as a much easier subfield to mainstream gender into due to the direct biological implications not easily discerned in other environmental subfields such as climate change (WECF B interview). Working within an alliance of NGOs was also seen as crucial to getting their voice heard in a negotiation process that was heavily populated by powerful industry

(WECF B interview; ENV B interview). This cooperative work is still credited as the only way to maintain the level of human health and environmental protection established by REACH that industry is constantly fighting to water down (WECF B interview). WECF is an accredited stakeholder with ECHA, the European Chemical Agency, which manages the new applications for chemical substances regulation, and therefore has a place at the decision-making table where chemicals are regulated, along with other relevant NGOs.

WECF's work on endocrine disruptors

Endocrine disruptors are a specific type of chemicals that have a negative impact on the hormonal system of humans. They existed as a concept at the time of the REACH negotiations and were considered an important type of substance to take into account but endocrine disruptors were seen as too complex to include in an already complex piece of regulation such as REACH (ENV B interview). It was also considered that endocrine disruptors were not explored enough scientifically for policymakers to be able to act, and there was still a need to formulate criteria to assess and classify these particular substances that impacted on human hormonal health (ENV B interview). Since then the EU has adopted legislation on pesticides and biocides (EP and Council 2009; EP and Council 2012b) that includes provisions to gradually phase out endocrine disrupting chemicals present in these two types of products.

The grand issue still being discussed and negotiated is the criteria for specifying what properties a chemical must have to be considered an endocrine disruptor. This is an on-going discussion since the EU started regulating EDCs with the pesticides and biocides regulations, but it was exacerbated when several member states sued the European Commission at the European Court of Justice for failing to come up with legislation establishing criteria to identify endocrine disruptors by the date required in the pesticides and biocides regulations. The urgent need to come up with criteria to classify EDCs after the European Court of Justice sanctioned the Commission means that EDCs have become a more salient topic on the political agenda in recent years (ENV B interview). In June 2016 the Commission finally released a legislative proposal establishing the criteria to identify endocrine disrupting properties in substances, after a lengthy period of meetings and consultations with experts and stakeholders.

WECF was one of such stakeholders to take part in the European Commission's consultations to define the criteria to identify endocrine disruptors. WECF's work on this type of chemicals goes back twenty years, a period during which the organisation has worked hard to promote public and policymakers' awareness of the potential hazardous effects of these particular substances. The work was originally done individually on chemicals that were known or suspected to alter the hormonal system, such as phthalates, bisphenol-A or parabens. However, more recently, and as a reflection of the increasing salience of EDCs on the EU environmental political agenda, DG Environment started to provide funding streams for specific projects on endocrine disrupting chemicals, treating these substances as a group. WECF therefore started working on endocrine disruptors as a group as well, to match the EU's categorisation and regulation of this environmental policy issue. This shift in focus from single chemical substances to treating endocrine disruptors as a group was identified in interviews with WECF staff as a significant change in WECF's modus operandi on this topic (WECF B interview). It simplified the advocacy work on this topic towards the EU institutions and the application to EU funding streams for projects on the issue of raising public awareness on substances with hormonal disrupting properties.

Recently, WECF was successful in three applications for EU-funded projects on endocrine disrupting chemicals: the *Reduce exposure to EDCs and advocating for better legislation* project (2014-2015), the *BaltInfoHaz* project (2011-2015) and the *ChildProtect-Life* project (2014-2016). All of them had a two-pronged strategy of raising public awareness on the exposure to EDCs and of informing policymakers of the harmful effects of these substances. The aim of raising public awareness was to inform consumers of the risks posed by certain substances present in everyday products such as cosmetics, toys, and plastic products in order to contribute to changes in consuming patterns and influence businesses to voluntarily substitute hazardous chemicals for safer alternatives. The aim of informing policymakers about EDCs was to enable them to come up with national legislation on the topic, and put pressure at the European level for legislation to be adopted regulating the presence of these chemical substances. In the three EU-funded projects conducted by WECF on endocrine disruptors there was also the goal of activating the organised civil society of specific European countries, such as the Baltic states in the *BaltInfoHaz* project or Germany in the case of the *ChildProtect-Life* project, on the issue of endocrine disruptors and thus enabling NGOs to have an informed voice in the policymaking process. A concrete example: in the *Reduce*

exposure to EDCs and advocating for better legislation project, one of the stated goals was to inform German civil society about EDCs and consequently ensure that there would be a significant number of contributions to the impact assessment that was being prepared by the European Commission on establishing criteria for identification of endocrine disruptors.

WECF has also implemented projects on endocrine disruptors that are funded by other international organisations and national governments, particularly the German one, a country where WECF has one of its office bases. This piecemeal project strategy to the issue of endocrine disrupting chemicals is not ideal for the organisation since it means having to compartmentalise efforts to what is a common topic (WECF B interview), but is a practical necessity due to the difficulty in getting a longer-term and stable funding source on the issue of EDCs.

Beyond conducting awareness-raising projects, WECF also undertook other actions on the issue of endocrine disrupting chemicals. The women's organisation participated in the public consultation launched by the Commission in 2014 in order to set up the criteria for identifying EDCs, and in 2015 WECF launched an own-initiative report on women and chemicals, intended to be an overview of the ways chemicals impact women's health specifically. In both of these activities we can see a mismatch between the EU's frames on endocrine disruptors and WECF's. Starting with the 2014 *Public Consultation on defining criteria for identifying endocrine disruptors in the context of the implementation of the plant protection product regulation and the biocidal products regulation*, organised by DG SANTE, WECF's position was extremely critical of both the content and the form of the mechanism to engage stakeholders on this matter. WECF heavily criticised the scope of the consultation, which was limited to endocrine disruptors in agriculture; the format of the consultation, which featured closed questions on a highly technical subject; and the content of the consultation, which involved mainly questions geared to a preoccupation with the costs of regulation for farmers and industry instead of focusing on benefits for the whole society. The format of this consultation severely limited WECF's capacity to introduce gender and/or sex considerations into the discussion.

The two proposals of the Commission released in June 2016 for criteria to identify EDCs that were a product of this public consultation were also severely criticised by the

women's organisation for the laxity of their criteria. WECF strongly condemned the erasure of provisions which made possible the identification of potential endocrine disrupting substances, not just definitive and absolutely proven ones. This, the women's organisation feared, would mean that only a small fraction of endocrine disruptors will be identified as such, meaning that humans will not be properly safe, in particular members from vulnerable groups such as children and pregnant women. With this new legislation, the EU is abandoning the precautionary principle that regulated European chemical policy since the REACH regulation. This principle meant that substances suspected of having severe negative impacts on human health were regulated and restricted. The EU is moving to an absolute proof principle. This is seen by some internal and external voices as a setback in the protection of human health, since now there has to be very strong scientific evidence of cause-and-effect between a chemical and a negative health impact for it to be regulated, something which in some cases may take decades to achieve. The underlying premise that steered the Commission in its design of EDCs criteria, just as in the case of the REACH regulation, is achieving a balance between two often contradictory goals: protecting human health and the environment, and improving the functioning of the internal market by ensuring that industry will not be overly burdened (EC 2016a; EC 2016 2016b).

WECF's focus, on the other hand, is solely on the protection of human health, particularly that of pregnant women and children, considered vulnerable groups. In this regard, WECF's report on Women and Chemicals is very telling, since it includes as a proposed solution for regulating chemicals to limit safe exposure of humans to chemical substances not by the average male standard, as is common practice, but by the most vulnerable group standard: children and pregnant women (WECF 2016c). The other proposed solutions are mandatory labelling of composition of products, making the precautionary principle the underlying justification in chemical regulations, and increasing the participation of women in chemical policymaking to ensure that diversity of voices leads to diversity of interests being considered. These solutions reflect a preoccupation first and foremost with protecting human health from definitive and potential endocrine disruptors and other hazardous chemical substances, and particular attention is paid to protecting groups that are the most vulnerable to these chemicals. In its Women and Chemicals report, WECF explicitly states that the organisation considers this issue to be part of 'the broader concept of gender equality and sustainable development' (Ibid., p. 8).

Contrary to what often happens when the EU considers gendered differentiated impacts on its chemical policy, WECF does not limit its analysis of differentiated chemical impact on women to their different physiology. The focus is not only on women's biological determinants but also on their social roles. Both determine the type of exposure they are subjected to and from which chemicals. The use of gender equality on chemical policy by WECF is therefore *stretched* to include both sex determinants and socially-constructed roles. Women are constructed not just as passive vulnerable victims but also as potential agents of change, something reflected in the goal of strengthening women's presence in decision-making and the chemical production.

8.2.2. Sustainable development in third countries: WECF and DG DEVCO

DG DEVCO, specifically the unit on Democratic Governance, Human Rights and Gender, was mentioned in interviews with WECF staff as one of the institutions more welcoming to the women's organisation in the EU (WECF A interview; WECF B interview; WECF C interview). The DG is identified as one of the most progressive in terms of the adoption of gender mainstreaming, although some considerable obstacles are still present for its effective implementation in practice (see Chapter 5 for a detailed analysis of such obstacles). WECF interacts with this DG through different activities including meetings, public consultations, and application to co-funded projects. The most concrete and visible dimension of this interaction is WECF's work as a coordinator of DG DEVCO's co-funded projects, of which the *International Women's Alliance 2030*[20] and the *Building local capacity for domestic solar heating, hot water and insulation for rural and remote areas in the EEC region* projects are two examples.

International Women's Alliance 2030

One of the priorities of EU's development policy is building the capacity of local and regional civil society organisations in developing countries and their cooperation with local authorities. The fostering of civil society in developing countries is seen as a means of 'consolidating and supporting democracy, the rule of law, good governance, human

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[20] The formal title of the project is *Women's NGOs networking to realise the Sustainable Development Goals*, although WECF nicknames it *International Women's Alliance 2030*, using this denomination in many of its communications. For practical reasons, the short version will be used in this chapter when referring to this project.

rights and the relevant principles of international law', and as a way of guaranteeing an increased 'sustainable economic, social and environmental development' (EP and Council 2014). Therefore, the participation of civil society organisations in projects that DG DEVCO finances is often a requirement. This preoccupation with involving and strengthening civil society organisations in third countries was the justification for DG DEVCO to launch in March 2012 a public consultation on the issue, entitled *Consultation on the future EU policy on "Civil Society Organisations in development cooperation"* (DG DEVCO 2012). The goals of this consultation were to gather best practices and views on civil society organisations and development principles, to understand the challenges that civil society organisations face for action in the context of a shrinking legal and regulatory space, to promote civil society participation in policy processes and accountability, internal governance and accountability of organisations, and gather views on how to achieve a consistent EU engagement with local organisations. WECF participated in this consultation with a contribution.

This public consultation fed into the EU development policy on civil society organisations from 2014 to 2020. In 2014 the European Parliament and the Council adopted a regulation that established a funding instrument for development cooperation (EP and Council 2014). One of the priorities of this instrument is precisely the strengthening of civil society and local authorities and the improvement of cooperation between the two types of organisations (Ibid., Art. 1). Gender equality is mentioned explicitly as a core principle of development policy: 'The Union is strongly committed to gender equality as a human right, a question of social justice and a core value of the Union's development policy'. Gender equality is central to the achievement of all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). On 14 June 2010, the Council endorsed the EU Plan of Action 2010-2015 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development. (EP and Council 2014). The regulation earmarks EUR 970 million for the theme of civil society organisations and local authorities for the period of 2014-2017. It is in this context that WECF successfully applied for a project on the *Strengthening Regional, European and Global CSO Umbrella Organisations* call. The aim is to build the capacity of local, regional and national civil society organisations in developing countries so that they are able to implement and monitor the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and make these organisations able to engage meaningfully in the policy process of their countries and regions (DG DEVCO 2012). Transnational civil society organisations are recognised as important in this task of building the capacity of local organisations, training their staff

and volunteers, and allowing them to cooperate with similar organisations at the national and international level.

WECF's project *International Women's Alliance 2030* aims to build the capacity of local organisations and make them stronger on aspects such as gender, policy, advocacy, and SDGs. The focus is on ensuring that the SDGs directly related to the environment (e.g. clean energy, water and sanitation) are implemented in the regions where these local organisations operate. This comes from WECF's strongly-held belief, much similar to the one shared by the EU on development policy, that NGOs and civil society have a crucial role to play in the implementation of SDGs (WECF C interview). WECF has therefore teamed up with four other umbrella organisations for this project focusing on gender and women that will then share the knowledge they acquired with local organisations through roundtables, shadow reports, and other local activities. The requirement from the DG DEVCO's call for projects to cover more than 50 developing countries was a key definer of the form and content of the project designed by WECF. This requirement ended up determining the need for including other umbrella organisations as partners in the project, since WECF's own members were not enough to cover the 50+ country jurisdiction. It also determined the number and type of activities to conduct, more numerous to cover as many countries as possible but smaller in scope than the organisation would have preferred (WECF C interview).

Other DG DEVCO-funded projects

In addition to a preoccupation with strengthening the capacity of local civil society, WECF also manages and implements projects that aim to make tangible changes in the daily lives of people in developing countries through the use of improved technology. One such example, co-funded also by DG DEVCO, was a project to improve access to sanitation and hot water in rural villages in neighbouring countries such as Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus. The main goal of the project was to train locals in the construction, maintenance and use of solar collectors to improve insulation and access to hot water. This project had a focus on women and on improving women's quality of life, since social gender roles determine that they are the ones to whom hot water is more precious (domestic chores like cooking and washing up are usually the responsibility of women) and often the ones responsible for the time-consuming hard work of collecting fuel for heating up water. WECF's projects are thus gender-sensitive since they recognise that

the design of technological improvements and capacity-building efforts is important to make sure both women and men collect their advantages. Gender-sensitivity is a dimension of projects that fits well with the EU's avowed commitment to gender equality in development and cooperation policy.

8.2.3. WECF efforts for gender mainstreaming

Below is an example of an attempt by a women's group to foster gender mainstreaming at the EU level. In this case, the aim was to create a network that would step up efforts to mainstream gender into the European Parliament's environmental policy work.

The Gender + E3 working group at the European Parliament

In 2013 a group of MEPs and a few NGOs got together to set up an informal working group at the European Parliament to discuss and promote gender issues within environmental policy. The group was named Gender + E3, with the 3 'E's standing for 'equality, ecology and economy' (WECF 2013a). WECF was invited to be a member of the group, along with other NGOs working in the field of gender equality and/or environmental issues such as the European Women's Lobby, Friends of the Earth, Genanet, and the Global Water Institute. The group of MEPs included members from the FEMM, ENVI (public health and food safety), AFET (foreign affairs) and IMCO (internal market and consumer protection) committees. The main goal was 'to work for socially, ecologically, and economically sustainable policies within and outside the European sphere', inform diverse parliamentary forums and committees about the importance of taking gender into consideration on sustainable development issues, and try to make sure that a gender perspective was incorporated into the Commission's proposals and initiative reports on the topic (Ibid.). The role of the NGOs within the group was to inform MEPs about conferences, workshops and latest research on gender and environmental issues, hence serving as a bridge between European politicians and civil society.

One of the key preoccupations of the informal group was to debate ways to incorporate a gender perspective into the international negotiations that were happening at the time on the successors of the MDGs that were to expire in 2015. So in September 2013 the Gender + E3 group issued a position on the topic that was published by the EU-specialised media and by WECF and the European Women's Lobby on their own

websites. The group argued that there is a double standard when it comes to the EU promoting gender balance and gender considerations in development policy to third countries but stopping short of implementing it within its own borders. The text therefore calls for the importance of considering how men and women, due to their different social roles, may be affected differently by climate change and may have disparate attitudes towards the problem and the solutions for climate change (WECF 2013a). It denounces the lack of women in decision-making positions regarding climate change, and the gender-blindness of climate change policy in Europe, which may lead to decreased effectiveness in accomplishing the goals of low-carbon and climate-resilient development. The group calls for a two-pronged strategy to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into the negotiations for post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals: ensure gender balance at the decision-making table, and increase gender expertise of decision-makers through training and encouragement to rethink gendered attitudes and structures (Ibid.).

Albeit an example of an effort to mainstream gender into the work of the European Parliament in environmental policy, of bringing civil society into the debate, and of a recognition of NGOs' expertise in gender equality and environment issues, the Gender + E3 was a short-lived and, according to some members, a half-hearted attempt at gender mainstreaming (GEN A interview). The cost of travel for non-Brussels-based NGOs is once more brought up as a great obstacle in attending meetings regularly and maintaining the flexible and often spontaneous contacts required for these informal work gatherings (GEN A interview; WECF A interview; WECF B interview). After the release of the position of the Gender + E3 group in September 2013, there were no other statements issued, which reflects the lack of activity of the informal group. The overall issue of short-term planning when it comes to gender mainstreaming in the EU was mentioned by a member as affecting the effort that was put into the group, along with gender issues seeing their position lowered in the EU political agenda (GEN A interview).

8.3. WECF and gender mainstreaming: organisational and discourse adaptation

8.3.1. Organisational adaptation

WECF's work extends beyond advocacy and lobbying politicians and policymakers. A key component of the work of the women's transnational umbrella organisation is the coordination and implementation of concrete projects that have practical consequences for the lives of local populations in developing countries, and that are steered to increase the capacity and the expertise of local civil society organisations on environmental and gender equality issues. There is also an important component of awareness-raising in the work that WECF does. In areas such as the effects of chemical exposure on children and pregnant women WECF has developed information materials for the general public and for national and European policymakers. All three types of work – advocacy, capacity building, and outreach campaigning – are shaped to some extent by the successfulness or failure of WECF's engagement with the EU. The most crucial aspect of this engagement is the availability of relevant and accessible funding from the part of the EU and WECF's ability to successfully apply for it.

The funding programmes put forward by specific DGs reflect the medium-term policy priorities of each of them, with the sanctioning of the European Parliament and the Council. The general funding programmes are usually drawn out to coincide with the EU multiannual financial frameworks (MFF), the budget cycles for each seven-year period (current MFF is 2014-2020), but they are further split into smaller time chunks of award-granting. This means that NGOs that are highly dependent on EU funding are limited in two fundamental ways: the type of issues they can work on, that have to coincide to some extent with the EU's priorities in that policy field; and the length of time to undertake their initiatives. So, for instance, chemicals in general and endocrine disruptors in particular are topics that have been on the EU policy agenda for the last few years, as evidenced by the legislation proposed in the area (DG SANTE 2015; EC 2016a; EC 2016b). WECF has therefore been able to secure funding for three projects related to that topic: *ChildLife-Protect*, *BaltInfoHaz* and *Reducing Exposure to EDCs for Pregnant Women and Children* in the last five years. WECF has also been able to secure funding for several projects aiming to increase local access to sustainable energy sources in EU neighbouring countries. Although all of these projects have a gender dimension, either by paying attention to chemical hazards for pregnant women or by enabling women to operate clean local energy sources, the emphasis is usually put on the technical part of the projects that fit EU funding priorities. In some of the projects we can therefore witness a sort of Trojan-horsing of gender equality into mainstream policy priorities.

It is not just on the type of issues that WECF is limited when it comes to applying for EU funding. It is also on the manner of working. Funding for projects is often limited to a few years: the average length of projects funded by the EU and coordinated by WECF is 2.3 years. WECF's EU-funded projects range in length from one to five years, with projects of one and two years being the most common. This severely restricts the organisation's capacity to plan long-term activities and negatively impacts its running stability. Other requirements of EU funding, such as often a requirement of consortia with business and governments for projects funded by DG ENV, or the involvement of NGOs based in over 50 countries for DG DEVCO, forces the NGO to a hard trade-off between credibility and capacity, quantity and depth, effectively barring WECF for certain funding streams that would otherwise be applicable.

The EU shapes WECF's modus operandi in ways beyond funding. One example mentioned by WECF staff in interviews was the work on chemicals that affect the human hormonal and reproductive systems (WECF B interview). These different substances had been the target of WECF's advocacy and awareness-raising efforts for the best part of the last two decades, but they were addressed individually. It was only after the EU started to work on them with more urgency and treating them as a group that WECF switched its strategy with the endocrine disrupting chemicals and began grouping them as well. Additionally, due to the presence of several EU institutions' headquarters, Brussels functions with magnetic pull, attracting a lot of conferences, meetings, organisations and networks to it, meaning that regular travel to the city is an imperative as well as an additional strain on the budget of NGOs based elsewhere, as is the case of WECF.

8.3.2. Frames and discourse adaptation

The overarching neoliberal frame permeates all EU institutions and consequently all policies that they produce. When it comes to policies that WECF engages with within the EU, chemicals are no exception to this. Two main competing frames are used to justify action in this field: competitiveness of the EU internal market, and the protection of human health and the environment. These frames are used in parallel, but they are competing; indeed, one of the biggest hurdles in the negotiations for the REACH regulation was getting the right balance between the financial and economic burden for

industry and an appropriate level of health and environmental protection (WECF B interview; ENV B interview). Different DGs often have disparate attitudes towards the same issue. So, for instance, when the topic of endocrine disrupting chemicals moved from DG ENV to DG SANTE there was a perceptible change in the stance towards this topic to a more sceptical one in terms of EDC's harmful impacts, as mentioned by policymakers and WECF staff in interviews (ENV B interview; WECF B interview). This was reflected in new legislation. Several environmental groups, including the HEAL platform and WECF, strongly condemned the legislation establishing criteria for endocrine disrupting chemicals proposed by the Commission in June 2016 as too lax and with a high level of burden of proof for EDCs to be identified and treated as such. This was seen as shattering the decades-old precautionary principle and tipping the scales too much in favour of industry while providing an unsuitable level of protection for humans (ENV B interview; HEAL 2016; WECF 2016a).

Specifically when it comes to gender, and even on issues of EU environmental policy that do contain a gender dimension, the frames used by WECF are different from the ones used by the EU institutions. So, for instance, in the case of chemicals, WECF and the EU institutions share the general view that there is a degree of difference of impacts on women and on men, as well as on children, that is relevant when regulating chemicals. Biology and physiology are responsible for these sex differences. However, WECF puts an emphasis also on the socially determined gender roles that determine exposure to different chemical substances to different degrees, based on the time spent by women and men on certain environments and activities. For WECF, understanding these gender differences on chemical exposure and addressing them is part of a wider strategy towards gender equality and sustainable development, one that also includes getting more women participating in the chemical production cycle and its decision-making (WECF 2016c). WECF's position is also about making sure that the recommended exposure limits are brought down to the level that is safest for vulnerable groups (Ibid.), instead of being standardised through the average male, effectively ending male bias on chemical exposure limit recommendations.

When it comes to gender frames in other environmental topics, it is even more of a struggle to WECF. Making sure that environmental legislation takes into account women and men's different social gender roles and that both benefit from it is generally difficult in EU environmental policy within EU's borders due to DG ENV treating policy and

solutions as technical issues that only indirectly at best concern people (Allwood 2017). Mainstreaming gender into environmental policy at EU level is sometimes also seen as going beyond the principle of subsidiarity and the need for EU law to maintain a basic standard, as opposed to a gold standard, which will be for member states and local authorities to decide (ENV A interview).

What could be expected was a direct correlation between gender awareness of DGs and WECF's success in applying to funding streams from those DGs. The reality is not as straightforward. It bears taking into account that WECF's operating grant from the EU, one of the most general types of EU funding there is that covers organisational expenses for NGOs, is awarded by DG ENV, through its LIFE+ programme. This is because WECF works at the intersection of two main policy issues that are themselves transversal to a wide range of other fields: gender equality and sustainable development. Aspects of each can therefore be played up or down to fit the priorities and general discourse of different DGs and their funding programmes. In the last decade, WECF managed projects funded by DG ENV, DG DEVCO and DG NEAR. Gender equality is a recognised and explicit goal of EU development policy and therefore it is easier to stress that dimension in projects funded by DG DEVCO. In projects funded by DG ENV, it is the technical environmental aspects that should be in evidence.

There is a degree of discourse flexibility that allows WECF to introduce a gender dimension into issues that at the EU level are largely dealt with gender-blindness. This is done through a kind of venue-shopping for amenable institutions and matching funding priorities, through an adaptation of WECF's own discourse to those priorities. For the same goal, WECF can change the focus and the framing of its priorities to make a project appropriate under DG DEVCO instead of DG ENV. For instance, the *International Women's Alliance 2030* project is about making sure women's voices are heard when it comes to the implementation of SDGs closely related to the environment, such as sanitation, energy and water. This is about achieving a more gender equitable environmental policy. However, by framing the issue as a case of civil society strengthening in developing countries, and of empowerment of women in particular, it fits one of the funding and policy priorities of DG DEVCO. This project thus becomes pertinent under DG DEVCO funding programmes. In terms of projects on chemicals, also financed by LIFE+ programme of DG ENV, it is easier to Trojan-horse the issue of

gender since there is some recognition at EU level of vulnerable groups such as pregnant women and children. This capacity for discourse adaptation and for venue-shopping is thus a crucial asset for a successful engagement with the EU.

8.3.3. Processes of proactivism

WECF has some flexibility of discourse, which means that the organisation is capable of adapting to the priorities of a few DGs. The next step is to address the harder question of whether WECF contributes to the transformation of EU's own discourse and policy priorities. Windows of opportunity for change are limited and often unsuccessful, although the NGO has been involved in some of them. The Gender + E3 informal group at the European Parliament was a tentative way of introducing a more participative method of gender mainstreaming into EU environmental policy. WECF was one of the few NGOs involved in the set-up of the group but the group was short-lived and ineffectual. Its work resulted in a statement release mentioning the need to take the gender dimension seriously when it comes to environmental policy within EU's borders, and to go beyond the goal of having more women at the environmental decision-making table to having more informed policymakers and politicians with gender expertise on that area. The timing of the statement release coincided with the preparations for the Conference of the Parties meeting in Warsaw in December 2013, an important set of international climate talks, so the text was supposed to work as a recommendation piece for the EU and for the 28 member states. No further statements were released and some of the NGOs were unable to participate in the organised group meetings, once again a reflection of the difficulty that elsewhere-based organisations often face to engage with Brussels-based policy- and decision-making.

Another type of window of opportunity for change that WECF tries to take advantage of is the public consultations on the future of funding programmes and/or on policy priorities regarding a specific issue. Arguably, all public consultations conducted by the European Commission on policy topics prior to taking a formal stance on issues can be seen as windows of opportunity. However, consultations on the future of funding programmes, such as the *Consultation on a future EU financial instrument for the environment (continuation of LIFE+)* (DG ENV 2010) are a particular case of a chance to shape the organisation's own means of financial survival. The objective of this consultation was 'to gather views on the next financial instrument for the environment for

the period 2014-2020, especially its objectives, activities and support modalities' (Ibid.). This was specifically targeted to stakeholders, including environmental NGOs, that had previously applied for and managed projects funded by the LIFE+ programme to share their views on it and point the way forward. DG DEVCO's consultation on the priorities for civil society in EU development policy was also an interesting case that translated directly into a funding stream afterwards. WECF also contributed to this consultation.

One of the critiques that WECF makes regarding EU public consultations in general is that they are very restricted in their form and content. Consultations are usually about a very specific topic and the questions are closed, sometimes offering pre-determined options to choose from. This severely restricts the ability of stakeholders to shape the terms of the debate at one of the earliest policymaking stages, since the range of terms possible to debate an issue is already pre-established by the European Commission. New topics or new ways of looking at an issue are therefore hard to introduce through the formal channels for stakeholder participation in the EU policymaking process.

Table 12 is a summary of some of the processes of adaptation and reaction that WECF undertook in environmental and international development policies.

	Processes of adaptation	Processes of proactivism
Discourse (Framing)	Treating endocrine disrupting chemicals as a group in projects, advocacy and public-awareness campaigns.	n/a
Actors (Institutional allies)	Contacts in different DGs to work on a wide range of environmental issues in a wide geographical area.	Member of informal group in European Parliament to bring awareness of gender into environmental issues. Raising awareness of national and European policymakers on EDCs' nefarious impact.
Resources (Funding programmes)	Playing either gender equality or environmental technical details up or	Participation in public consultations about future of funding programmes to

	down according to each DG's priorities to apply for multiple funding streams.	help DGs establish their funding priorities (successful in DG DEVCO).

Table 12. WECF's strategies for take-up and creation of political opportunities in EU sustainable development policy

8.4. Conclusion

WECF's work on sustainable development spans several policies in which the EU has a competence and therefore WECF engages with diverse DGs in the European Commission. Its unique position as an organisation that not only advocates for gender equality in environmental issues but also as a service-provider in terms of training and projects on the ground in Europe and third-countries means that one of the biggest chunks of WECF engagement with the EU is application for EU co-funded projects.

Opportunities and resistance in sustainable development policy

Two of WECF's main interlocutors, DG ENV and DG DEVCO, can be placed in opposing poles of a gender-awareness scale. The only environmental field where gender is considered to any extent is chemicals, more specifically endocrine disruptors, due to their obvious and direct impacts on women and men's biologically distinct hormonal systems. DG DEVCO is one of the Commission's units that devotes more resources and has the best knowledge of how to integrate gender into its policies (Reis 2017).

Nevertheless, these opposing stances towards gender equality do not translate neatly into reduced or heightened opportunities for WECF in terms of funding: sitting at the intersection of environmental concerns and gender equality, WECF is able to play the latter up or down depending on who is its interlocutor. This means that WECF has successfully applied for DG ENV-funded projects that aim to raise awareness on the impacts of EDCs in vulnerable groups, including (pregnant) women, for instance. When it comes to advocacy efforts, in chemical sub-policy, the economic competitiveness is a ubiquitous frame that competes strongly with human and environmental protection, and often only concerted efforts from NGOs can offset some of the prominence of business lobbying. Even in chemical policy actions such as the REACH regulation, where

protection of human health and the environment are given as justification for the EU to act, legal justification is firmly rooted only in economic competitiveness (Art. 95 of TEC on the harmonisation of laws to improve the internal market), not on environmental protection (Art. 175 of TEC). Environmental policy proves a difficult one to mainstream gender into, even in the EP, an institution generally seen as quite amenable to gender equality. Nevertheless, again it is through FEMM that most of the attempts to bring recognition of women and men's specificities in terms of environmental impact are brought up, as was the case of its opinion report during the REACH negotiations, which led to mentioning of vulnerable groups (including pregnant women) in the final text of the regulation.

Below is a table that summarises the political opportunities and obstacles afforded by the EU to women's groups that fight for gender equality in sustainable development, both within and outside the EU's borders.

	Opportunities	Resistance/obstacles
Structural	Complex policymaking process, with multiple points of access and opportunities to influence institutions with different preferences. Commission's penchant for funding European groups representing public interests in virtually all policy areas.	Economic growth and competitiveness master frames in EU, permeating environmental policy actions.
Institutional	Long-standing rhetorical commitments to women and gender equality and institutional mechanisms in place to mainstream gender into DG DEVCO-funded programmes.	Subsidiarity principle justifying no gender mainstreaming at EU level in environmental policy. DG ENV's preference for technical information as a strongly regulatory DG, coupled with concerns over competitiveness of EU economy, gives industry a loud voice in this field.

Individual	n/a	n/a

Table 13. Multi-tiered approach to opportunities and obstacles to gender change and gender equality advocacy in EU sustainable development policy

What kind of gender mainstreaming approach?

In DG Environment gender is largely absent in the policymaking process so there is usually no process of gender mainstreaming whatsoever. Gender is not considered or, at best, is relegated to the implementation phase, left to the discretion of national and local authorities. Nevertheless, there are opportunities for women's groups to contribute with their positions through formal public consultations, much like any other interest group. The exception for gender mainstreaming in the environmental field appears when it comes to chemicals, specifically endocrine disruptors. There is recognition of the different impacts on women and men due to their biological composition and this recognition is filtered into policy documents. Again, the process through which civil society participates is through formal public consultations and a few organisations enjoy a consultative status with ECHA, the European Chemicals Agency. However, WECF has severely criticised the format and content of the public consultations, in particular the one opened in 2014 for the establishment of criteria to identify EDCs: it consisted of closed questions geared towards regulatory costs, with a limited focus on agriculture, which severely restricted the ability of the women's group to bring gender considerations to the fore. There is thus a very limited concern for the gender dimension in environmental issues, restricted to chemicals and even then, the approach is mostly a top-down one, close to the expert-bureaucratic approach described in the literature.

DG DEVCO, on the other hand, has considerably formal structures in place to include gender equality and gendered impacts of its policies. The sub-unit responsible for gender is an illustration of the commitment to gender mainstreaming translated into a formal structure, and resources – funding, training and time – are allocated to this mechanism in DG DEVCO. Public consultations are regularly launched, and one recent example was on the topic of civil society organisations and their contribution to development, which was translated into a funding programme specifically to improve the capacity of grassroots organisations to engage with policymakers, educate the public and participate in the political debate on issues they are engaged in. This thus reflects some degree of responsiveness to stakeholders' concerns. However, and despite greater openness to considerations of gender, the approach to mainstreaming is largely a top-down one that seems to be common to most DGs analysed.

An attempt at gender mainstreaming that was closer to the participative-democratic approach was undertaken in the European Parliament with the establishing of the Gender + E3 group. This informal short-lived group consisted of MEPs and several civil society organisations with a stake on gender equality and/or environmental issues, including WECF and the European Women's Lobby. It aimed to discuss the importance of considering gender in the negotiations for replacing the MDGs and of including gender in discussions of sustainable development within the EU borders as well as in international development cooperation with developing countries. However, and notwithstanding its potential to seriously recognise and include the expertise of civil society into the debate, the Gender + E3 group was short-lived and a somewhat ineffectual mechanism to that end.

This section concludes the case study part of the thesis. The next chapter is a comparative analysis of the three women's groups and respective policy fields when it comes to gender mainstreaming and opportunities for gender equality advocacy. It draws from the findings on Chapters 5-8 and compares them against the theoretical framework set out in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 9. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: OPPORTUNITIES, RESISTANCE AND ADAPTATION

After careful analysis of how gender is mainstreamed in DG Justice, DG Research, DG Environment and DG DEVCO, and of dissecting the frames and gendered considerations negotiated and adopted in several pieces of legislation and policy proposed by these four arenas, this chapter will discuss these findings in light of theoretical considerations presented in Chapter 3. It will also compare and discuss the strategies employed by the three women's groups studied for this research in trying to adapt and proactively change the political opportunity structures that the EU affords them.

9.1. The sources of opportunities and resistance to gender mainstreaming in the EU

Suzanne Franzway et al. (1989), like many researchers before and after them, have questioned whether 'demands [can] be made on the state to intervene in the interests of women when the state embodies the interests of men?' (Franzway et al. 1989, p. 27). For a long time the state has been 'culturally marked as masculine and functions largely as an institutionalisation of the power of men' since it has been men that have dominated its echelons and thus masculine norms have been institutionalised as the standard (Franzway et al. 1989, p. 29). The EU has not been an exception (Abels & MacRae 2015; Abels & Mushaben 2012a; Kronsell 2005; Kronsell 2016; Locher & Prügl 2009; Weiner & MacRae 2017). But if the state is not neutral, can it be made to work for the interests of women?

What Franzway et al. argue is that the state does not embody 'a unitary male interest' at all times since it has also been 'an important vehicle for the advancement of the status of women' (Franzway et al. 1989, p. 29). Therefore, the state – and the EU – are marred with contradictions that make advancing women's interests and gender equality possible in certain spaces and under certain circumstances. This was the rationale for looking at the gender mainstreaming in the EU, and the receptiveness to women's groups' advocates, within a multi-level framework.

In each of the case study chapters, opportunities and resistances were analysed through this multi-level framework, looking at what was facilitating or impeding gender mainstreaming and gender equality advocacy structurally, what was specific to the institutional arenas in a particular policy field, and which opportunities and resistances were due to the actions and preferences of individual actors. Bringing back Table 3 from Chapter 3, which was used to guide this multi-tiered analysis for each policy field, I will now use it to compare the opportunities and obstacles the three women's organisations faced, to see how the political opportunity structures for gender equality vary across policy fields and whether some opportunities and resistances are endemic to the EU political system.

	Opportunities	Resistance/obstacles
Structural	Multi-level, porous system, democratic-deficit awareness	Neoliberal master frame, neutral bureaucracy
Institutional	Consultations, funding (specific opportunities in specific units)	Logics of appropriateness, regulatory vs redistributive policies
Individual	Feminist preferences, gender awareness, velvet triangles	Ignorance, refusal

Table 3. Multi-tiered approach to opportunities and obstacles to gender change and advocacy in EU

9.1.1. Structural receptiveness and the neoliberal ethos

In Table 3 I defined structural resistance to gender mainstreaming in the EU as 'resistance that stems from the EU's constitutional make-up including the balance of power between its institutional components, treaty-ascribed competences, and long-term political projects' (see Table 2). As mentioned in the introductory section of this chapter, the greatest barrier to gender policy change is the institutionalisation of the power of men in the constitutional fabric of the EU. This is reflected in the priorities of the Union, with a heavy preponderance of the economic public realm in the sphere of the EU's competences, in detriment to reproductive issues, relegated to the private sphere, but with a disproportionate impact on women's lives due to biological and social roles.

The EU operates under a neoliberal ethos that is reflected not just in the predominance of the economic political project but especially in the assumptions made about citizens, in political aims and in the modes of governance to achieve them. Neoliberalism treats people blindly as rational and autonomous citizens, consumers and workers (Teghtsoonian 2004), disregarding the relationships of dependence that particularly shape the lives of women as mothers (Abels & Mushaben 2012b). The focus is on the public sphere of productive work and the goal is the realisation of the Single Market through the tearing down of regulatory barriers to achieve the four freedoms of movement. A market logic thus permeates the whole remit of EU's action. According to Richard Thomas and Peter Turnbull, the Commission persuaded a varied group of political actors – including women's organisations – that the market was the solution to Europe's problems (Thomas & Turnbull 2016). Economic growth and competitiveness are thus the ultimate goals of several policies pursued by the EU. The policymaking process is infused with neoliberal governance features: impact assessments are widespread, privileging the analysis of the economic impacts and the regulatory burden of policies (Mergaert & Minto 2015), technical quantifiable expertise is preferred and issues tend to be de-politicised by widespread reluctance in analysing and addressing inequalities and the impact of EU policies in (gender) relations of power in society (Kronsell 2005). Governance efficiency, although not intrinsically a neoliberal governance goal, is often used as a pretext to shed features of the policymaking process, including gender mainstreaming, that are deemed as administrative burdens (Minto & Mergaert 2015, p. 12). This was illustrated in the making of Gender Action Plans optional for applicants to the 7th Framework Programme for Research, and to the following Horizon 2020 funding programme, as an attempt to streamline project applications and shed what was deemed as an undue bureaucratic layer for the scientific community (HG A interview).

The assumed neutrality of bureaucracy is a significant obstacle to the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming, a mechanism whose goal is to shed light into the gendered norms permeating policymaking. Male-centred institutional practices have evolved and become the norm in the political system due to the predominance of men in positions of power (Haastrup & Kenny 2015). They are rendered invisible because they constitute the norm, and seen as gender-neutral because they are presented as common-sense. Thus, the male-as-norm/women-as-deviant model of the EU neoliberal single market project is invisible, and its modes of governance masquerade as neutral

and objective. This renders women-advancement strategies as ideologically biased and running contrary to norms of neutrality and de-politicisation (Chappell 2006; Minto & Mergaert 2015). As such, '[b]ureaucractic objectivity takes the high ground as free of values' and any attempts to challenge it, such as gender mainstreaming, 'may be readily construed as value-laden, as political, not objective' (Franzway et al. 1989, p. 144). This is more pronounced in more markedly neoliberal institutional settings such as the ones that deal with competition and trade (Locher & Prügl 2009), and in arenas that are heavily regulatory such as environmental policy. As Chapter 5 showed, the penchant for technical expertise in DG Environment, along with the de-coupling of environmental issues and their impact on people, is a strong determinant of the general refusal to mainstream gender into environmental policy (see also Allwood 2017; Reis 2017).

This is the result of a neoliberal master frame that permeates all EU areas of action (Thomas & Turnbull 2016). Gender equality is thus subjected to the resilience of this master frame and its meaning is often narrowed to economic-related issues (Lombardo et al. 2009) or justified through the benefits that it brings to economic growth and competitiveness (Elomäki 2015). This was something pervasive in the case studies analysed here. EPWS's efforts to bring attention to the gender dimension lacking in EU-funded research fell largely on deaf ears due to the Commission's main focus on the numerical under-representativeness of women in science careers and research teams (see Chapter 7). This is not only because the presence of women is easier to understand, quantify and thus to address than the gender dimension of a research project, but also because the issue of women and science has been traditionally framed as one of untapped human resources that can be used to improve the competitiveness of the European economy and foster economic growth. In the case of WECF and chemical policy, there is an ongoing struggle to tip the balance in favour of human health and environmental protection, and away from concerns of industry burden, that were quite stark in the negotiations for the pesticides and biocides directive proposals (EP and Council 2009; EP and Council 2012b).

So the neoliberal ethos combined with the invisibility of the institutionalisation of men's interests through the male-as-norm model creates an overall institutional environment where it is easy for the gender mainstreaming commitment to be filtered out in practice. Yet this institutionalisation of masculine interests is 'uneven' (Franzway et al. 1989, p. 41) and sometimes contradictory, and the EU affords several opportunities for feminist

advocates to pursue gender change. The multi-level and complex nature of the EU political system makes it porous for interest groups – it affords multiple points of access to them (Bache & Reardon 2016; Hooghe 2008; Imig & Tarrow 2001). The EU institutions welcome information that interest groups provide it but this information is not restricted to technical expertise; information on the European aggregated interest is something both the Commission and the European Parliament long for, in order to imbue their policy positions with representative legitimacy and close the perceived democratic gap of the EU policymaking process. That is why the Commission actively contributes to the setting-up of gender equality organisations, as was the case of the European Platform of Women Scientists (see Chapter 7) and all three women's groups analysed in this research are or have been financed by the European Commission through several funding programmes. The porousness of the political system is also attested by the diverse routes that these women's groups have taken in their lobbying efforts. Both WAVE and EPWS have used MEPs to put pressure on Commission's proposals, as was the case of the victims' rights directive and Marc Tarabella MEP's formal question to the Commission on gender considerations in a Horizon 2020 work programme, respectively (see Chapters 6 and 7 for more details). Nevertheless, there are differences in the levels of receptiveness of institutional arenas to women's groups' advocacy that limit where and what they can lobby for.

9.1.2. Institutional logics of appropriateness and EU competences

The divergent levels of implementation of gender mainstreaming across venues and policy fields in the EU reflect different modi operandi or gendered logics of appropriateness in these institutional settings. These largely determine the behaviours, norms and values used by each of these political units. Most importantly, they limit the ways in which an issue is handled, and the frames used to debate it. The distinction between whether a policy is regulatory or redistributive is a relevant determinant of receptiveness to gender mainstreaming: policies such as social affairs and international development are traditionally used to address inequalities so they are more amenable to the inclusion of a gender dimension into their work, whereas competition policy is more markedly market-oriented and less accustomed to considering and redressing disadvantages to certain groups (Coen 2009; Locher & Prügl 2009; Pollack & Hafner-Burton 2000). Moreover, due to their depoliticised context and the attention to technical detail, regulatory policies also reflect a stronger adherence to the idea of a neutral and

objective bureaucracy (Reis 2017). This is true for environmental policy, a regulatory giant among the EU's competences. This research confirmed previous findings on the non-existence of gender mainstreaming due to the prevalence of competitiveness as a main concern in this policy area (Allwood 2017), as attested by the ubiquitous presence of economic costs and the regulatory burden in impact assessments overall (Mergaert & Minto 2015), and the perceived incompatibility of this mechanism with the principle of subsidiarity (see Chapter 5; see also Reis 2017).

The regulatory-vs-redistributive dichotomy, however, is not the only factor that explains variance in gender mainstreaming implementation. Whether actions in a policy area are mainly undertaken through legally binding measures or through soft instruments is a crucial distinction to make. Two policy fields generally associated with progressive mainstreaming apparatuses – research and international development – are examples of redistributive policies in which the EU acts mostly through project-funding. This policy strategy is important to sustain specific initiatives on gender equality and for supporting women's groups, both within and outside the EU's borders, but they are not enough. Project-funding is about redressing inequalities with ad hoc measures but not about structurally overhauling the biased status quo. Additionally, the inclusion of gender considerations is often not a requirement for projects to be successful in their funding application, as is the case in Horizon 2020, the current multi-annual financing programme for research and science. In addition, the issue of gender equality in science is reliant on soft measures such as the OMC, since there are no directives or ECJ court rulings on the matter. Therefore, progress on the topic is dependent on the good-will of governments and private stakeholders. The gender mainstreaming apparatus is thus more developed in areas where it is the least disruptive to the status quo.

The above is related to another important factor when considering differences in the strength of gender equality provisions at the EU level in diverse policy areas: the EU competences in these policies. It is important to distinguish between domains where the EU has 'legal and political supremacy' from those where it has only a shared competence or a competence to coordinate or support member states' actions (Walby 2004, p. 15). This is because for domains that fall in the last two categories, binding legislation continues to be produced mostly at the national level, and the EU, due to the principle of subsidiarity, has a reduced role in policymaking. The realisation of the internal market is the strongest justification for the EU to act legislatively and this is

reflected in virtually all of its legislative acts, sometimes overlooking other EU-level commitments that could also be used as legal basis for legislative action. A case in point was REACH, a comprehensive regulatory piece of legislation in the field of chemicals that, although the EU used the protection of human health and environment as an additional justification to act, was firmly rooted only in the improvement of the Single Market (Art. 95 of TEC, on harmonisation of laws to improve the internal market, was used, and subsequent Parliament amendments to add Art. 175 of TEC on environmental policy were dismissed). This is a striking example of a structural feature of the EU political system influencing the institutional logic of appropriateness of a specific institutional arena.

It is not mentioned that the EU has an exclusive, shared or coordinating and supporting competence in gender equality policy in the treaties, although due to the cross-cutting nature of this field this omission is to be expected. Moreover, a gender mainstreaming approach makes it irrelevant for there to be a specific gender equality policy, since, if implemented in its most revolutionary approach, gender equality is catered for in all other policy areas. In practice, the delimitation of legislative powers when it comes to gender equality is complex. Employment-related issues, 'where the EU has been legally supreme for some time', continue to be the strongest core of gender equality provisions at the EU level (Walby 2004, p. 15). Other policy areas have made significant efforts to contribute to gender equality but through soft policy measures, as in the case of research and international development (see Chapters 7 and 8). Interestingly, the principle of subsidiarity is often perceived as a barrier for the inclusion of gender considerations in legislation, as in the case of DG Environment (see section 5.4.1) and on DG Justice's reluctance to legislate directly and specifically on violence against women (see Chapter 6). Notwithstanding this, there is also recent evidence of gender mainstreaming being used to circumvent the issue of EU competence in matters such as violence against women. This was the case in the victims' rights and the European Protection Order directives, where gender provisions were inscribed into general legislation (see Chapter 6). Other areas where the EU has a strong political and legal competence, such as trade and some aspects of macroeconomics, have been virtually untouched by gender mainstreaming (True 2009). This lends credit to the argument that, with some exceptions such as criminal justice, gender mainstreaming has been most widely used where it can be least disruptive to the status quo.

Yet despite all of this, there are still opportunities for the engagement of women's groups even in regulatory venues. Public consultations are still launched, funding to NGOs is still available and networks are still in place for the articulation of public interests. The most striking case is DG Environment which, although the most gender-blind unit analysed in this research, has provided funding for an environmental organisation with a strong gender equality penchant, WECF, almost continuously for more than a decade (see Chapter 8). Opportunities for project-funding, although limited in their scope, should not be dismissed as irrelevant; they are very often lifelines for women's organisations and they make a difference between their capacity to contribute to the EU policymaking or not. This is very much a reflection of the structural drive of the Commission to be seen to include citizens' voices in the European policymaking process to counter critiques of the European democratic deficit.

9.1.3. Individual agency and windows of opportunity

Individual actors can make or break institutional change; they are the ones that link rhetorical commitments to practical action (Cavaghan 2012, p. 33). That will in part depend on an individual's gender expertise and gender equality commitment. For instance, Lut Mergaert and Emanuela Lombardo identified a series of resistances to gender change in DG Research by individuals who refused to mainstream gender due to insufficient time, resources and training (Mergaert & Lombardo 2017). The logic of appropriateness of institutions only matters because individuals enact the script provided by these logics. But if individuals can resist institutional change and are constrained by the logic of appropriateness prescribed in each institution, they can also be propellers for change. This was the case with the adoption of gender mainstreaming in the 1990s in the EU, which, through a combination of favourable circumstances and committed individuals, was inscribed in the Treaty of Amsterdam as a mandatory instrument. The story of EU gender equality policy is in fact one of specific individuals fighting for gender change: from the Belgian lawyer Eliane Vogel-Polsky who pursued the Defrenne v Sabena cases,[21] to the series of feminist female civil servants that propelled the equal pay and equal treatment legislative actions in the 1970s and 1980s, and the impetus that Agnès Hubert, head of Equal Opportunities unit from 1992-1996,

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[21] For more information about the Defrenne v Sabena cases on the principle of equal pay for equal work see Hoskyns 1996.

and Swedish commissioner Anita Gradin gave to the adoption of the gender mainstreaming mechanism (Stratigaki 2005).

More recently, as this research has shown, individuals in strategic positions have also been responsible for furthering gender equality provisions at the EU level. Viviane Reding, the Justice, Fundamental Rights and Gender Equality commissioner during 2010-2014, was crucial in the proposal for a directive on gender corporate quotas, and for the legislative impetus on victims' rights, a recent example of gender having been mainstreamed to a considerable extent into binding legislation in criminal justice matters (see Chapter 5). Moreover, the role of two feminist rapporteurs in the Parliament for the victims' rights directive was also decisive in the gender-awareness of that piece of legislation (see Chapter 6). An example of individual action for gender change in research and science was the recent case of commissioner Carlos Moedas's desire to develop gender guidelines for funding application evaluators (see Chapter 7).

Individual agency is thus important to explain change in institutions. Sometimes a powerful feminist actor can change the opportunities for women's groups at a certain point in time, as in the cases above. However, these actors benefitted from institutional and structural windows of opportunity in which they were able to act to realise change. Therefore, the more receptive an institutional environment is, the more opportunities arise that put together the right circumstances for committed individuals to enact change, which can be argued was the case both with commissioner Moedas in DG Research and, to a larger extent, commissioner Reding in DG Justice. These two institutional arenas are some of the most progressive in terms of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission, so the work of these two senior politicians in furthering gender equality in precisely these policy areas is hardly a coincidence.

9.2. Women's groups' adaptation to opportunities and resistance

This section is about the strategies that women's groups employ to take up the opportunities for engagement presented by the EU institutions and to circumvent the resistances to gender policy change that are there. As a guiding framework for laying out and comparing the strategies employed by the three women's groups, I reprise Table 4 from Chapter 3. This table distinguishes between three main types of strategies – discourse through framing, actors through teaming up with institutional allies, and

resources through application for funding programmes. These strategies are anticipated using insights from the literature on EU interest representation, particularly the resource exchange and venue shopping theories, with their emphasis on appropriate resources and groups' agency in searching for amenable interlocutors (see Chapter 2), as well as the wider framing literature and its emphasis on discourse adaptation (see Chapter 3). It also draws from previous research on the contribution of women's groups for furthering gender equality policy at the EU level (see Chapter 2).

Table 4 also distinguishes between processes of adaptation to opportunities and constraints, and processes of proactivism, in an attempt to establish whether women's groups are capable of influencing the access criteria of the institutions they interact with and/or contribute to gender mainstreaming implementation in them. The table, as presented in Chapter 3, sets out a few strategies that I anticipated that women's groups would use in both processes.

	Processes of adaptation	Processes of proactivism
Discourse (Framing)	Framing the issue in a way acceptable to EU policymakers in a different DG / in that same DG	Influencing the terms in which issues are discussed
Actors (Institutional allies)	Linking up with policymakers that have feminist preferences / venue-shopping for those	Training policymakers to have feminist preferences (e.g. through gender expertise training)
Resources (Funding programmes)	Developing their capability to interact with EU institutions and to improve their expertise in their field	Advocating for budgeting for these programmes in the first place

Table 4. Women's groups' strategies for take-up and creation of political opportunities in EU

The following section will be a reflection of findings from Chapters 6-8 that determine if the strategies used in practice correspond to the ones anticipated in the theoretical framework of Chapter 3.

The table was used in Chapters 6-8 to summarise the processes of adaptation and proactivism that could be observed for each women's group. The purpose of reprising it here is to make a comparison in the following sections between the strategies used by each of the groups and see how they correspond to the ones anticipated in the theoretical framework of Chapter 3.

9.2.1. Reacting through discourse: framing strategies

The *process of adaptation* of discourse is a prominent strategy that interest groups use when engaging with political institutions (Benford & Snow 2000). It involves choosing to emphasise the aspects of a problem and solution that are more likely to resonate with a specific institutional culture and its political and policy priorities. This is to maximise the chances of their position being heard and accepted as pertinent by policymakers. It is often closely related to venue-shopping, whereby interest groups actively search for venues that will potentially be more welcoming to their position. In this research, several examples of this strategy were found. WECF, the environmentalist women's organisation, was found to be particularly adept at this. By virtue of its broad work on sustainable development, WECF engages with several DGs that have differing levels of receptiveness to a gendered perspective of their work. But through its position at the intersection of two broad concerns – gender equality and environmental sustainability – it can play each up or down in accordance with the logic of appropriateness of the institution it seeks to interact with. When applying for DG DEVCO funding streams, it is usually easier for WECF to stress the gender dimension of the project, as was the case with the *International Women's Alliance 2030*. This was a project concerned with achieving a more equitable environmental policy by improving women's access to decision-making in the implementation of environmental SDGs (e.g. sanitation, water and energy). By framing the issue as a case of civil society strengthening in developing countries, and of empowerment of women in particular, it fits one of the funding and policy priorities of DG DEVCO and thus makes it appropriate for that funding stream. When applying for DG ENV's LIFE+ funding programme, it is the technical aspects of WECF's work that are put into salience and the gender dimension is downplayed. This framing strategy allows the women's group to obtain funding from one of the most gender-blind DGs of the European Commission.

When it comes to lobbying for specific legislative pieces, however, there are still difficulties in getting a gender dimension into the environmental debate. In chemical policy, an exception in environmental legislation when it comes to awareness of differences of impact on women and men, the gender dimension stops short at biological differences between the two sexes in EU documents, while the position of WECF encompasses a consideration of women and men's different social roles that lead to a general exposure to different types and volumes of chemicals. The women's group has been unsuccessful in broadening the EU's understanding of the gender dimension in chemical policy to include social differences.

Other groups may struggle to tailor their discourse to diverse institutional venues. EPWS has repeatedly mentioned that the organisation struggles with being at the intersection of science and gender equality: often gender equality experts are not attuned to the importance of promoting a gender dimension to science and research or are not comfortable with the particularities of that field, with the opposite also being the case. EPWS's members are experts on research and research development so their involvement is mostly with DG Research, not with general gender equality structures. Gender equality in research, however, is a soft policy issue at the EU level, meaning that provisions for the integration of a gender dimension into funding programmes are mostly optional, left at the discretion of applicants and therefore weak. DG Employment and Social Affairs used to be an alternative contact due to its remit on employment affairs and thus on the issue of women's careers in science and research. This was intensified by the presence of the Gender Equality unit in that DG prior to 2011. With the move of the GE unit to DG Justice and the reduction of EPWS's work capacity to a voluntary basis, however, these contacts were essentially lost. This significantly reduces the group's opportunities for policymaking engagement at the EU level. In fact, the capacity to venue shop and frame their demands accordingly is in principle not always an easy task for single-issue organisations such as the ones under study in this research; there is often a very limited number of venues that deal with their policy topic, as is the case of EPWS.

Often with gender equality in the EU, and particularly when an issue has not been dealt with before by that political institution, discourse adaptation involves framing that issue in a way that makes sure the EU has a legal competence to legislate on it. This was the case with sexual harassment framed as workplace discrimination by activists in the

1980s (Zippel 2004) or of unpaid care work framed as a labour market policy concern (Locher & Prügl 2009, p. 188). So the alternative way that groups can use framing as a lobbying strategy is to make certain aspects of the problem salient so that the issue falls under the responsibility of a venue that is already amenable to their demands (Princen & Kerremans 2008). This can be considered as a *process of* discourse *proactivism* (see Table 4). This is a rare phenomenon and the closest example in this research was found on the issue of violence against women. The problem was the same as with the case of sexual harassment in the 1980s: violence against women is an issue where the EU has an unclear mandate to legislate on and in which the Commission has avoided proposing binding legislation, hence the framing of sexual harassment as workplace discrimination instead of gender-based violence in the 1980s. In the beginning of 2010s, WAVE used framing to push for legislative provisions for victims of violence against women. Both pieces of legislation that establish provisions for victims of crime analysed in this research contain a considerable gender perspective that seeks to cater to some extent to victims of violence against women. By highlighting specific instances of violence against women as a curtailment of women's freedom of movement, WAVE stressed the EU's competence in establishing a European Protection Order (see Chapter 6).

Another important feature of reaction strategies of women's groups through discourse is their adaptation to the prevalence of the economic frame in their own fields. As argued by Thomas and Turnbull, 'the Commission uses the "master frame" of neoliberalism to establish a mandate for sector-specific policies' (Thomas & Turnbull 2016, p. 1). This frame thus permeates virtually every DG, to a smaller or larger extent. The present research corroborates this finding, as all three women's groups working in diverse policy fields had to contend with an economic framing of the policy problem they were trying to lobby (WAVE to a much lesser extent than EPWS and WECF). In the case of chemical policy and WECF, two frames were seen to compete for primacy: protection of environment and human health on one hand, and economic competitiveness of European industry on the other. In REACH, the most important regulatory instrument for chemicals in Europe, the tension between both is notable, while in subsequent Commission proposals to define pesticides and biocides, the pendulum swung heavily towards the goal of economic competitiveness with prejudice for environmental human health protection (ENV B interview; WECF B interview). In the case of women and science and EPWS, the main focus has been on the presence of women in scientific and research careers, and the problem has been framed mostly in terms of untapped human

resources that could improve the competitiveness of the European economy through research innovation. EPWS tried to use this frame and skew it towards the goal of diversity, instead of simply economic competitiveness, and reinforce the importance of the gender dimension, with limited results. Both women's groups are considerably constrained by the prevalence of the neoliberal master frame and the economic framing that permeates the logic of the institutional culture they try to engage with.

9.2.2. Institutional allies and velvet triangles

An important element of employing the venue-shopping strategy successfully is the presence of allies within the political institutions that interest groups are trying to access (Baumgartner & Jones 1993, p. 1050). Policy networks of feminist policymakers, politicians and civil society advocates have long been credited with furthering gender equality policy at the EU level (Locher 2007; Locher 2012, p. 64; Woodward 2003). Linking up with allies within the EU institutions continues to be an important strategy for women's groups to access the European policymaking process and to try to influence it through the dissemination of their positions. Several authors speak about the loosening of the velvet triangles after the adoption of gender mainstreaming (Jacquot 2010, p. 129-130), a consequence of the dispersion of the gender equality policy mandate. This loosening of once very tightly knit and informal networks was further accentuated with the migration of the Gender Equality unit to DG Justice (Jacquot 2017; O'Dwyer 2017).

There seems to emerge a trade-off regarding the impact of gender mainstreaming in gender equality policy networks: if, on one hand, the broadening of the scope of gender equality results in the widening of the pool of potential institutional allies, on the other, it has negative repercussions on the strength of old networks for furthering gender equality legislation. This paradox was at the crux of this research and constituted the starting point for analysis. Nevertheless, the present research has found that traditional institutional allies continue to be important forces with which the advocates of women's groups link up for furthering a gender dimension into mainstream legislation. Two main dynamics were found to garner results: making FEMM a joint committee and using MEP questions to pressure the Commission into action.

In the two analysed cases of legislation that more fully integrated a gender dimension, the FEMM committee was attributed joint responsibility in the legislative process. The

victims' rights directive and the European Protection Order directive were dealt with jointly by the FEMM and LIBE committees, in an unusual dual attribution of responsibility in the European Parliament. The exceptional gender dimension of both directives is credited to a large extent to the lead work of the FEMM committee (FEMM A interview; JUST A interview; WAVE A interview; EP GM study). WAVE was proactive on this issue, having keenly lobbied for the inclusion of FEMM as a joint committee before the victims' rights directive was proposed (WAVE 2011). This is thus a remarkable example of a strategy of venue-shopping whereby an interest group attempts to bring into the policymaking process a venue that they already know is amenable to their demands and is therefore an institutional ally. Interestingly, bringing FEMM in in order to incorporate a gender dimension into mainstream legislation seems to produce results, albeit to a lesser extent, even when the opinion of FEMM is merely consultative. This was the case with the participation of FEMM in the legislative process for the REACH regulation, where the committee released an opinion report that contributed to the inclusion in the legislative text of a recognition of (pregnant) women and children as vulnerable groups (see section 8.2.1.).

Linking up with the FEMM committee to further a gender perspective in mainstream policies is also acknowledged as crucial by EPWS. The women scientists' platform refers to the importance of contacting MEPs with gender-awareness to maximise their chances of having some influence in the policy at stake. An illustrative example was the formal question that an MEP member of the FEMM committee addressed to the Commission, at the instigation of EPWS, regarding DG Research's plans for including gender equality provisions in the following work programme of Horizon 2020 (see section 6.2.2). This warranted a response from commissioner Moedas, which, although of limited practical results, is testament to the political importance of this mechanism. Nevertheless, the neoliberal master frame, a structural feature of the EU political system, also permeates the institutional logic of appropriateness of the most sophisticated gender-aware arena, the FEMM committee, to some extent. This is reflected in the overwhelming presence of the under-representativeness of women in science as the main problem of gender equality in this field, to the detriment of the gender dimension in the content of research and science projects. Additionally, all three women's organisations were seen to regularly use a pincer strategy in their lobbying efforts, consisting in pressing both European policymakers and MEPs, along with national

politicians, to increase support for their position in all institutional arenas and at all policymaking stages.

Evidence of processes of proactivism when it comes to attempts by women's groups to shape the preferences of policymakers and turn them into allies is rare. For the three analysed groups, only two cases were found that resembled such an attempt. WECF participated in the establishment of an informal working group to promote gender issues in environmental policy in the European Parliament. The Gender + E3 group was created in 2013 and its main goal was to raise the profile of the gender mainstreaming mechanism in environmental policy in the Parliament and in the Commission and educate policymakers on the mechanism. This effort, however, was ephemeral and did not last beyond the event that was the main propeller for its inception: the negotiations for the successors of the Millennium Development Goals (see section 8.2.3). In the case of WAVE, there were continued efforts in the implementation stage of the European Protection Order to educate judges and other judicial practitioners on the instrument through the organisation of training workshops nationally (see section 6.4).

Another example of proactivism in shaping policymakers' preferences, albeit an external one to the three groups analysed, was the European Women's Lobby training workshop on gender mainstreaming that was organised in December 2015 at the European Parliament. The goal was to educate MEPs and parliamentary staff on the mechanism and how it related to different policy areas (EWL A interview). The obviously optional nature of the workshop, however, might have meant that only participants who already had some degree of gender-awareness and/or a feminist preference chose to attend it.

9.2.3. EU as a source of resources: funding programmes

Opportunities for women's groups in the EU are not limited to engagement with the policymaking process. Civil society organisations in general, and transnational ones in particular, have several opportunities for applying for EU funding programmes to finance their daily operations and specific actions in their field of work. All three women's groups analysed in this research have benefitted from European funding streams. The operationalisation of this funding, from monitoring and application to implementation and reporting, is a substantial part of the workload of these groups. The criteria for application to these funds have shaped substantively the way the groups organise

themselves and the topics they decide to work on. WECF's work on chemicals is spurred to a significant extent by the EU's recent attention to this issue that has been translated into funding streams allocated specifically for projects that aim to focus on endocrine disrupting chemicals. This increases the EU resource opportunities for interest groups working in this field. For a group that has a broad remit of work on sustainable development, EU priorities in the environmental field also determine to some extent their own work priorities in the short to medium term. The EU's continued focus on combatting violence against women as one of its priorities for gender equality means that WAVE is the only organisation of the three to receive a multi-annual grant from the Commission's equality-purposeful funding stream, the *Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme* of DG Justice.

What this research has found is that it is not just EU funding priorities that shape women's groups' work priorities; the requirements of these funding programmes are powerful determiners of how women's groups operate. The most striking example is that of EPWS, the platform of women scientists that lost eligibility to EU financing due to its inability to secure the 20% funding from alternative sources; a requirement for all EU funding applications. This had a tremendous impact on the viability of EPWS; it dramatically changed the purview of the platform's work, its capacity to stay on top of policy developments and its ability to interact with the EU institutions (see section 7.3.1.). The other two women's organisations, to a less dramatic extent, were also impacted by EU funding requirements. For WECF, it was the shape and form of their project on civil-society capacity building that had to be tailored, broadening the number of partners that resulted in a more geographically-spread project but less ambitious in terms of content than the organisation's original plans (see section 8.2.2.). For WAVE, the adaptation involved a structural change in the legal status of the organisation, which in 2014 became a legal entity based in Austria, from what had originally been a loose network (see section 6.3.1.).

These findings lend credibility to the claims of the bureaucratisation of feminism. When feminists engage with political systems and enter their bureaucracies, feminism has to adapt to them by adopting 'Weberian principles of hierarchical authority, functional rationality, objective expertise [i.e. the removal of the emotional and praise of the rational] and regulated impersonal structures' (Franzway et al. 1989, p. 143). This improves their capacity of survival, by enabling these women's groups to take

advantage of resource opportunities provided by political institutions, but it restricts the content and form of their own work and strategies.

There have been a few attempts captured in this analysis by the women's organisations to shape the funding programmes of the European Commission – what could be termed as *processes of proactivism* regarding resource opportunities. WECF has contributed its position to consultations on the future of current funding programmes in DG Environment and DG DEVCO, aiming to shape their policy priorities and thus align future resource opportunities with the women's group's own priorities (see section 8.3.3.). Likewise, EPWS has formally registered its discontentment and its difficult experience with the co-funding rule of the Commission's funding programmes (see section 7.2.2.). These formal consultation processes have a limited chance of success for interest groups, however, since they often are restricted to pre-defined answers or rating scales, and the often thousands of stakeholder responses are quantitatively assessed. Women's groups thus have a very limited ability to shape resource opportunities for themselves at the EU level.

9.3. Conclusion

In this chapter I summarised the empirical findings from my analysis of gender mainstreaming implementation in four DGs of the European Commission and 13 instances of policymaking where women's groups interacted with the EU institutions. The aim was to provide a cross-cutting analysis of the political opportunity structures for gender equality advocacy in the European Union and the strategies employed by women's groups to access them. A multi-tiered framework guided the comparative analysis. All three organisations benefit or have benefitted in the past from the Commission's public interest entrepreneurship that drives it to make specific funding available for transnational organisations representing societal interests, including women's interests and gender equality. Despite this structural opportunity, induced by the Commission's zeal to be seen to include citizens' interests in the policymaking process and the fact that involvement in the debate is not hard for interest groups, in reality the road to access and actual influence is an arduous one. Public consultations are routinely launched before legislative pieces are proposed, but they often demand closed answers to limited-issue questions, which makes it difficult to introduce new frames into the discussion.

Gender equality advocates grapple with two main obstacles that seep into the logics of appropriateness of different institutional arenas: the omnipresence of the economic master frame and the delicate balance between the EU's and member states' competences. These constitute two significant similarities across the cases. The economic master frame determines the terms in which issues and solutions are discussed, and it can determine whether gender equality is considered at all in a policy field (such as environmental policy) and the form that it assumes as a problem (such as the under-presence of women in science careers as the overwhelming concern in gender inequality in research). This in turn strongly determines the types of frames that women's groups such as WECF in sustainable development and EPWS in science and research can successfully deploy. EU institutions, in particular the Commission, can be wary of acting legislatively, including reluctance to introduce a gender perspective in certain policy actions, for fear of violating the principle of subsidiarity and risking the Council blocking its proposals. This was particularly acute in the violence against women policy field, where the Council's averseness to the EU legislating bindingly on violence against women was illustrated in the severely limited EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention. Even in policy areas with a relatively sophisticated gender equality rhetoric and commitment, such as science and research and international development, these two structural obstacles – the economic master frame and the EU's limited competences translated into soft policy measures – are present. In this context, individual actors are crucial in spurring gender equality considerations in specific policies.

Framing, as a strategy to circumvent these resistances to gender mainstreaming, is a useful one, albeit limited by the ubiquitous economic master frame. The employment of framing is another similarity between the cases explored. It was used to bring to the fore a gender equality institutional ally, the FEMM committee, which put strong pressure for gender considerations to be included in several occasions. Framing, along with teaming up with institutional allies, are thus two important lobbying strategies that garner results for women's groups. Framing is also a useful strategy to deploy to make women's groups' priorities match those of EU funding programmes and for groups to be successful in applying for those.

Similarities and differences between the three cases

In sum, the three case studies reveal that the women's organisations grapple with similar challenges when engaging with the EU institutions, but they are also faced with distinct circumstances specific to their policy area and their own organisational situation. All three groups regularly engage with EU actors and all of them are or have been substantially funded by EU programmes. Both WECF and EPWS operate in policy fields where the economic master frame is heavily used and gender equality, when taken into account, is subservient to it. The delicate balance between member states' and EU's competences is another important cross-cutting issue that all three organisations have to deal with, as gender equality goals are often timidly pursued as a result of the sharing of competences or the use of soft measures.

Notwithstanding the similarities across the cases, there are significant key differences. The first has to do with the attention given to gender in their policy field by the EU institutions responsible for it. As examined in this chapter, the logics of appropriateness of each DG determine to a significant extent if gender has a chance of being considered or not and thus explain the variation of EU engagement success among the women's groups. But other dimensions such as the competences of the EU in that field, the overall EU priorities for gender equality and the existence of powerful actors with gender equality on their agenda are also crucial in determining receptiveness to gender equality. WAVE here had a distinct advantage as violence against women has been on the EU agenda consistently for the last two decades and was given a strong impetus under Commissioner Viviane Reding and through the new powers the Lisbon Treaty gave the EU in criminal matters. On the other hand, the ability to employ strategies to circumvent the resistances faced was significantly different for each women's organisation. This variation was largely explained by the amount of resources each group possessed: money, staff and contacts. WECF was surprisingly good at navigating between DGs to further gender equality in a wide-range of environmental topics, including in some of the most gender-unaware DGs such as DG ENV, whilst EPWS, a voluntary-based organisation, found it difficult to engage with DG RTD, considered one of the most gender-friendly institutions in the European Commission.

The next chapter will wrap up this thesis. It will consist of reflections on the gender mainstreaming paradox, and on the women's groups' interaction with the EU institutions and involvement in gender mainstreaming process. It will also include general reflections

on the theory and methodology used to guide the empirical findings of this research, the contribution of this research, and suggestions of ways forward for researching the topic of women's interest representation and gender mainstreaming in the EU.

CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSION: THE PARADOX REVISITED

In the final chapter of this thesis I will re-visit the paradox laid out in Chapter 2 in light of my findings and draw some final conclusions on the kind of access that women's groups have to the EU institutions. After this reflection on the findings comes a reflection on the theories used, the theoretical framework that was designed and the original contribution it makes for the theoretical literatures from which it draws. A reflection on the use of critical frame analysis is provided in the following section. Finally, the thesis closes with the description of the contribution of this research to knowledge and some remarks on possible routes for future research.

10.1. Reflections on the paradox: new opportunities but weak gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming has presented a paradoxical opportunity for women's organisations in the EU. The revolutionary dimension of this mechanism is its recognition of inequality between women and men as a structural problem that can only be solved with a complete overhaul of the way policy is made and the purpose for which it is made. Thus, gender mainstreaming has the potential to spread gender equality as a policy goal for diverse fields and put it at the very centre of the European project. However, the considerable research that has been conducted into the implementation of this mechanism in the EU for the last two decades tells a different story. Uneven adoption in the different policy fields, with implementation stopping short at rhetorical commitments with no resources committed to it or proper regulation and coordination of the implementation of gender mainstreaming leaves it much to the discretion of individuals to actually make it work. Although the EU's strategy has been a dual approach, with gender mainstreaming mandated in parallel with women-specific policies so as to correct any disadvantages of existing policies, the fear that many scholars have expressed is that gender mainstreaming would replace commitment to legally-binding policies targeting inequalities between women and men. With the mal-implementation of gender mainstreaming as the backdrop, this would indeed be a worrying development, since gender mainstreaming could be used as window-dressing while the existing gender equality apparatus could be quietly dismantled. So the paradox was about the potential for new political opportunities being created in traditionally gender-blind fields

for women's groups while the conventional networks were being eroded. There is evidence for both parts of the paradox in this research.

Three diverse issue-organisations and respective policy areas were chosen purposefully to assess opportunities for political engagement regarding gender equality and women's rights in gender-pioneering and gender-laggard policies. Gender mainstreaming implementation varies considerably from policy area to policy area, ranging from substantial awareness of gender in policy venues such as DG DEVCO and DG Justice to complete absence of gender equality commitments or document mentions in DG Environment. Nevertheless, and interestingly, this research found that the correlation between the implementation of gender mainstreaming and the existence of opportunities for women's groups in a policy area is not necessarily linear. WECF has successfully applied for multiple environmental funding streams for gender-equality-targeting projects while EPWS has reported several difficulties in engaging with DG Research, considered a pioneer in gender mainstreaming in the European Commission. This is because both organisations have different levels of work capacity, a consequence of their divergent sizes, which determines their capacity to adapt and frame their discourse to access political opportunities in diverse venues. In short, opportunities for women's groups exist in new policy areas, but they largely depend on the ability of these groups to take advantage of them.

The policies with the largest gender mainstreaming apparatuses – such as international development and research – tend to be redistributive policies where the EU acts mostly through soft measures. International development and research and science at the EU level are overwhelmingly conducted through funding for projects which, although necessary and sometimes life-changing for recipients, fall short of the overhauling of the structural male bias that gender mainstreaming promised. The opportunities for women's groups' engagement in these policy fields are thus mostly limited to applications for project- or organisation-funding, with limited chances of shaping the EU's priorities in the fields and compelling gender inequalities to be addressed in these funding programmes in a compulsory way.

Justice is be an exception. This policy area was given a significant boost with the Lisbon Treaty in what concerns the EU's competence to legislate on it. A flurry of legislation in the field of criminal justice followed in 2010-11 that considered gender seriously by

including provisions specifically targeting women victims of gender-based violence. In this case, the EU has used mainstream legislation to extend the scope of its action on an issue where the political appetite of member states for the EU to use its competences is limited: violence against women. Although with their share of criticisms from both policymakers and women's groups, the victims' rights directive and the European Protection Order directive are two interesting examples of binding legislative pieces that were gender mainstreamed to a considerable extent.

Although this research finds that, indeed, women's groups have been able to take advantage of political opportunities in diverse policy areas and in ones without a tradition of gender awareness, such as WECF in DG Environment, parallel events have weakened the traditional networks that propelled EU gender equality for several decades. The most significant was the change of the GE unit from DG Employment to DG Justice in 2011. Although this change symbolically ascertained gender equality as an issue of fundamental rights as opposed to restrictedly a labour market issue, it disrupted established contacts between policymakers and civil society, while making it harder for GE unit staff to monitor employment matters and mainstream gender into this weighty economic issue. Moreover, the rising importance of macroeconomic policy at the EU level with the sovereign debt and Euro crises – a policy that has been impervious and at times hostile to gender mainstreaming (Cavaghan 2017b; Hoskyns 2008) – has translated into reduced opportunities for gender equality advocacy in economic matters.

Far from fulfilling its revolutionary potential, gender mainstreaming has thus been used mostly in an ad-hoc way, heavily dependent on the preferences and priorities of actors in high ranks with the ability to mobilise resources to it, and on the work of traditionally feminist institutions such as FEMM. As put clearly by Elaine Weiner and Heather MacRae, gender mainstreaming was supposed to displace existing modus operandi and to be 'ubiquitous'; instead, it was '*layered on*, to some extent, to the prevailing institutional order' (Weiner & MacRae 2017, p. 81, italic original)

10.2. Women's groups and the EU: what kind of access?

Reprising the concepts of engagement developed by Darren Halpin and Bert Fraussen (2017) (detailed in Chapter 2) is a useful way to draw some closing remarks. Engagement with the EU policymaking process has degrees of depth and breadth. In

terms of increasing depth, interest groups may experience involvement, access or prominence in relation to the EU institutions. All three women's groups that were analysed for this research are regularly involved in the European policymaking process, through responses to public consultations and sending letters to EU politicians and civil servants in specific crucial moments of policymaking. This is the lowest and easiest mode of engagement and is open to all stakeholders that wish to undertake it. It is bounded only by the capacity and priorities of the women's groups themselves, which, at least in the case of EPWS, face nonetheless significant restrictions. Access, the next level of engagement, is different in the sense that there must be a degree of responsiveness from the EU political institutions: policymakers function as gatekeepers in the engagement of interest groups with the policymaking process since they decide which groups to meet with, to invite, and to establish as members of advisory groups and other formal policy networks. Our women's groups do enjoy some degree of access in this sense, with WECF being an accredited stakeholder with ECHA, the European Chemical Agency, EPWS having been invited to meetings with the European Economic and Social Council, and WAVE having had meetings with the parliamentary rapporteurs of the European Protection Order directive. Prominence is arguably not enjoyed by any of the three analysed women's groups, with only the European Women's Lobby being seriously considered by the EU institutions as prominent when it comes to gender equality policy.

Allies continue to be crucial and members of FEMM as well as high-up officials with a commitment to gender equality are still extremely important in getting a foot in the policymaking door. However, access is far from being a synonym of influence, not least because women's groups have to contend with other interest groups that are also striving for involvement and access into the EU policymaking process. These groups are often more resourceful and sometimes more successful than women's groups, in part due to a closer alignment with EU frames in particular fields, such as the case of industry groups on chemical policy and endocrine disruptors specifically. A struggle that is particular to women's groups is that they have to spend time and resources having to convince people that gender is relevant in virtually any policy field that they wish to lobby (Cavaghan 2017b, p. 55). This matters for the successful representation of women's interests, particularly in areas that have been systematically gender-blind:

Anyone whose preferred perspective is systematically replicated within an organisation no longer needs to expend energy or resources arguing their case, making themselves intelligible, or refuting others, with the same intensity as their opponents (Callon & Latour 1981, p. 285 quoted in Cavaghan 2017b, p. 55)

Gender equality advocates by contrast are likely to become embroiled in extremely resource intensive contestations where they confront a policy process characterised by, for example, gender-blind and gender-biased rhetorical policy, implementation procedures and impact assessment procedures, which must all be tackled simultaneously. (Cavaghan 2017b, p. 55)

This constitutes a 'significant hurdle to gender equality advocates trying to disrupt refusals of knowledge, analyse and rectify the gendered impacts of policy' (Ibid.) and it is a reflection of the reduced or non-existent traction that gender mainstreaming and gender equality as a policy goal has had on many policy areas.

The core of the present research was to analyse the breadth of engagement of women's groups with EU policies in order to gauge whether political opportunities are widespread for these interest groups by virtue of gender mainstreaming adoption. What it found was that sometimes women's groups are successful in influencing certain aspects of EU policymaking but not in core areas. Research and international development, two of the areas with larger gender equality apparatuses, are dominated by soft measures, mostly funding mechanisms in which gender considerations are optional. On the other hand, environment, a considerable area of EU policy competence in the form of regulatory binding measures, is largely untouched by gender considerations. Although WECF is successful in receiving grants from DG ENV and is part of formal advisory networks in this field, its success in influencing legislation and policy priorities is extremely limited. Justice seems like a promising policy field, although the EU's competences here are very new – dating from the Lisbon Treaty signed in 2007 – and limited in most cases to recognition efforts between member states' legislations rather than harmonisation. Women's groups' influence, therefore, is limited to peripheral areas of EU competence, away from the core economic realm. Although neither trade nor competition or macroeconomics were part of the policy fields analysed in this study, previous research has highlighted the hostility of macroeconomics to gender mainstreaming (Cavaghan 2017b; Hoskyns 2008) and exploratory interviews for the present research have found

the very limited engagement of women's groups with macroeconomic policy at the EU level (EWL A interview).

These findings thus lend weight to the argument that although women are present in the structure of the political system, they have unequal power: not only are women usually present at the lower levels of decision-making, they are also concentrated in units that are peripheral to the core internal organisation of the political system (Franzway et al. 1989, p. 31). FEMM, the institution most strongly associated with successful implementation of gender mainstreaming, continues to be a committee with relative low power within the European Parliament compared with economic policymaking units in the EP and in other EU institutions.

Finally, the fact that neoliberal framing seeps into all areas of policy at the EU level means that women's groups have to adapt and/or restrict their discourse to it. Gender mainstreaming, and gender equality as a consequence, continues to be subordinate to the neoliberal project, with a few clusters of opportunities here and there. Elaine Weiner and Heather MacRae highlight 'the *dependence* of the EU's gender equality project's *path* on the EU's economic oscillations', stating that 'the gender equality project has never been able to dislodge the reigning neoliberally informed *rules of the game*', with 'the changes incurred hav[ing] almost exclusively taken shape when they pose little or no challenge to the neoliberal conventions of the Common Market.' (Weiner & MacRae 2017, p. 79-82, italic original). The revolutionary potential of gender mainstreaming is unrealised, as radical discourse and structural changes are ignored in favour of proof of added value of gender equality to existing policies (Lang 2009, p. 339). As Gabriele Abels and Joyce Marie Mushaben put it simply, gender mainstreaming continues to be an extension to the European Integration project, not part of its core (Abels & Mushaben 2012b).

Lessons learned: conditions for success for women's groups' engagement with EU

In light of the different policy cases that were analysed for each case study chapter, and the comparisons drawn between the women's groups and respective policy fields, we can draw some conclusions in terms of what makes the difference between success and failure when lobbying for gender equality. The degree of awareness of gender within an institutional arena and its commitment to gender equality is certainly important and

groups will experience added difficulty advocating for gender equality in a gender-blind field such as environment. However, there does not seem to be a perfect correlation in the cases examined between rhetorical commitment to gender equality and women's groups' success in achieving their interaction goals (i.e. through influence or funding). Other factors seem to have an important role.

The existence of institutional allies is one of these factors. Women's groups seem to be able to engage with the policymaking process in a more significant way when there are individual actors in senior positions who have gender equality on their agendas. This was the case with EPWS and Marc Tarabella MEP, Research Commissioner Carlos Moedas in DG RTD, and the combination of Justice Commissioner Viviane Reding, EP rapporteurs and the Spanish Presidency with strong commitment to combatting gender-based violence from 2010. Committed individuals are able to act more strongly when institutional conditions are favourable – in other words, when there are already institutional commitments and structures in place to further gender equality. This was the case with all the examples given in this paragraph.

On the part of the women's groups, the ability to employ framing successfully is crucial for their success of engaging with the EU. This can be done in two ways.
Groups can frame their discourse on gender equality to match EU's priorities in a given policy field to increase their chances of being heard and/or of being funded. However, this very often means engaging with economic frames, so it may limit women's groups' capacity to introduce new ways of understanding a problem and effective solutions. More importantly, albeit more difficult, is using framing to pull powerful allies from elsewhere into the debate. We have seen how involving the FEMM committee in the policymaking process was a crucial factor in mainstreaming gender into policies, particularly when FEMM was included as joint committee for the reading stage at the European Parliament.

Framing, along with teaming up with institutional allies, are thus two important lobbying strategies that garner results for women's groups and can result in successes even in gender-laggard policy fields.

10.3. Final reflections

10.3.1. Theoretical reflections

The main focus of this research was the analysis of the political opportunities for women's groups in the EU policymaking system. In order to study that, an analysis of gender mainstreaming implementation was crucial since the mechanisms behind resistance to GM would also explain, to a large extent, the lack of political opportunity structures for women's groups in certain fields. Feminist institutionalism, with its focus on formal and informal institutions as the main drivers in explaining political outcomes, was an extremely useful theory to explain uneven levels of implementation in different policy fields and institutional arenas. Different gendered logics of appropriateness were helpful in explaining diverse degrees of resistance to the formal requirement of gender mainstreaming.

But the EU does not just present obstacles or resistance to gender mainstreaming and to gender equality advocacy; women's groups have been successful in some instances of policy change in the EU and gender equality legislation is the most developed field of EU social policy. Moreover, the literature on political opportunity structures and EU interest representation signals certain characteristics of the EU political system that are conducive to welcoming interest groups in general, including women's groups. So the EU as a political system also affords opportunities for women's groups engagement and influence. Thus it was important that I considered both the opportunities and the resistances that the political system of the EU provides to gender equality change and advocacy.

In the existing literature on gender mainstreaming implementation in the EU there are common threads of opposition to this policymaking mechanism that can be found across different policy fields. The EU interest representation literature, from its part, presents clear cues on the general opportunities for interest group lobbying, as well as different requirements of information in specific institutions that make access easier for some types of groups. Both feminist institutionalism and interest representation literatures point to the importance of individual actors for institutional change or resistance and as institutional allies for interest groups' access. Therefore, there seemed to be different levels of analysis worth dissecting here that would impact each other, but

were worth analysing separately in order to have a full picture of the political opportunity structures for gender equality advancement in the EU as a whole and how and why these varied between specific arenas. These observations on the multi-level nature of the EU as a political opportunity enabler and resister, rooted in the review of the literature and in the preliminary findings brought about by the first interviews and document analysis, were the basis for the refinement of the theoretical framework designed prior to my starting the fieldwork. There was therefore an approach informed by grounded theory in the sense that the empirical stage was initially guided by the theoretical framework that was consequently considerably revised because it was informed by the empirical findings. Data collection was guided by theory, and theory was informed by empirical findings.

So, in relation to the theoretical dimension, the major contribution of this thesis is to put two major theoretical fields – EU interest representation theories and feminist institutionalism – in dialogue with each other, in order to arrive at a framework nuanced enough to allow for the mapping of political opportunity structures for women's groups and for gender equality advancement in the EU political system. The gender mainstreaming implementation literature is abundant with instances of resistance to the mechanism, but it does not distinguish sufficiently the tiers of resistance and how they impact each other. Therefore, I used Mergaert and Lombardo's original framework distinguishing between institutional and individual resistances to gender change, expanding it to include an additional macro level of structural resistances, while using insights from EU interest representation literature to include a column of opportunities for each of the three levels, along the one for resistances. In this way, the analysis of the EU as both an enabler and an obstacle for gender equality advancement is fully captured and the paradox of gender mainstreaming for women's organisations better understood.

This, however, provided only part of the picture. Political opportunity structures are defined not just by the characteristics of the political system that establishes them, but also by the characteristics of the interest groups that determine whether these groups are able and willing to take advantage of them. Moreover, opportunity structures are not fixed but rather are dynamic; they are impacted by the very interaction between groups and the political system, since a process of learning and preference shifting may occur during these exchanges. In order to capture these dynamics, and in particular to find out

whether women's groups were able to circumvent resistances and therefore change the political opportunities for gender equality advancement, including contributing for the implementation of gender mainstreaming, focus was also put on the characteristics of women's groups. For this, EU interest representation theories, such as resource exchange, venue shopping, velvet triangles and, more generally, framing, were used to look for the characteristics that would impact women's groups' ability to take advantage of political opportunities and dodge resistance.

Two frameworks were thus designed and applied in the empirical stage or research: a multi-tiered analysis of opportunities and resistances to gender change and advocacy, and a framework of strategies of adaptation and proactivism on the part of women's groups to take up the opportunities and combat resistances. Although designed specifically with gender equality policy and women's rights' group in mind, with a few small adjustments, these two frameworks lend themselves well to the analysis of political opportunities for other types of interest groups working in different policy fields.

10.3.2. Methodological reflections

During the operationalisation of the first framework I encountered two main obstacles. For each chapter I sorted my findings on the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the specific cases analysed into examples of structural, institutional or individual opportunities or resistances. It quickly became clear that an instance of resistance or opportunity was sometimes difficult to classify neatly as structural or institutional. The tiers were therefore more fluid – particularly between the macro and meso levels – than what the original theoretical framework might have indicated. Nevertheless, the distinction between what are characteristics of the political system of the EU, constitutionally derived and seeping into all its institutional components, from the diverse characteristics of the diverse institutional arenas that compose it, is still an important one to make. This distinction signals what is more or less likely, easier or more difficult to change. In relation to the micro level – the individual opportunities/resistances – these were often non-existent in my analysis and they were the hardest aspects to identify through my methods as I did not use ethnography or participative observation within the EU institutions. The logistical constrains are explained in more depth in the methodology chapter (see Chapter 4). If overcome, it may have been possible to bring new insights into the daily practice of gender mainstreaming in the different policy arenas under

scrutiny here. Nevertheless, I do not anticipate that they would have brought fresher insights into the 13 specific policy cases analysed for this research, since they were all finished processes at the point of data collection and analysis.[22]

A large part of my empirical analysis consisted of extracting the frames used in policy documents to talk about gender inequality in diverse fields. The purpose of this was twofold: 1) to look at how the problem was documented, the solutions proposed, and the actors involved in the problem and solution; and 2) to find out, for each instance of policymaking, how the meaning of gender equality was being used and the final purpose of its use. The former was to check how gender equality is understood by different actors along the policymaking process and across policy areas, and how these match the gender equality frames used by the women's groups. Caution was taken when women's groups' frames matched EU institutions' to not automatically conflate that with influence, since matching frames could be down to coincidence. Interviews and document analysis provided the context in which to analyse whether each matching could be attributed to influence or to coincidence. The latter purpose – analysing the gender equality meaning used by each actor in each instance of policymaking – was useful for understanding how gender equality was being instrumentalised in different policy fields and it is an accurate way of finding out whether gender mainstreaming is being taken seriously and to the point it was originally intended. I used a combination of critical frame analysis with the typology of gender equality meanings to achieve this two-pronged purpose.

The set of questions originally intended for critical frame analysis was helpful to direct my own analysis to often rather extensive documents. Although nearly all policy documents under scrutiny had some sort of gender dimension to them, the relevance of that dimension varied across policy fields, with the environmental policy documents predictably being the more gender-blind ones. The method of critical frame analysis thus proved useful not just to identify how gender equality was being framed but also how some of the other problems justifying a legislative solution were being framed by the EU institutions (e.g. chemical regulation as simultaneously a solution to human health and environmental hazard, and to low levels of economic competitiveness of industry). The

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[22] The exception to this is the EU's accession to the Istanbul Convention, which had not been legally formalised when the interviews with WAVE staff and policymakers were conducted (July 2016), and the process for the establishment of the criteria for EDCs in pesticides and biocides, which was not yet finalised at the point of writing this thesis (January 2018).

analysis of the gender equality meaning proved trickier since the scarce inclusion of a gender dimension in some of the policies meant that it was not always clear the purpose for which gender equality was being used, or even if gender equality was being used at all. Nevertheless, gender equality meaning analysis was conducted for each of the documents listed in Appendix 1, even if the finding turned out to be non-applicable (the template used for critical frame analysis and gender equality meaning analysis for each of the documents listed in Appendix 1 is provided in Appendix 2 and an example of how it was used is provided in Chapter 4).

10.4. Contribution and ways forward

10.4.1. Contributions to literature

In 2016, Kronsell lamented that '[w]hen gender is included in EU scholarship, for the most part it studies the policy implications of European integration on gender equality with a focus on women's working conditions and care responsibilities' (Kronsell 2016, p. 104). It rarely considers how 'gender relations are reproduced in European integration through masculine norms and gender power' (Ibid.). One of the goals of this research is to analyse the gender-awareness of areas not traditionally associated with women's issues, such as the environment. It is to contribute to the full picture of how (gendered) power is distributed within the EU institutions and how the EU shapes gender relations by its own framing of the problem and the solution for gender inequality in different policy areas.

Concretely, this thesis makes an original contribution in several ways.

Firstly, this research is partly about the implementation of gender mainstreaming in diverse DGs of the European Commission. DG Justice, DG Research, DG Environment and DG international Development and Cooperation are the main institutional arenas analysed. However, room was made to consider the constraints to the full implementation of the mechanism that, on one hand, are common across DGs and, on the other, are specific to the action of individuals. Therefore, I contribute to the comprehension of gender mainstreaming implementation by setting out the barriers for gender change that exist at different organisational levels: the micro/individual, the

meso/institutional, and the macro/structural. This multi-tiered analysis of resistance to gender mainstreaming gives a fuller picture of the problems with the implementation of the mechanism and brings together several of the different critiques that have been aimed at it by feminist scholars.

Secondly, by focusing the analysis on the interest groups, this thesis develops an analytical framework that considers political constraints and opportunities for interest representation of women's rights and gender equality. This may prove a useful framework for analysis of other interest groups and the political opportunity structures that the EU presents for their policy theme.

Thirdly, this thesis makes a substantial empirical contribution to the EU public policy literature. By policy-tracing pieces of legislation in diverse policy fields and analysing how the frames changed throughout the legislative process, I generated new empirical data that can be expanded on. Two of the most recent pieces of legislation scrutinised – the European Protection Order and the victims' rights' directives – with a few exceptions, have not yet been given much academic attention, in particular their gender considerations.

Finally, the focus of this research is on the three European women's organisations that serve as the case studies for the comparative approach of the thesis. These organisations have not been the targets of deep academic research before (Antonucci 2014 is an exception on the EPWS). The intensive analysis of the organisational structure, membership, utilised frames, interaction with the EU institutions and application for EU funding programmes gives a comprehensive picture of interest groups that advocate for women's rights at the EU level beyond the prominent European Women's Lobby (EWL).

10.4.2. Avenues for future research

This research analysed gender mainstreaming implementation and political opportunities for women's groups in varied European policy fields. Justice, research and science, and environment and international development were chosen so as to encompass gender-pioneers and gender-laggards, regulatory and redistributive policy areas. However, European policy action is spread across dozens of subjects; the current European

Commission has 37 Directorate-Generals, which vary in size and scope, but each in charge of a thematic field. An analysis of gender mainstreaming in a wider number of policy fields would confirm – or deny – the findings in the present research on the dichotomies of regulatory/redistributive and hard/soft measures. A framing analysis of prominent pieces of legislation in other subjects, along the lines of the one conducted in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, would shed further light on the stickiness of the neoliberal master frame: Is it prevalent in all policy fields? Are there exceptions? What about the economic case for gender equality; is it argued everywhere? The case-study approach of this thesis was to match single-sector transnational women's groups with the relevant EU DGs. Future research could be conducted on organisations that work on topics that were not analysed, such as the European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW), Women in Development Europe (WIDE), Business and Professional Women Europe (BPWE), to name but a few.

Research on the EU governance of the economic and Euro crises of the last decade is abundant, and the gendered impacts of the austerity measures implemented in the aftermath of the 2007-8 financial crash are well-documented (see for example Kantola & Lombardo 2017; Karamessini & Rubery 2013). Recently, there has been research conducted on the consequences of the new EU macroeconomic governance mechanisms for gender equality policy (Cavaghan 2017b; Jacquot 2017; Weiner & MacRae 2017). Interesting analyses could be undertaken on women's groups' engagement with economic policy at the EU level, not just in the traditional field of employment and social affairs but, more importantly, with macroeconomics and new EU governance instruments such as the European Semester. An analysis is also lacking on gender mainstreaming implementation and women's group involvement in core economic DGs such as DG ECFIN, DG Trade or DG Competition.

Finally, although this research focused on organisations that directly advocate for women's rights and gender equality, it would be interesting to analyse whether mainstream interest groups also pick up the gendered aspects of their policy sectors and include them in their lobbying strategies and demands. Tentative research has been undertaken on the inclusion of women's interests in trade unions' and business associations' policy positions (Reis 2011), particularly the European Social Partners, but there is scope for broader and deeper analyses. Other fields lack any such analysis: for example, do environmentalist organisations such as Greenpeace or WWF include a

gender perspective in their positions? Environmental organisations are a potentially interesting research focus on this since interviews with WECF have confirmed that the women's environmentalist group worked together with these organisations.

In their engagement with the EU political system, women's organisations face resource, funding and framing challenges. The gender mainstreaming mechanism, as adopted and implemented by the different institutions, has brought new challenges but also new opportunities for women's organisations. This thesis sought to provided nuanced clarity on both.

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Appendix 1. Documents that undertook critical frame analysis

Victims' rights directive

Date	Author	Title
unknown	European Commission	Proposed Indicators for the implementation of the Victims Rights Directive (through GBV lens) (internal document)
2011.05.18	European Commission	Executive summary of the Impact Assessment Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament to the Council, to the European Economic and Social Committee and to the Committee of the Regions – Strengthening victims' rights in the EU(COM(2011) 274 final)
2011.05.18	European Commission	Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (COM(2011) 274) (COM(2011) 276)
2012.01.26	European Parliament (Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality)	DRAFT REPORT on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (COM(2011) 0275 – C7 – 0127/2011 – 2011/0129(COD))
2012.07.18	European Parliament (Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality)	Report on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (COM(2011) 0275)

2012.11.14	European Parliament and Council	Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2011/220/JHA
2015	European Institute for Gender Equality	An analysis of the Victims' Rights Directive from a gender perspective
2015	European Institute for Gender Equality	Recommendations for the Implementation of the Victims' Rights Directive with a focus on the needs of gender-based violence
2013.12.19	European Commission	DG Justice Guidance Document related to the transposition and implementation of Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2011/220/JHA

European Protection Order

Date	Author	Title
2010.01.22	Council of the European Union	Initiative for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Protection Order – Explanatory memorandum (Interinstitutional File: 2010/0802 (COD))
2010.01.22	European Parliament and the Council	Initiative for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Protection Order (2010/0802 (COD))

2010.12.07	European Parliament (Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality)	Report on the draft directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Protection Order (00002/2010 – C7 – 00006/2010 – 2010/0802(COD))
2011.12.21	European Parliament and the Council	Directive 2011/99/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the European protection order

Istanbul Convention EU accession

Date	Author	Title
2016.03.04	European Commission	Proposal for a Council Decision on the signing of the Istanbul Convention (COM(2016)0111)
2016.03.04	European Commission	Proposal for a Council Decision on the conclusion of the Istanbul Convention (COM(2016)0109)
2017.05.11	Council	Council Decision (EU) 2017/865 of 11 May 2017 on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence with regard to matters related to judicial cooperation in criminal matters
2017.05.11	Council	Council Decision (EU) 2017/866 of 11 May 2017 on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence with regard to asylum and non-refoulement

Date	Author	Title
2017.09.12	European Parliament	European Parliament resolution of 12 September 2017 on the proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion, by the European Union, of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (COM(2016)0109 – 2016/0062(NLE))

WAVE documents

Date	Author	Title
2011.12.07	Women Against Violence in Europe	OPEN LETTER: Joined Competence between LIBE and FEMM Committees on the Victim's Directive

Research funding programmes

Date	Author	Title
2008.04.22	European Parliament (Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality)	Report on women and science (2007/2206(INI))
2008.05.21	European Parliament	European Parliament resolution of 21 May 2008 on women and science (2007/2206(INI))

2013.12.20	European Parliament and Council	Regulation (EU) No 1291/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing Horizon 2020 – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) and repealing Decision No 1982/2006/EC
2016.03.09	European Commission	Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2016-2017 *(European Commission decision C(2016)1349 of 9 March 2016)*
2016.03.21	European Commission (DG Research and Innovation)	Vademecum on Gender Equality in Horizon 2020

EPWS documents

Date	Author	Title
2008.03.03	European Platform of Women Scientists	Best practices in terms of what has worked in attracting more female scientists to research careers and retaining them
2010.01.13	European Platform of Women Scientists	Response of the European Platform of Women Scientists to the *Public Consultation on the future "EU 2020" Strategy*

2012.03.26	European Platform of Women Scientists	EPWS Position Paper on the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation *Horizon 2020*
2012.06.29	European Platform of Women Scientists	Open Letter to Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn

REACH

Date	Author	Title
2003.10.29	Commission of the European Communities	Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), establishing a European Chemicals Agency and amending Directive 1999/45/EC and Regulation (EC) (on Persistent Organic Pollutants) SEC(2003 1171) (Explanatory memorandum)
2003.10.29	Commission of the European Communities	Commission Staff Working Paper "Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), establishing a European Chemicals Agency and amending Directive 1999/45/EC and Regulation (EC) (on Persistent Organic Pollutants) – Extended Impact Assessment

2005.08.18	European Parliament (Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality)	Opinion of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), establishing a European Chemicals Agency and amending Directive 1999/45/EC and Regulation (EC) (on Persistent Organic Pollutants) (2003/0256(COD))

Endocrine disruptors

Date	Author	Title
2016.06.15	European Commission	Draft Commission delegated Regulation (EU) …/… of XXX setting out scientific criteria for the determination of endocrine-disrupting properties pursuant to Regulation (EU) No 528/2012 (C(2016) 3752 project)
2016.06.15	European Commission	Draft Commission Regulation (EU) …/… of XXX setting out scientific criteria for the determination of endocrine-disrupting properties and amending Annex II to Regulation (EC) 1107/2009 (C(2016) 3751 project)

DG DEVCO funding

Date	Author	Title

		Strengthening Regional, European and Global CSO Umbrella
2015	European Commission	Organisations – Guidelines for applicants (Reference: EuropeAid/150-053/C/ACT/Multi)

WECF documents

Date	Author	Title
2012	Women in Europe for a Common Future	Annexes to the report on the key results of the on-line consultation on the issues paper "CSOs in Development Cooperation" (row 264)
2015.06.12	Women in Europe for a Common Future (European Commission as contracting authority)	Strengthening Regional, European and Global CSO Umbrella Organisations – Application form for a Framework Partnership Agreement and related Grant Application Form
2016	Women in Europe for a Common Future	Women and Chemicals – The impact of hazardous chemicals on women

Appendix 2. Critical frame analysis template

Author	Year	Title	Problem			Solution			Participants	GE meaning (fixed, shrunk, bent, stretched)	Comments/notes
			How it was constructed	Where it comes from	Who caused it	Why should it be fixed	Who should fix it	How should it be fixed			

Appendix 3. List of events for participant observation

(Code and organisation, event, location, date)

EWL 1 – *Seminar 25 Years of Feminist Activism Across Europe & Beyond* (Brussels, 2015.05.29)

EPWS 1 – *General Assembly 2015* (Berlin, 2015.11.04)

EPWS 2 – *Ready for Dialogue Conference* (Berlin, 2015.11.05)

EWL 2 – *Why Women Will Save the Planet* (Brussels, 2016.05.23)

WAVE 1 – *18th WAVE Conference – Step Up! Europe – Unite to end violence against women and their children* (Berlin, 2016.10.19-21)

Appendix 4. List of interviews

(Code, organisation, date)

EPWS A – European Platform of Women Scientists (2015.05.11)

WECF A – Women in Europe for a Common Future (2015.07.01)

ECHO A – DG Human Rights (2016.01.28)

EPWS B – European Platform of Women Scientists (2016.02.03)

ENV A – DG Environment (2016.02.03)

DEVCO A – DG Development and International Cooperation (2016.02.16)

CLIMA A – DG CLIMA (2016.02.17)

EWL A – European Women's Lobby (2016.02.26)

WECF B – Women in Europe for a Common Future (2016.03.01)

GEN A – Genanet (2016.03.04)

JUST A – DG Justice (2016.05.23)

JUST B – DG Justice (2016.05.23)

JUST C – DG Justice (2016.05.24)

JUST D – DG Justice (2016.05.24)

EPWS C – European Platform of Women Scientists (2016.06.02)

JUST E – DG Justice (2016.06.22)

FEMM A – FEMM committee (2016.06.22)

ENV B – DG Environment (2016.06.24)

WAVE A – Women Against Violence in Europe (2016.07.01)

WECF C – Women in Europe for a Common Future (2016.07.11)

ENV C – DG Environment (2016.10.12)

RTD A – DG Research and Innovation (2016.10.13)

HG A – Helsinki Group (2016.10.2)