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# Working against the tide? Institutionalizing Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament

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# Working against the tide? Institutionalizing Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament

#### Petra Ahrens<sup>i</sup>

While the Beijing Platform for Action of the UN Women's World Conference in 1995 led many governments to adopt gender mainstreaming (GM), parliaments seldom embraced GM as an official strategy. The European Parliament (EP) is one of the few parliaments worldwide that committed to implementing GM and can therefore be characterized as a vanguard. Since 2003, the EP has adopted six resolutions and several reports on GM, the most recent in January 2019.

The continuing effort to institutionalize GM in the EP is puzzling, given that GM as a tool to promote gender equality has lost considerable ground on the supranational level over the last decade (Ahrens 2018; Debusscher and Van der Vleuten 2017; Jacquot 2015). It is even more astonishing given that in many member states political parties also represented in the EP openly oppose gender equality policies and attack gender studies as "gender ideology" (Korolczuk and Graff 2018; Verloo 2018; Verloo and Paternotte 2018). Given this background, these questions arise: how did the EP, and particularly its Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM committee), manage to work against the tide and keep GM on the EP agenda? How was pursuing GM implementation justified? Can we speak of a successful institutionalization of GM in the EP, and if yes, to which extent?

This chapter examines the ideas and discourse used to justify the adoption of GM in the EP, conceptualizing them in the form of different frames, with the aim of understanding the broader context and direction of GM implementation in the EP. I also examine how the occurrence and the political implications of the particular frames changed over time. The chapter contributes to understanding how parliaments, even with their predictable changes of MPs and staff, can institutionalize GM rules. Analysing the institutionalization of GM also helps answer a key question about the power relations in the EP: who has the power to introduce new rules and who the power to implement, block, or ignore them in one way or another? The EP is of particular interest because, as a supranational institution, it has to develop new rules and practices due to the heritage of differently gendered national parliaments.

The first section briefly reviews studies on GM in EU institutions and elaborates how combining Discursive Institutionalism (DI) and Feminist Institutionalism (FI) offers a useful framework to understand the institutionalization of GM in the EP. The second section presents the frames used to justify GM implementation in the EP and explores their political implications for promoting gender equality. The third section then attends to GM's implementation over time and which elements proposed in the resolutions were actually realised before concluding the chapter by discussing the main findings in a broader perspective.

# Theorizing Gender Mainstreaming in the EP

Gender mainstreaming (GM) as a political strategy aims to change structures causing inequalities, question existing institutions, and suggest a paradigm shift by promoting gender equality as a goal (Beveridge et al. 2000; Rees 1998; Woodward 2012). GM considerably changed the scope of EU gender equality policy by moving beyond employment policy (Mazey 2001) and attempting to change the institutional setting (Behning and Sauer 2005). A strong feminist coalition mobilised for including GM in the Treaty of Amsterdam (Hubert and Stratigaki 2016), but "bending, stretching or shrinking" almost always led to integrating or even co-opting gender equality instead of transforming existing policies (Lombardo et al. 2009). Hence, a range of scholars have attested the Commission and the EU in general lack any clear and coherent vision of gender equality, with GM becoming an empty signifier (Verloo 2005; Lombardo and Meier 2008) and pursuing integrationist, co-optative, or toolkit approaches to GM implementation (Stratigaki 2005). Effective GM implementation also failed in the European Court of Justice (Kenney 2002), the European constitution-making process (Lombardo 2005), and the Council of Europe (Lovecy 2002), and we lack insights on any GM implementation at the European Council or the Council of the European Union. The fate of GM in EU policy-making relied less on legislation than on administrative everyday policy-making routines (Jacquot 2015). Overall, inadequate GM implementation on the supranational level depoliticized gender equality policy, weakened the original institutional gender equality structure, and undermined the previously strong cross-institutional collaboration between feminist actors (Ahrens 2018; Jacquot 2015).

Even though the role of the EP in gender-equality policy in general has been investigated (Ahrens 2018; Rolandsen Agustín 2013; Van der Vleuten 2012, also in this volume), researching the institutionalization of GM in the EP as an institution almost requires starting from scratch. As the EP – like other EU institutions – is characterized by constant

(institutional) change (Abels in this volume), we can expect that nesting new GM rules in everyday EP practices would be possible, especially also given the long-standing self-understanding of the EP as a gender equality promoter (Debusscher and Van der Vleuten 2017; Van der Vleuten in this volume). Nonetheless, the EP might face similar difficulties as the newly established Scottish Parliament, where Mackay (2014: 566) found signs of "institutional amnesia and political drift", as "the combination of 'newness' and 'gender' appears to make the institutionalization of reforms even harder".

Moreover, ideas and how they are discursively generated and communicated play an important role in co-constituting institutional change and empowering its actors (Mackay et al. 2010). Politics and their articulation through discourses represent the "struggle for representation of needs, problems, and identities" (Kulawik 2009: 265). Therefore, it is useful to conceptualise EP decision-making processes as an on-going discourse and an on-going construction of policy problems and solutions in the form of frames (Lombardo and Forest 2012). Frames are important because they reveal how actors understand the policy field and how they fit political issues into the broader context of their institution (Lombardo et al. 2009). Despite the rich literature on GM implementation in certain policy fields or different institutions, we know little about competing ideas and frames used in justifying GM institutionalization.

To capture the variety of frames actors' use in discourses and the resulting political change in the EP as an institution, this chapter builds on feminist institutionalism (FI) and discursive institutionalism (DI) as important recent strands of analysing European integration (Mackay et al. 2010; Macrae and Weiner 2017). Both institutionalisms emphasize actors and endogenous institutional change, allowing us to examine "the ways in which gender norms are reproduced and gendered power dynamics are maintained within EU structures" (Haastrup and Kenny 2016: 206). With its multicultural and multinational setting, the EP provides an exceptional case to study competing ideas about how to promote best gender equality in a system defined by consensual decision-making. DI helps focus "on the interrelations of institutional arrangement, actor constellations, and political discourse", even though "the constitutive dimension of discourse limits the scope of statements that can be meaningfully articulated in a given society" (Kulawik 2009: 267, 269). Repeating ideas over and again prompts "continuity through change", yet ideas and practical implementation can still become disconnected (Schmidt 2011: 109f.), and GM in the EP is an illustrative example of disconnections and how actors in favour of GM repeatedly aim to overcome institutional barriers and push for collective action.

While DI focuses on how and why (incremental) institutional change through ideas occurs, the concept of "nested newness" (Mackay 2014) extends that perspective to what happens with new institutions once installed. The concept of nested newness captures the fact that newly established institutions – be they organizations or policy-making practices – are created in a specific context that motivates them to design an either similar or contrasting institution (Mackay 2009, 2014). Simultaneously, the institution's context affects how a new institution develops, as the 'nestedness' means that establishing any new practices and rules might go against previous procedures and therefore meet opposition. Furthermore, EP actors arrive with knowledge from their previous (national) institutions, and when it comes to gender issues rules related to changing (new) institutions are apparently among those that are particularly easily 'forgotten' (Mackay 2009).

In this chapter, the EP self-appointed mission to implement GM is conceptualized as creating a new institution by adopting new rules that by definition shall ultimately lead to institutional change. In this context, Mackay et al. (2010) highlight the *constitutive* aspect of ideas and frames in institutions, yet there is also a *receptive* aspect of ideas at work here. The frames regarding GM implementation communicated in texts and EP plenary debates gain different levels of power at different times. Combining DI and FI allows for tracing which particular frames (as in ideologically grouped discourses and ideas) stand out in introducing and maintaining GM processes in the EP.

To analyse the discursive aspect of institutions, I draw on primary material from the EP, such as resolutions, minutes of plenary debates, committee documents, and other documents, produced in the context of the following EP resolutions<sup>ii</sup>:

- European Parliament resolution on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament (2002/2025(INI))
- European Parliament resolution on gender mainstreaming in the work of the committees (2005/2149(INI))
- European Parliament resolution of 22 April 2009 on gender mainstreaming in the work of its committees and delegations (2008/2245(INI))
- European Parliament resolution of 17 November 2011 on gender mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament (2011/2151(INI))
- European Parliament resolution of 8 March 2016 on Gender Mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament (2015/2230(INI))
- European Parliament resolution of 15 January 2019 on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament (2018/2162 (INI))

Such documents provide data in which ideas, norms, and cultures are embodied and rendered visible (Teghtsoonian 2016). Political actors, moreover, use frames to transport their norms and ideas, and connect them to a broader institutional context in parliamentary texts (Schmidt 2010, 2011). Studying the written texts and plenary debates on the EP resolutions, I first categorized the frames that were used to justify formally implementing gender mainstreaming in the EP. Next, I examined which frames appeared when and determined whether their composition changed over time. Finally, I assessed what the resolutions tell us about the scope of nesting GM in the everyday practices of the EP.

## **Embedding GM resolutions in Parliamentary Procedures**

Gaining support for the first gender mainstreaming resolution and embedding it in the formal EP procedures was crucial for all further steps of institutionalization. It should be noted here that the Conference of Presidents does not generally authorize the EP to produce a so-called own-initiative report and a resolution, on the contrary. According to Mamadouh and Raunio (2003), such requests are often turned down as a form of EP agenda control. EP resolutions are prepared on the request of either a motion for resolution by individual members or by a committee, in this case FEMM. The Conference of Presidents assigned the first GM resolution as an own-initiative report to FEMM as lead committee, with the Committee on Legal Affairs and the Internal Market (AFET) as opinion-giving. Passing the initial formal procedure meant automatically institutionalizing all following resolutions because it included a reporting obligation in the form of own-initiative reports assigned to FEMM as the competent committee (European Parliament 2003a).

FEMM prepared all resolutions following the EP standard procedure. The political group of the different rapporteurs caused no noticeable differences regarding the process or adoption. GM resolutions have thus become a well-institutionalized new standard output of the EP, not least because FEMM, as the initiating committee, is in charge of them. All resolutions received a clear majority in FEMM, though with increases in rejection votes. In plenary, only the 2009 resolution received broad support, while the first one in 2003 and those after 2009 were more contested. Table 6.1 presents rapporteurs, adoption dates, voting outcomes, and frame distribution over time.

While institutionalizing resolutions was easy, establishing new practices and rules that ensure GM's implementation in the overall environment of the EP is a different task. In this regard, the resolutions (except the first) are interesting hybrids of otherwise quite formalised EP resolutions: not only do they signal the way forward on topics as resolutions usually do, they also are themselves the reporting mechanism for GM developments since the previous resolution. Consequently, the policy process becomes inevitably intertwined with ideas and discourses about justifying the need for GM, with necessary steps for further institutionalizing the strategy, and with judging the results beyond the FEMM committee. The next section presents the particular frames that were mobilized to gain support for GM, as well the one that was used *against* GM institutionalization.

#### **EP Gender Mainstreaming Frames**

The frames used in texts and plenary debates are instructive to understand internal parliamentary struggles and power relations because they function as attempts to 'nest' gender equality in all aspects of the EP. What each frame presents as the problem and what it suggests as solution also imply different implementation trajectories. Discourses about GM revolved around seven different frames justifying (and one discrediting) gender mainstreaming implementation in the EP (see table 6.1), all of which are familiar from other presentations of gender mainstreaming and have different underlying logics that imply different consequences for gender-equality policy. Each of them is listed according to their prevalence in the different stages of the resolutions texts and in EP plenary debates.

#### GM as a goal in itself

In this frame, not using the correct tools to promote gender equality is presented as the problem, the solution being GM as something that offers tools for all actors at all levels. The frame is characterized by references to using adequate tools and instruments, and presents GM as the only possibility to promote gender equality. GM remains unquestioned and is presented as a "natural" step; it becomes a goal in itself, as the following quotes illustrate:

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality stresses the need for committees and delegations to have suitable instruments at their disposal for ensuring maximum awareness of gender mainstreaming. We need indicators, data and statistics grouped according to gender, and we also need budgetary resources to be allocated from a gender equality perspective. (Plenary debate 2009)

Secondly, Parliament – further to several resolutions on gender mainstreaming – gradually developed a gender mainstreaming structure. However, analysis shows that the system is fragmented and not particularly efficient. It is time for corrective measures, as well as an efficient feedback and evaluation mechanism, if we want to prevent this resolution from remaining a dead letter. (Plenary debate 2016)

Even though this frame implies using certain tools, it can nevertheless stop actors such as the different MEPs, rapporteurs, committee (vice) chairs, or political groups from discussing gender equality policy goals and instead use GM as an "empty signifier" (Verloo 2005) without clear targets that should be reached within a certain time span. Thus, the frame allows for GM to be de-politicized and turned it into a technical step, a toolkit approach (Lombardo et al. 2009) everyone must take without further discussing the ultimate vision of what gender equality may mean in different policy fields. In this frame, GM becomes a matter of following technical steps and nesting them into the institutional logic of the institution, but it does not address the issue that actors need to be trained and inclined to use these new tools.

#### GM as a placeholder for descriptive representation

The second major frame presents the low number of women in the EP as a problem and uses GM as a stand-in for pushing to improve the recruitment of women overall and particularly in leadership positions. GM here stands for increasing the quantitative representation of women in all bodies and levels of the EP – as MEPs and staff, as the quotes show:

The European political parties must strive to promote the participation of women in public life, to put more women forward for election, and here in Parliament they should encourage and create fairer and more equal representation. (Plenary debate 2007)

There's still huge work to be done. That is why I believe that the top hierarchy of the European Parliament should really take this into consideration, and to have more women, at least forty percent, at top management and top posts and positions. (Plenary debate 2016)

While reaching parity is certainly an important indicator of gender equality, as the final distribution predominantly depends on national party practices and electoral laws in member states, it is out of the EP's scope. Using GM as a placeholder for descriptive representation might limit it to counting heads instead of questioning structures and policy content. It also uses binary categories and tends to neglect other intersectional aspects of representation like race, ethnicity, or physical abilities. Nevertheless, using this frame could help create pressure to reconsider the Rules of Procedure regarding parity rules for (vice) committee chairs, political group leaders, and administrative staff.

## GM as a trademark of a progressive EP

The trademark frame's main problem is that GM is not implemented well, also not in member states' parliaments, so the solution is that the EP becomes the vanguard. Consequently, the frame highlights the role of the EP as the lead institution in promoting gender equality and mainstreaming in parliaments and beyond, and it was usually supported by utterances such as these:

I believe that this is an excellent initiative for transferring to national parliaments the positive model offered by the EP on gender equality. (Plenary debate 2007)

Finally, the best way to promote gender equality is to set a good example, to live its essence, and to show how it is done. Gender mainstreaming and gender equality are principles that are enshrined in the Treaties. Who, if not the EU institutions, could be the best example when it comes to implementation? (Plenary debate 2016)

Even though this trademark frame reinforces the image of a progressive EP, a notion quite widely held in EP discourses (van der Vleuten in this volume), it loses its mobilizing potential if everyone thinks gender equality is accomplished in the EP (e.g. as opposed to everywhere) or if gender issues beyond traditional topics like representation, reconciliation, or equal pay are not recognized as necessary fields for intervention. Rolandsen Agustín (2013) illuminated how a form of cultural othering occurred in discourses on gender-based violence that may lead to overlooking gendered inequalities in one's "own" settings.

#### GM as a democratic necessity

In this frame, the problem to be solved by implementing GM is located in the broader context of various EU crises, particularly the alleged democratic deficit. The democracy frame references the necessity of promoting gender equality through GM as an indicator of the EP's credibility (globally) and EU democracy in general. It questions whether it is justified to ask other actors to promote gender equality if one's own institution fails to do so itself, as the following quotes highlight:

Often, work begins at home, in one's own house, and for us that means in this House, our Parliament. We cannot be credible in our work and in the demands that we make of others outside Parliament if we are not at the same time prepared to practice what we preach. (Plenary debate 2011)

It'll lead to greater democracy. (Plenary debate 2016)

Similarly to the trademark frame, the democracy frame tries to establish internal pressure to implement GM, and its appeal largely depends on whether MEPs and groups consider the democratic deficit a problem or – as is the case for some of the newer right-wing political groups – a reason to object to GM even more as part of their strategy to further undermine the EU and its policies.

#### GM as a tool for better reconciliation

While most of the frames so far concern more process- and institution-related frames, the reconciliation frame presents the unequal share of paid and unpaid work as the major barrier to reaching gender equality and casts GM implementation as the solution. Here, GM is justified as a tool to promote work-life balance and the reconciliation of private and public life, as can be seen in the following quote:

All these options must encourage the continual exchange of good practice, with the aim of implementing the integrated strategy for combining family life and work life and facilitating the career development of female employees. (Plenary debate 2009)

While the distribution of paid and unpaid work is a core question in gender equality, its use as a frame for GM implementation in the EP also presents some challenges due to its limitation to employment and social policy. If GM would rely on this frame alone, it could be limited to

the committees concerned with employment and social policy, while other important policy issues such as gender-based violence, sexual rights, gender and public health, or gender identity would probably receive less attention.

GM as a safeguard of human and fundamental rights

The frame presenting GM as a safeguard for human and fundamental rights problematizes the fact that gender-equality policies were not fully accepted as a human-rights issue and that international obligations need to be taken more seriously. Overall, this frame casts women's rights and gender equality as global values:

Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of community law – I emphasize that this fundamental principle, and thus also its advancement, is the indisputable task of the community. (Plenary debate 2007)

While the frame offers the chance to nest GM implementation in a broader political context, it might also lead to limiting gender equality to a question of legal rights, instead of taking the transformative approach that characterizes GM.

*GM* as a tool to advance the economy

This frame relies on casting gendered inequalities as a limitation to making full use of human resources and thus presents GM as a tool to enable full economic growth through better human-resource management:

And also, there's certainly inequality on the boards of businesses. Enormous differences there. We need changes in business, we need changes in society so that women are more involved in decision-making. Especially, I say, in businesses. And I think this [resolution] will make a contribution to the well-being of businesses as well. (Plenary debate 2016)

This economic frame ties gender equality to the promise of accomplishing economic goals, but if this frame dominates, only proposals that can be linked to economic efficiency can be justified. If a proposal lacks a clear economic advantage or would even be costly, it could be rejected.

GM as an instrument to address demographic changes

This frame presents low birth rates across Europe as a major challenge and proposes that GM will change certain policies that would lead to women having more children. Here, changes to the age composition of the EU population function as the main justification for gender mainstreaming:

The ageing of Europe will be an impossible problem to solve unless we revise our approach to gender mainstreaming. (Plenary debate 2007)

Similarly to the reconciliation and the economic frames, such a limited policy focus would most likely also limit the implementation of GM to this topic, thereby ignoring that the real problem is usually not too few children but the way the social security system is organized.

#### GM as ideology and threat

The last frame is fundamentally different from all previous ones, because it opposes rather than supports GM. First appearing in 2016, its problem is "feminists gone wild" that attempt to brainwash the EU population through "gender ideology". The solution suggested is abandoning GM and any gender-equality policy, as illustrated by the following quotes:

But unfortunately, I cannot support this report, because it goes in the wrong direction. I never heard of a worse proposal for harmonizing private- and business-lives. We cannot allow such interference. Policies in totalitarian regimes never try to do something like that, which explains quite a lot about this proposal. (Plenary debate 2016)

We're talking about transposing gender ideology into the internal organization of the European Parliament. (...) The Mlinar report has two advantages. It's clear how much money is being squandered on gender ideology, and the text, seems to me, to bear out everything bad the people are saying about the European Parliament being cut off. (Plenary debate 2016)

As the range of frames illustrates, GM resolutions and plenary debates used many different issues to justify GM implementation. They refer to the EP's internal organization, such as its committees, delegations, human resources department, and administration, and to policy

fields like employment and demography. The frames and the resolutions themselves become more detailed and sophisticated over time, as various discourses represented in the frames find their place and are institutionalized as topics for GM implementation in the EP. Moreover, over time, the scope of resolutions also extended to intersectional aspects, for instance LGBTQI-rights, gender identity, and transgender issues, as is clearly visible in the 2016 resolution, and additional diversity aspects and sexual harassment in the EP in the 2019 resolution.

The next section compares which frames dominated over time, how they affected the content of the political debate, and how implementation changed over time. We will also examine in greater detail the specific settings of each resolution and what this tells us about the discourses that shape GM's nesting in the EP.

# **Nesting GM in Parliamentary Procedures**

All resolutions present information on how GM is implemented (or not) and all resolutions follow the same standardized structure of EP resolutions. They start by linking GM with the EU legislative framework, such as treaty articles on gender equality (TEU §3(2)), nondiscrimination (TEU §13), and equal pay (§141), EP resolutions, and EP rules, and also cover the activities of other supranational actors like the European Commission. All resolutions then continue by summarizing why promoting gender equality is still a necessary goal, briefly assessing GM implementation in the EP thus far and postulating necessary future steps. The function of the explanatory statement attached to the resolutions changed over time: in the first four resolutions, the rapporteurs used it to report the results of evaluating GM implementation in the EP since the previous resolution, but it disappeared in the 2016 resolution. It returned in the 2019 resolution in the form of a political statement that simultaneously summarized overall results and urgently called for more serious attempts at implementation, given the time already spent on GM's institutionalization process. The FEMM committee kept track of this process by compiling data on GM in the EP with surveys covering the GM implementation steps defined in the 2003 resolution. In addition, FEMM regularly invited the (vice-)chairperson in charge of GM within each committee to report in a FEMM meeting and arranged joint meetings of the GM network that was created after the first resolution. What follows is a detailed timeline of GM in the EP.

2003. The first resolution was influenced by broader political discourses at the time that were concerned with transposing the Treaty of Amsterdam and its GM provisions and with the upcoming EU enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe. For the former, the

resolution presented the European Commission's GM approach as a best practice and blueprint for the EP, and the suggested implementation steps quite accurately followed the specialist group report of the Council of Europe (1998), which was then considered a blueprint for GM implementation. Two core steps were nevertheless omitted: gender training and consultative measures directed at stakeholders and/or think tanks. For the latter, the rapporteur highlighted that in light of the 2004 enlargement it would be necessary to ensure a high proportion of women in parliament and also reasoned that GM and promoting gender equality would be a core EP task to support democracy "as the European institution closest to citizens" (European Parliament 2003b: 16). Overall, GM implementation was justified by only five frames: GM as a goal in itself, descriptive representation, trademark, democratic necessity, and reconciliation; the last frame never again receiving similar attention. The resolution initially used the neutral formulation "effective work by the competent committee" (ibid.: 9) to allocate the responsibility for GM, and only in the explanatory statement was "competent committee" specified by suggesting that all tasks mentioned in the resolution be assigned to the FEMM committee. GM institutionalization thus became a life insurance for the FEMM committee by assigning it recurring tasks and reporting duties.

2007. Now that the EP had committed to implement GM and report biannually, the 2004 EP elections meant that the stage had changed, resulting in a delay of the 2007 report. Constituting a new EP and returning to formal and informal rules clearly had an impact for GM. The various drafts and the final adopted version aptly illustrate the internal struggles and problems of nesting GM in the existing procedures and of establishing new ones. The frames used in the plenary debate emphasized descriptive representation and GM as a goal in itself. While some MEPs highlighted that EP committees were quite reluctant to implement GM, the written texts were much more cautious. The explanatory statement almost excused shortcomings by flagging the "political and technical dynamic inherent in each topic" that "determines the attention paid to the specific challenge posed by gender mainstreaming", and that "this should not under any circumstances result in a moral condemnation of individuals" (European Parliament 2006a: 9f). Committees seemed to have forgotten about the requirement to mainstream gender and moreover were reluctant to adopt more decisive steps and implement stricter rules. The committee report which was adopted as a basis for the final resolution included concrete steps such as, for instance, the need for the High-Level Group on Gender Equality to establish obligatory political priorities for GM in legislation, communication and information policy, gender budgeting, and staff policy. The report also suggested adopting compulsory quotas for female MEPs and, in a previous version, providing

gender trainings for all MEPs. All these disappeared in the final resolution, demonstrating the difficulty of institutionalizing GM in an EP composed differently after the elections.

**2009**. Adopted towards the end of the legislature, the 2009 resolution clearly resembled the previous two in terms of the drafts and adopted text. The content of the explanatory statement changed considerably though, listing details on each of the EP committees and delegations<sup>iii</sup> in a "name-and-shame-approach". Instead of summarizing the main findings regarding certain topics, the explanatory statement disclosed details on the (non-existent) activity of a majority of committees. While 14 out of 19 committees stated that they had included gender aspects in some (non-)legislative acts, the committees on constitutional (AFCO), legal (JURI), and civil liberties, justice and home affairs (LIBE), budgetary control (CONT), and the environment (ENVI) did not. Moreover, only the committees on regional development (REGI), fisheries (PECH), foreign affairs (AFET), and its subcommittee on security and defense (SEDE) reported a dedicated internal equality strategy. Few committees used gender-disaggregated data, indicators, gender impact assessments, and gender budgeting. Yet, compared to 2007, where not a single committee had an internal equality strategy (European Parliament 2009b: 8), the numbers had increased. The Independence/Democracy Group opposed the resolution and proposed a number of weaker formulations such as "reiterates that it is possible to adopt" instead of "reiterates the need to adopt" (European Parliament 2009c: 5). The number of frames used in the plenary debate was never as large again while simultaneously being balanced in their percentage of occurrences; all frames except those of the GM as ideology and as threat were mobilized, and this was the only time when the demography frame appeared.

2011. As with the 2007 resolution, for the 2011 resolution we also see that the newly elected EP affected how GM implementation is reported and to what extent it faces challenges nesting in the everyday parliamentary business. It provided no details on the different committees; the results presented were rather general and useless for estimating which committees were (in)active or how things had developed since the last report. The policy process leading to the resolution was the shortest of all the studied resolutions, which might be interpreted as a sign of institutionalization, at least regarding the level of routinization in FEMM. The frames on descriptive representation and GM as a trademark were the ones most often used in the (brief) plenary debate, while policy-related ones – economy, demography, human rights – disappeared.

While the other resolutions focussed on how to push other committees to implement GM, the 2011 resolution signalled a change of strategy on the part of FEMM. Throughout the

resolution, so-called "gender mainstreaming amendments" (GMA) were emphasized as a useful tool. GMAs are tabled and voted in the FEMM committee and then forwarded to the lead committee, which then can but is not required to adopt them. In other words, instead of the earlier practice of competing with other committees over gender-related (non)legislative acts (Ahrens 2016) or pushing for GM implementation, FEMM considered GMAs the most successful strategy. GMAs became the informal new GM standard rule, and the 2011 resolution suggested formally including it in the rules of procedure; a suggestion repeated in each follow-up resolution yet not implemented to date. According to a commissioned study, "the majority of GMAs in most cases simply add the words 'gender', 'female' or 'women' to the respective text, be it a proposal for legislation of the Commission or an own-initiative report of a parliamentary committee" (European Parliament 2014a: 77).

2016. The 2016 resolution once more signals that institutionalizing GM in the EP is a question of matching existing rules and routines with new ones. Ostensibly, the biannual GM reporting does not synchronize well with the EP's five-year election cycle, as the previous legislature only had the 2011 report. We can assume that a second report was probably not prepared because of the change in committee chair<sup>iv</sup> and timing problems with the 2014 election, both most likely affecting committee routines.

However, the 2016 resolution also indicates the routinization and perseverance of FEMM committee members, evincing their ability to detect the mismatches between long-established rules and routines and the new requirements connected to GM. Strong emphasis was placed on the frames of GM as a goal in itself and of descriptive representation, and in general a variety of frames were mobilized in support. For the first time though, the frame of GM as ideology and threat also appeared.

The resolution proposes additional measures to ensure better 'nesting' of GM in the EP, for instance through:

- Setting up an institutional coordination and monitoring mechanism for the bodies in charge of GM, such as the High-Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity, the FEMM committee, the gender mainstreaming network, and the EP's administration services;
- Staffing up the gender-mainstreaming network with delegation members and additional substitutes, and co-chairing it with a representative from the FEMM committee and someone from among the different committees on a rota basis in order to signal that gender mainstreaming involves all committees;

- Calls for gender balance (at least 40% of each sex by 2020) in chairpersons for committees and political groups, heads of (administrative) units, as well as middle and senior management, and by nominating MEPs from the underrepresented gender in each committee (incl. FEMM committee);
- Establishing a standing rapporteur on gender mainstreaming to coordinate with the High Level Group (European Parliament 2016a: 7-8).

For the first time, the report mentioned LGBTIQ issues as a subject for GM implementation. Gender budgeting and gender training re-appeared as requested measures, and the resolution called for greater involvement of the European Institute for Gender Equality and the EP research services. Overall, the 2016 resolution demonstrates that some elements of GM implementation had been institutionalized, such as reporting, certain actors like the High Level group and the gender mainstreaming network, but also some tools like GMAs, as attention for gender aspects was growing in a number of committees. Moreover, FEMM stressed how important it is "to establish a clear procedure, to be incorporated into Parliament's Rules of Procedure, on the adoption of a gender action plan by each committee and delegation" (European Parliament 2016a: 10).

2019. The most recent resolution replicates core elements of the 2016 one and demonstrates clear advancements in institutionalizing GM. Angelika Mlinar, in charge of the resolution, became the first "Standing Rapporteur on Gender Mainstreaming" in 2016 and in addition to the GM network, the EP set up another one with GM network administrators for each committee. Furthermore, 19 out of 23 committees prepared a gender action plan, for the first time publicly accessible on the FEMM committee website after the resolution's adoption." The four committees not publishing a gender action plan were the FEMM committee itself, those without a policy field – Budgetary Control and Petitions – and the 2018 special (temporary) committee on Financial Crimes, Tax Evasion and Tax Avoidance (TAX3). Also, in 2017 the EP bureau unanimously adopted the report "Gender Equality in the European Parliament Secretariat – state of play and the way forward 2017-2019" with quantified targets for different positions.

The FEMM committee clearly attempted to further foster GM implementation and extend its scope beyond the elements reached thus far by mobilizing a variety of frames in plenary, but this was met with the growing use of the GM as ideology and threat frame. The resolution contains a stronger emphasis on diversity as an important element of promoting gender equality and refers specifically to LGBTI and gender identity, as well as to the importance of male role models for gender equality (European Parliament 2019a: 7). Finally,

the resolution proposed to add rules on sexual harassment and abuse to the EP rules of procedure and to organize measures that raise consciousness about this issue in the EP; whether or not this will actually be implemented remains to be seen.

#### Conclusion

This chapter set out to examine the policy frames and processes leading to the adoption of EP gender-mainstreaming resolutions that (self-)oblige the EP to implement GM on all levels, i.e. committees, delegations, EP Bureau, Secretariat, and staff management. The FEMM committee assigned itself to regularly monitor and evaluate implementation, and to present the results to plenary. Four frames used to justify GM implementation dominated the policy discourses surrounding all resolutions: (1) GM as a goal in itself, (2) GM as placeholder for descriptive representation, (3) GM as a trademark of a progressive EP, and (4) GM as a democratic necessity.

All frames lacked a clear definition of gender equality, and the use of the first frame de-politicized the discussion by only trying to oblige actors to adopt certain technical steps. The third and fourth frame relied on the self-representation of the EP as an equality promoter to push for institutionalisation. These frames clearly related well to the growing role of the EP in EU policy-making, but whether they will work effectively in the future depends on the composition of future EPs and the number of MEPs and political groups opposing gender equality.

The continuing repetition of the four frames over time caused institutional change by intractably linking the ideas with new rules and practices (Schmidt 2011) compatible with existing EP ones. Hence, the overall process and the use of certain ideas helped to prevent new gender rules from being "forgotten" (Mackay 2014), although a newly elected EP posed a particular challenge to the partly institutionalised rules. Notably, the frame of GM as a goal in itself also changed: in the beginning, actors using the frame emphasized that GM tools are available and just need to be picked up, while nowadays the frame is used to stress that the EP needs to adapt tools to its own structure to implement GM. The system that the FEMM committee set up managed over time to make it almost impossible for the EP to forget about the new GM rules because of the continuous reporting and additional elements such as GMA, gender action plans, GM networks, and a GM Standing Rapporteur that constantly require all parts of the EP to engage with the topic – even if rather unwillingly. Remarkably, using the GM resolutions FEMM managed to indirectly exert power over the different EP branches despite it usually being considered powerless and unprestigious (Ahrens 2016). Whether

FEMM will find ways to use this power in a future EP which will most probably become much more conservative, right-wing, and anti-feminist remains to be seen.

Overall, we can distinguish different, overlapping steps in institutionalizing GM in the EP:

- Making it an established practice and returning subject by institutionalizing reporting mechanisms with the responsibility clearly allocated to one institutional body, the FEMM committee, secured the long-term survival of GM as a subject.
- De-politicising the process by presenting it as a technical process increased receptivity in the EP and allowed for stepwise interweaving new rules with existing ones. Nevertheless the technical focus did imply slow progress with regards to the content of gender-equality policies.
- Institutionalizing GM in other committees than FEMM, in delegations, and in other duties of EP took more time and was less successful, as committees remained reluctant, and inactive change only happened slowly.
- Intersectional aspects long played no role, though more attention was paid in the most recent resolutions. The same applies to the notion of gender-sensitive parliaments, vi which only appeared in the last resolution.

When we consider the broader implications of a successful GM implementation in the EP, we could expect a considerable impact on supranational and national policies, because the increased power of the EP would allow for enforcing the mainstreaming of gender in all EU policies. This could even help to correct the omissions of an inactive European Commission in policy fields not directly associated with gender equality. Can the EP thus become a best-practice example for national parliaments? Can there be a spill-over? Will the EP continue working against the tide? Future developments will hopefully answer these questions positively.

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ii In the following, the resolutions will be referred to by their adoption year, not their starting year.

iii The report contained no data on other EP bodies, such as the Bureau.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>iv</sup> At the end of 2011, Mikael Gustavsson replaced Eva-Britt Svensson as chair. Why no second GM resolution was adopted was not available on the EP website.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>v</sup> Cf. <a href="http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/subject-files.html?id=20160602CDT00721">http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/subject-files.html?id=20160602CDT00721</a> (accessed March 7, 2019) for details. Two gender action plans were adopted by subcommittees.

vi See for example Childs 2016, Palmieri 2011, and Wängnerud 2015.

Table 6.1 Overview of the votes and frames of EP resolutions on gender mainstreaming

Resolution	2003			2007			2009			2011			2016			2019		
Assigned to FEMM	14.03.2002			15.06.2006			23.09.2008			07.07.2011			10.09.2015			05.07.2018		
Adopted	13.03.2003			18.01.2007			22.04.2009			17.11.2011			08.03.2016			15.01.2019		
Rapporteur	Lissy Gröner, S&D			Anna Záborská, PPE			Anna Záborská, PPE			Mikael Gustafsson, GUE/NGL			Angelika Mlinar, ALDE			Angelika Mlinar, ALDE		
	+	-	0	+	-	0	+	_	0	+	-	0	+	_	0	+	-	0
Committee vote	23	1	0	30	0	1	23	0	1	21	4	0	23	6	1	19	6	0
Plenary vote	255	255 186 15			Show of hands			12	64	378	154	40	453	173	79	492	126	75
Frame distribution over time																		
GM as a goal in itself	+++			++			++			++			+++			++		
GM as a placeholder for descriptive representation	+++			+++			++			+++			+++			+++		
GM as a trademark of a progressive EP	++			++			++			+++			++			+++		
GM as a democratic necessity	++			++			+			++			+			+		
GM as a tool for better reconciliation	+++			+			++			+			-			+		
GM as a safeguard of human and fundamental rights	-			++			-			-			+			-		
GM as a tool to advance the economy	-			+			-			-			+			+		
GM as an instrument to address demographic changes	-			+			-			-			-			-		
GM as ideology and threat	-			-			-			-			+			++		

Compilation by author. Key: no mention = - | mentioned at least once = + | mentioned at least three times = ++ | mentioned more than four times = +++