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Petra Debusscher

Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium


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Mainstreaming Gender in European Union Development Policy in the European Neighborhood

PETRA DEBUSSCHER
Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

This article examines gender mainstreaming in European Union (EU) development aid toward the European Neighborhood through quantitative and qualitative research of policy documents. The objective is to evaluate whether a shift has been made from a “Women in Development” paradigm to a “Gender and Development” paradigm. First, documents are examined quantitatively, looking at language, format, and budget. Next, the qualitative analysis embarks on a deeper reading of how gender equality is approached. The data indicate that a shift toward the “Gender and Development” paradigm has not been made. The internal European agenda as well as the limited space for civil society are proposed as explanations.

KEYWORDS European Union, gender equality, development planning, women in development, gender and development, European Neighborhood, gender mainstreaming

INTRODUCTION

The European Neighborhood encompasses the European Union’s (EU) immediate neighbors by land or sea. These are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus to the eastern border and Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia to the southern border. The European Neighborhood Policy dates back to 2003, when the European Commission, the EU’s executive body, outlined its wider Europe initiative to govern the relations with the Eastern and the Southern Neighbors (European Commission 2003b). A more developed strategy paper...
followed in 2004 that included the Southern Caucasus countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia (European Commission 2004). The objective of the European Neighborhood Policy is to avoid “the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and . . . [its] neighbours” and “to offer political association and deeper economic integration” based on “a mutual commitment to common values,” such as “democracy and human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy principles and sustainable development” (European Commission 2010a). Within this framework, the promotion of gender equality has been clearly defined among the European Union’s “priorities” and “common values” for cooperation (European Commission 2004, 13). Until December 2006, the European Commission provided development assistance to the countries of the European Neighborhood under various geographical programs, including Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) for the eastern neighbors and MEDA (an abbreviation of the French phrase for accompanying measures) for the southern Mediterranean neighbors, which both included commitments toward “the promotion of equal opportunities for women” (European Council 1999, article 2) and “the role of women in economic and social life” (European Council 1996, annex 2). In the newly dedicated European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument, which replaces TACIS and MEDA, it is stated that “community assistance shall be used to support . . . gender equality” and “women’s rights” (European Parliament and Council 2006, article 2). Furthermore, the European Union has adopted a range of high-level policy documents confirming that gender has to be integrated in all areas of its development policy and into all programs and projects at regional and country levels.

The main EU strategy to pursue gender equality in its internal and external policies is gender mainstreaming. The gender mainstreaming approach, which implements the Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm, was officially taken up by the international community after the United Nations (UN) Beijing Conference on Women in 1995 and was a reaction to the Women in Development (WID) paradigm. The WID paradigm addressed the exclusion of women from the development process by creating specific projects aimed at women, but it was increasingly criticized by feminist scholars who pointed out that focusing on women in isolation is ineffective as it ignores the underlying societal problem, namely unequal gender relations (Moser 1993).

By contrast, the GAD paradigm and the strategy of gender mainstreaming widen the scope from add-on, small-scale projects focusing on women to the integration of a gender equality perspective and gender equality aim into all policies, in an effort to transform society and obtain social justice for all people. Whereas WID policies—even those policies aimed at redressing the imbalances between the sexes—were directed at women only, the gender mainstreaming approach stresses “the shared responsibility of women and
men in removing imbalances in society” (Council of Europe 1998, 18). As the ultimate aim of gender mainstreaming is to change discriminatory gender norms, structures, and practices in society, it is regarded as a transformative approach.

This article seeks to determine the extent to which EU development policy toward the European Neighborhood has shifted from WID to GAD by assessing a selection of official programming documents from 2002 and 2007. The article takes a dual perspective, focusing on formal and substantial aspects of gender mainstreaming. The first part of the study is a quantitative analysis of formal aspects of gender mainstreaming that assesses the language, format, and budget in EU programming documents. The second part goes further and provides a deeper, qualitative content analysis of the same selection of policy documents that assesses gender mainstreaming’s potential as a transformative tool. I start in the next section with a discussion on gender mainstreaming and how it is interpreted in internal EU policies. Then, I give an overview of the data set and the applied method and clarify how the two dimensions of gender mainstreaming will be measured. After that I delve into the analysis of the gender mainstreaming approach in terms of formal aspects (quantitative analysis) and substantial aspects (qualitative analysis). Last, I conclude my findings.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

After the 1995 Beijing Conference, the concept of gender mainstreaming was further developed mostly within the European intergovernmental context. The Council of Europe set up a group of specialists that developed guidelines on how to implement the strategy of gender mainstreaming, which was adopted by the international community. Widely used by European policymakers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and researchers, the Council of Europe’s definition of gender mainstreaming is the most influential and frequently cited definition in European context to date (Verloo 2005a; Walby 2005a). It reads: “Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making” (Council of Europe 1998, 13).

The definition conceptualizes gender mainstreaming as a process of changing policy routines where the objects of mainstreaming are all policies, at all levels, and at all stages of the programming cycle, while the active subjects are the existing policy actors. This means that gender equality must be an integral part of common policies (Council of Europe 1998). However, the way in which the gender specialists of the Council of Europe originally conceptualized gender mainstreaming was far more encompassing than the
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one-sentence definition that has traveled so well into policy contexts (Verloo 2005a). The original conceptual framework stressed that “gender mainstreaming implies a broader and more comprehensive definition of gender equality” and that its ultimate aim is “transforming gender relations in the direction of gender equality” (Council of Europe 1998, 14). The transformative potential of gender mainstreaming is shared by several feminist academics and involves a holistic and long-term agenda to tackle deeply rooted societal norms and practices within which inequalities are embedded. Teresa Rees (1998) states that “mainstreaming entails a paradigm shift in thinking” and that it “requires being able to see the ways in which [the] current practice is gendered in its construction despite appearing gender-neutral” (194). Judith Squires (2007) shares this view, explaining that gender mainstreaming should facilitate a “transformative frame of analysis that enables gender relations to be understood as changeable by policy interventions” (68). Closely related to this is Naiła Kabeer’s (2005) idea of transformative agency that entails the “greater ability on the part of poor women to question, analyse and act on the structures of patriarchal constraint in their lives” (15). The idea of gender mainstreaming as a transformative tool thus involves transforming society by naming and challenging the existing gender and power relations through policy interventions wherein formerly disempowered women or their organizations participate in questioning, analyzing, and acting upon the gendered world. A prerequisite to transforming the development agenda is an “agenda-setting approach” toward gender mainstreaming where women who are affected by development interventions or their organizations have a voice “to shape the objectives, priorities and strategies of development” (Jahan 1995, 127). Such an agenda-setting approach to gender mainstreaming “implies the transformation and reorientation of existing policy paradigms, changing decision-making processes, prioritizing gender equality objectives and rethinking policy ends” (Walby 2005a, 323). Gender mainstreaming as a “strategy [that] aims at a fundamental transformation” (Verloo 2001, 3) is, therefore, different from an integrationist approach (Jahan 1995), which addresses “gender issues within existing development policy paradigms” (Beveridge and Nott 2002, 300) and sells “gender mainstreaming as a way of more effectively achieving existing policy goals” (Walby 2005a, 323).

Within the European Union, however, the gender mainstreaming strategy has been implemented in a rather technical manner: it focuses on the existing policy actors and processes and not on rethinking these processes or on integrating excluded groups into policymaking. Because of this technical interpretation, gender mainstreaming is presented as apolitical or without conflict, although it ultimately entails a shift of power from one group (men) to the other group (women). Moreover, in practice gender mainstreaming in the European Union is realized mainly through “soft law” (such as nonbinding communications, guidelines for the member states, and the exchange of
best practices), which implies that results are not enforceable and depend largely on the goodwill of the member states and the actors involved. Despite their transformative potential, in internal EU policies, gender mainstreaming tends to be “lost in translation” and is interpreted in a rather technical, apolitical, and noncommittal manner (Perrons 2005, 390). In addition, the underlying EU ideology that colors its gender policies has been criticized for being too strongly focused on the realization of the internal market and economic growth. Several authors have claimed that the integration of gender equality into all kind of policies is not only for reasons of social justice and democracy (Braithwaite 1999; Hoskyns 2008; True 2009). In a 1999 gender assessment of European structural funds, Mary Braithwaite (2000) stated that the full participation of women and men through investments made in human resources (by raising education and qualification levels) was crucial to attain the main European objectives of economic growth, competitiveness, and employment creation. This means that gender equality policies were easily framed to attain other policy goals. Braithwaite (2000) stated that increasing female participation in the labor market was the most important gender equality goal within the structural funds. Other gender equality areas, like infrastructure (transportation, etc.) and agricultural support, were either left out or served to facilitate women’s participation in the labor market. For example, the issue of “reconciliation of home and professional life” was treated as a way to smooth women’s “more active participation in the labour market” rather than an “objective in its own right” to achieve a “more equal sharing of domestic and family work between men and women” (Braithwaite 1999; 2000). Thus, gender equality policies in the European Union are thus often framed instrumentally to achieve other policy goals such as economic growth.

METHODS

I analyzed two generations of Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and National Indicative Programmes (NIPs) from European Neighborhood countries on their inclusion of gender equality. CSPs and NIPs are bilateral agreements between the EU and the government of a developing country, and they are the main instruments for programming EU development aid. Given their importance in implementing EU aid, they are regarded as the main “building blocks” to effectively put gender mainstream policies in practice (Painter and Ulmer 2002, 4). A CSP contains four key chapters: a country analysis, the national strategy, an overview of cooperation, and a response strategy. The country analysis sketches the current situation of a country through subchapters looking at different aspects of the country (e.g., political, economic, social, trade, environmental aspects). The overview of national policies of the partner country outlines the government’s development strategy. Next,
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the CSP gives an overview of the past and ongoing development aid from the EU and other donors. The response strategy outlines the development priorities and is based on the country analysis. The NIP makes the CSP’s priorities concrete by outlining the development programs in the chosen focal and nonfocal sectors and adds timetables, budgets, and measurement indicators. CSPs and NIPs are established through dialogue between the EU delegation in the partner country in correspondence with the EU headquarters in Brussels, the government ministries of the country, the EU member states embassies, and representatives of civil society of the country. Although analysis of policy documents is limited in the sense that it does not show the informal decision-making processes that precede the writing of documents or show how policies are actually implemented on the ground, I argue that the paper agreements are an important first step in evaluating gender mainstreaming in development aid. It is, of course, not necessarily the case that, when gender is integrated in the programming phase, this automatically translates to the effective realization of goals which were set beforehand. Several contextual factors might impede successful outcomes on the ground. However, careful study of programming documents is useful and necessary to establish whether “policy shifts have been made operational in such a way that significant impact in the field may be indeed expected” and “to identify factors that can help explain the degree of impact found in future studies” (Holvoet 2006, 9).

First, I analyze gender mainstreaming in the CSPs and NIPs in terms of the formal aspects of gender mainstreaming and, second, in terms of the deeper content of gender equality policies. To detect possible progress over time in terms of formal and substantial aspects of the gender mainstreaming approach, I compare the first-generation CSPs and NIPs (2002–2006) with the second-generation CSPs and NIPs (2007–2013) on their inclusion of gender equality issues. For each generation I analyzed the same set of 12 countries—Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and Syria—which makes a total set of 24 CSPs and NIPs.4

Formal Aspects

When a gender mainstreaming approach is in place, both men and women should be equally named in the documents analyzed (i.e., equal share of specific references to women and men). An imbalance would indicate that one sex is taken implicitly and consistently as the norm, while the other sex is considered problematic. I count references that relate exclusively to women (including women, woman, girl, mother, and female), exclusively to men (including men, man, boy, father, and male), and references that relate to both sexes equally (including gender and sex). This word count is the first step in assessing the formal presence of gender mainstreaming and gives an
indication of whether the shift from the WID discourse, focusing exclusively on women, toward the gender mainstreaming discourse has taken place.

Second, I examine whether gender issues are incorporated into all parts of the CSP and the NIP. I scanned the texts for references linked to gender (in)equality using search terms such as gender, sex(es), woman, women, female, girl(s), maternal, sexual, reproductive, mother, father, men, man, boy(s), male(s), feminist(s)/feminism, patriarchy/patriarchal, domestic violence, and rape. Since gender equality is a crosscutting issue, it should be found in the entire CSP and NIP. This implies that the programming of EU development aid should contain “a strong gender analysis and country profile, the integration of gender issues in the political and policy dialogue,” and should address “equality and women’s empowerment in the NIP” (European Commission 2008, 8). Then, I assess the extent to which gender issues are incorporated in the four key parts of the CSPs (country analysis, national strategy, overview of cooperation, and response strategy) and in the NIPs.

Third, I provide an analysis of the budget using a scoring system I developed to estimate the percentage of the total development budget that is gender mainstreamed. Each sector linked to a budget is classified according to its gender inclusiveness. Gender inclusiveness ranges from “Not mentioned at all” (no gender mainstreaming), to “A one-sentence reference to gender equality” (sector will perhaps be gender mainstreamed), to “Two to three concrete references to gender equality in the objectives or expected results” (this sector is likely to be gender mainstreamed), to “Four or more concrete references to gender equality in the objectives or expected results” (very likely to be gender mainstreamed), and last to “Gender is integrated in one or more performance indicators” (fully gender mainstreamed). Since every NIP has a set of performance indicators linked to the sector’s goals to monitor and evaluate the success of the development program, it is reasonable to say that the inclusion of so-called gender indicators corresponds to having the development objectives linked to gender equality in practice. For example, an NIP with the focal sector “Justice” and the objective to reform the justice system could have “perception of the credibility of the justice system” as one of its indicators. If this indicator is disaggregated by sex or if there is a specific indicator linked to gender equality included—for example, “number of gender-based violence cases resolved”—this corresponds to having the development objectives linked to gender equality in practice. These gender indicators can be either indicators broken down by sex (for instance, school enrollment rates for girls and for boys) or specific indicators measuring improved gender equality or reduced disparities (such as the number of women’s organizations funded or a decrease in the gender pay gap). The importance of gender indicators in the gender mainstreaming process has been widely recognized by the international donor community and the European Union, which has made high-level commitments to their use and advancement in its development aid (European Commission 2007c).
Since gender indicators constitute a critical link between policy aspirations and policy practice (Walby 2005b), I regard the use of these indicators as the most definite formal sign present in the programming phase of being fully gender mainstreamed. In the analysis of formal aspects, I consider the policy to be genuinely gender mainstreamed, and thus potentially transformative, if there is an equal share of specific references to women and men (language), if gender is part of all programming phases (format), and if gender issues and gender indicators are included in all budgetary sectors (budget).

Substantial Aspects

The second part of the research embarks on a more qualitative analysis of the gender mainstreaming approach in the CSPs and NIPs. I examine the same set of CSPs and NIPs to ascertain whether the gender mainstreaming approach in EU development aid entails “a broader and more comprehensive definition of gender equality” (Council of Europe 1998, 14). To contrast the understanding of gender equality in the CSPs and NIPs I additionally analyze eight civil society documents of five movements or networks from the European Neighborhood working on gender equality. These organizations are the Association of Women of the Mediterranean Region (AWMR), the Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTD-A), the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), the KARAT Coalition, and the Network of East–West Women (NEWW). Analyzing the views of relevant civil society actors on gender equality not only allows me to detect possible silences in the CSPs and NIPs (what is not said) but also helps determine whether gender mainstreaming is implemented as an agenda-setting approach that gives “attention to the substantive objectives of the women’s movement” (Jahan 1995, 127).

In the qualitative analysis, I examine the CSPs/NIPs and the civil society texts with critical frame analysis. Critical frame analysis is a methodology that builds on social movement theory and was further developed by the MAGEEQ project to identify how gender equality policies are framed (Verloo 2005b). Policy documents generally include a diagnosis (identifying the problems) and a prognosis (solutions) of the issue at hand. Both diagnosis and prognosis can be interpreted in several different ways. Implicit or explicit representations emerge regarding “who is deemed to have the problem, who caused it and who should solve it” from the diagnosis and prognosis (Lombardo and Meier 2008, 105–106). I explore the gender mainstreaming approach in EU development aid toward the European Neighborhood through in-depth analysis of these different dimensions of a policy discourse. Concretely, I start by examining which gender issues are identified as problems or solutions in the CSPs and NIPs. I analyze which issues are deemed important and which issues are left out of the diagnosis and the prognosis by contrasting the gender (in)equality frames in the CSPs and NIPs with
the gender (in)equality frames of civil society. Second, I examine to what extent the problems and solutions are gendered. This means I analyze what roles are attributed to both men and women and whether gender stereotypes are challenged or reproduced. Is there a focus on women, on men, or on their relation, and in what respect? To what extent are the standards, norms, and behaviors of men and of women questioned? Third, I examine who has a voice in defining problems and solutions and who is being talked about to identify which actors are included and excluded in the CSPs and NIPs\(^5\) (Lombardo and Meier 2008). I consider policies to be genuinely gender mainstreamed and thus potentially transformative when the problems and solutions regarding gender (in)equality are framed in a holistic way that includes the voices and concerns of civil society and involves both men and women.

**ANALYSIS OF FORMAL ASPECTS**

Is the Language Gender Mainstreamed?

In all the CSPs and NIPs, references that related to women were much more common than references that related to men. As Table 1 shows, I found 70.89% of references related exclusively to women and merely 13.20% of references related exclusively to men. References that related to both sexes in relation to each other were only slightly more common than male-related references but much less common than female-related references. I found 15.91% of all references relating to gender and sex. Because there is an overrepresentation of references to women compared with references to men, I conclude the language used in the CSPs and NIPs is more the typical WID language than a genuine GAD or gender mainstreaming language that involves both women and men equally in the analysis of and solutions to gender equality.

Comparing the first generation CSPs and NIPs (2002–2006) with the second generation (2007–2013), a slight improvement in the gender imbalance can be noted. Table 1 shows the percentage of references to women has decreased (from 74.62% to 67.47%) and the percentage of references to men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Number of References to Women, Men, and Gender/Sex in European Neighborhood CSPs and NIPs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Neighborhood CSPs and NIPs</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to <em>women</em></td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to <em>men</em></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to <em>gender</em>/<em>sex</em></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
has slightly increased (from 12.88% to 13.49%), as has the percentage of references to both sexes equally (from 12.50% to 19.03%). This allows me to conclude that the GAD or gender mainstreaming language is increasingly, albeit modestly, being used in policy documents concerning EU/European Neighborhood development aid, although the WID paradigm that focuses mainly on women as problem and solution holders still predominates.

Is Gender Incorporated into All Parts of the Policy Documents?

As can be seen in Table 2, gender issues are integrated into each part of the CSP (country analysis, national strategy, overview of cooperation, and response strategy) and in the NIP. This was the case in the first- as well as in the second-generation CSPs and NIPs. Comparing the two generations, there was an increase in gender issues for all four parts, indicating a positive evolution over time. Gender issues were found mostly in the country analysis of the CSP (42.02% of gender issues are found in that part), but gender references in the response strategy section have made the most significant increase over time going from 10.32% to 29.89%.

However, I found an imbalance at the level of the country analysis’s subsections. Within the country analysis, I observe that gender issues are mainly integrated into the social situation of a country (80 gender equality references out of 179 are located in the social situation of the country analysis) or the political situation (52 references) and to a much lesser extent into the economic situation of a country (8 references) or other categories (39 references). Analyses of all kinds of gender issues (from domestic violence to unemployment) are thus mainly linked to the social and the political, but not to the economy or other sectors. This is not in line with the Council of Europe’s definition of gender mainstreaming, which demands “that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages” (Council of Europe 1998, 13).

| TABLE 2 Number of References to Gender Equality Issues in European Neighborhood CSPs and NIPs |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                           | n  | %      | n  | %      | n  | %      |
| CSPs                      |    |        |    |        |    |        |
| Country analysis          | 77 | 49.68  | 102| 37.64  | 179| 42.02  |
| National strategy         | 2 | 1.29   | 11 | 4.96   | 13 | 3.05   |
| EU cooperation            | 26 | 16.77  | 6  | 2.21   | 32 | 7.51   |
| Response strategy         | 16 | 10.32  | 81 | 29.89  | 97 | 22.77  |
| NIP                       | 34 | 21.94  | 71 | 26.20  | 105| 24.65  |
| Total                     | 155| 100.00 | 271| 100.00 | 426| 100.00 |
What Percentage of the EU Development Budget for the European Neighborhood Is Gender Mainstreamed?

The sum of the reviewed development budget was €1,685.1 million for the 2002–2006 period and €2,790.5 million for the 2007–2013 period. As Table 3 shows, up to 85.72% of this total reviewed budget was not gender mainstreamed for the first generation of NIPs. This means gender was not mentioned once in the objectives or expected results of the budgetary sectors, so it is to be expected this share of the budget was not gender mainstreamed in practice. For 2007–2013, the percentage of the budget that was not gender mainstreamed dropped by almost 20% compared to the first-generation NIPs. Although the large improvement demonstrates that gender equality is becoming more important in the concrete programming phase, this leaves 65.96% of the budget of the current generation NIPs that is not gender mainstreamed in the programming phase, which is exceptionally high compared to other regions such as Asia, Africa, or Latin America (Debusscher 2011).

Yet Table 3 shows that gender equality aims are being increasingly specified in the NIP. The part of the development budget that specifies with two to three references in the objectives or expected results how gender is to be mainstreamed has increased significantly, from 8.29% to 17.34%. Here it is likely gender will be effectively gender mainstreamed, because it is elaborated on in the objectives or expected results. The part of the budget that is fully gender mainstreamed through the use of gender indicators has also increased significantly. For the first generation, only 2.49% of the EU development budget was mainstreamed through the integration of gender in the measuring indicators; for the newest generation, this is 13.76%.

These data suggest gender is modestly becoming more important both in the budget and in the concrete programming phase. It appears over time there is an increase in specification on how gender will be mainstreamed, and it is increasingly included in the measurement indicators of the development programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not gender mainstreamed</td>
<td>€1,444.4</td>
<td>€1,840.5</td>
<td>€3,284.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perhaps</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>104.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>139.7</td>
<td>484.0</td>
<td>623.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most likely</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender mainstreamed</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>384.0</td>
<td>426.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with indicators</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>13.76</td>
<td>8.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total reviewed budget</td>
<td>€1,685.1</td>
<td>€2,790.5</td>
<td>€4,475.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% | 85.72 | 65.96 | 75.84 |
| 2.91 | 1.97  | 2.44  |
| 8.29 | 17.34 | 12.82 |
| 0.59 | 0.97  | 0.78  |
| 2.49 | 13.76 | 8.13  |
Mainstreaming Gender in European Union Policy

ANALYSIS OF SUBSTANTIAL ASPECTS

What Problems and Solutions Are Put Forward?

In-depth analysis of the EU programming documents reveals that gender inequality in the European Neighborhood's country diagnoses is mainly put forward as a problem of unemployment or low female-participation rates (10 out of 24 CSPs). The lack of access to decision-making structures (7 CSPs), unequal access to education (6 CSPs), high maternal mortality (5 CSPs), and discriminating laws (5 CSPs) are also important. The main solutions put forward in the NIPs to tackle gender inequalities are access to employment or to independent income-generation activities (10 NIPs), access to education (7 NIPs), programs to address gender-based violence (3 NIPs), and programs to improve the situation of women prisoners (3 NIPs). It must be noted that there is a strong divide between the Southern and the Eastern European Neighborhoods. Compared to the Southern Neighbors, gender is barely integrated in the CSPs and NIPs of the Eastern Neighbors. Gender is integrated (briefly) in most of the CSPs of the Eastern Neighbors, but only 2 of the 10 examined NIPs (Armenia 2002 and Moldova 2007) have sections that are fully gender mainstreamed using gender indicators.

Outlining the solutions reveals three important frames: a labor market or economic growth frame, a poverty reduction frame, and a democracy frame. The analysis of the dominant solutions shows that the two main solutions—employment and education—are firmly located in the organization of labor. Employment and education are mostly framed instrumentally to achieve economic goals or reduce poverty and, to a much lesser extent, as a basic human right. Gender equality in education or employment is never framed as a tool to bring gender equality into the intimate sphere. Women must be educated and integrated in employment to “contribute to growth,” “build a knowledge society,” “tackle poverty,” (European Commission 2007a, 20–21), bring “industrial modernisation” (European Commission 2002a, 27), and “ensure a technologically skilled and adaptable workforce” (European Commission 2007b, 24). Education is often framed as tool for economic development or poverty reduction, and it is accordingly conceptualized as a preparation for the labor market. The gender equality goal is strategically brought into the education sector and it is framed economically. For example, in the Armenian NIP (2004), the gender ratio in vocational education and training is one of the performance indicators, and it is argued they will “contribute to reducing poverty and improving overall economic and social conditions.” The NIP further emphasizes that “there is an increasing demand from the private sector . . . , including from foreign investors” (European Commission 2003a, 12). The main emphasis is on the needs of the employers and the market and not on the needs of women and men. Sections on gender and education speak about “relevance to the labour market” (European Commission 2007e,
“improving the links between education and the qualifications needed on the labour market” (European Commission 2007b, 35), or satisfaction of employers with “the skills of certified trainees” (European Commission 2007d, 31). Sometimes less evident topics are also framed instrumentally, as for example in the Moldovian NIP where it is stated that “lower child and maternal mortality rates” will be a “support for poverty reduction and economic growth” (European Commission 2007g, 10–11). The third major frame that was present in the policy documents connects gender equality with human rights, democracy, and good governance. Here I detected the broadest framing with the most transformative potential. Solutions within this frame included increasing women’s role in the political decision-making process, fighting gender-based violence (CSP Egypt and Lebanon 2007), and supporting the government to establish a “comprehensive gender mainstreaming strategy” (European Commission 2007h, 25) However, these solutions are not always elaborated on and are only rarely translated into performance indicators.

The focus on employment and educational solutions to address gender inequality is indeed apparent. It seems that the approach toward gender equality in the European Neighborhood CSPs and NIPs is similar to the internal EU approach. Women’s access to employment and education are the most frequent solutions put forward in the NIPs, and the underlying rationale of mainstreaming gender in aid toward the European Neighborhood is to “provide an economic contribution to development” (Moser 1993, 2). This is not to say that women’s employment and education are not important to women’s empowerment in the sense that they increase women’s resources, agency, and achievement. Nevertheless, expanding the employment rate “alone cannot be assumed to promote gender equality” (Perrons 2005, 392). A gender equal society goes beyond women going to school and having a paid job. A more holistic approach, which includes qualitative gender differences in employment and the imbalance between reproductive and productive work, is necessary to enhance gender equality. The “knowledge economy” that the European Union is pursuing in its own policies is also put forward in several of the examined CSPs and NIPs that demand increases in education and employment levels, particularly in the service sector (Perrons 2005, 395). However, unchecked market logic within the new economy tends to widen social divisions and risks lapsing into a polarized system where there is a big gap between high-paying jobs and more generic low-paying jobs, such as care work and people-related labor-intensive work. Given the gendered division of labor, where women are overrepresented in caregiving and people-related work, it is likely that such an approach will not only widen class divisions but also widen gender divisions and “make the goals of gender mainstreaming difficult to realize” (Perrons 2005, 390). Furthermore, the main focus within this frame seems to be on macroeconomic policies and market-based criteria. Social policies are an add-on “in order to achieve
socially desirable outcomes such as poverty reduction” (Elson and Cagatay 2000, 1347).

By contrast, civil society voices not only frame the main topics education and employment differently, they also shed light on several forgotten issues in the CSPs and NIPs. When talking about employment, civil society voices take a critical perspective, stating that “a fully functioning market economy does not lead automatically to social justice and gender equality” and that “quality of life” and “non-market forms of economic activity such as care for the sick, children and elderly” have to be taken into account (NEWW 2007, 24). Also, the problem of access to employment is framed more broadly. Civil society voices talk about unequal pay, sexual harassment in the workplace, the lack of legal counterinstruments, “discrimination in job promotion” (EMHRN 2003, 23), unequal domestic constraints (child care and looking after dependants) (EMHRN 2003; NEWW 2007; 2008a; KARAT Coalition 2009), and the vertical and horizontal gender segregation of employment (EMHRN 2003; NEWW 2007; KARAT Coalition 2009). Further civil society voices explicitly state that “the issue of women’s employment is complex,” and “simply having a higher rate of female employment does not necessarily reflect a higher degree of women’s development” (EMHRN 2003, 23). Civil society’s analyses make it clear that genuine attention needs to go to the type and context of women’s employment.

Examining civil society’s views on education also reveals several important issues that are forgotten in CSPs and NIPs—for example, the need for “training in gender equality and the prevention of gender violence in educational institutions, especially for civil servants, lawyers, law enforcement, teachers, doctors, social workers, etc.” (NEWW 2007, 22); free quality education for rural women (AWMR 2002); the problem of gender discrimination in the decision-making structures of higher educational institutions (NEWW 2008b); marriage at a young age, hindering girls education (EMHRN 2003); and the need “to organize educational programs on gender” for the representatives of all branches of power, local government, NGOs, and the mass media (NEWW 2008a, 35).

Who Holds the Problem and the Solution?

Examining the gendered nature of the diagnoses, it becomes clear that women are seen as the main problem holders, since it is mainly women who are mentioned when analyzing problems concerning gender inequalities. Women are linked to problems while men rarely appear in the country analysis and are almost never explicitly problematized. For example, not a single CSP or NIP mentions men as problem holders when mentioning gender inequality in decision making. Although several CSPs and NIPs talk about the underrepresentation of women in decision-making structures—depicting
it as a women’s problem only—not a word is said about the overrepresentation of men in politics or business. Structures of power that hamper equal participation—for example, all-male political networks (Lombardo et al. 2007) or deeply entrenched stereotypes about “good politics” as a male enterprise—are not revealed. When men are mentioned in the policy documents, it is mostly in a general phrase that refers to equality between men and women, or in quantitative numbers (for example, percentage of boys/girls enrolled).

What is more, women are not only seen as the main problem holders in the country analysis, they are also made responsible for the solutions in the NIPs, since men are completely absent in that part of the planning phase and are never explicitly addressed as a target group to solve gender inequalities. Even if it is implicit, the absence of men in the solutions for gender equality implies that women have to catch up with a “silent” male norm, a process for which women are solely responsible. Likewise, the programming documents barely understand gender relations in a way that takes into account “the many and complex ways in which social differences between the sexes acquire a meaning and become structural factors” (Braidotti 2002). Masculinities and femininities are conceptualized as fixed and are seldom questioned in policy documents. Such an essentialist definition of gender relations and the depiction of women as the sole problem and solution holders in the gender inequality question is not unique to EU development policy toward the European Neighborhood; it is just as common in internal EU policy on gender equality (Lombardo and Meier 2008). I discovered that civil society explicitly resists a classical WID approach, demanding “not to focus on women alone” (CRTD-A 2004, 3). Concrete civil society counterexamples of how the responsibility for gender equality can be shared include programs that “involve both men and women in educational programs achieving gender equality,” promote change of the workplace culture, “including adequate parental leaving schemes, shared by both parents,” and “address men’s role in relation to gender-based violence in order to break the cycle of violence” (NEWW 2007, 26).

It is also remarkable that references to the gendered division of productive (paid) and reproductive (unpaid) work have been left out of the diagnoses and prognoses. Women’s disproportionately large burden and men’s small burden of socially necessary but economically invisible care work (household tasks and care for family members) are not mentioned as a problem. By contrast, all of the examined civil society organizations discuss the gendered division of unpaid care work, as well its implications on gender power imbalances. Yet in the EU policy documents the importance of unpaid care work is neglected. One CSP even talks about “the low contribution of women to economic or productive life” (European Commission 2007e, 9), hereby implicitly defining unpaid care work as nonproductive work and ignoring the interrelation “between the economy of monetized production and the non-monetized ‘reproductive’ economy” (Elson 1994,
Unpaid care work remains invisible and does not have (economic) value in the CSPs and NIPs. One civil society organization explicitly resists this by stating that “the work of women as housewives” is productive work, which has to be taken into consideration in research and statistics (CRTD-A 2004, 5).

This neglect severely limits the scope for analysis and solutions, since the issue of unpaid care work is a crucial source of inequality and touches upon the core of the gender issues put forward in the CSPs and NIPs. Domestic violence, women’s access to (full-time) education and jobs, and the gender imbalance in decision making all have direct or indirect links with the gendered division of (care) work. These links remain invisible in the analyzed documents because unpaid reproductive work is not discussed. Even if implicit, the absolute silence on this topic perpetuates men’s and women’s unequal roles in care work. Some authors even go further claiming that the silence on reproductive work is strategic, using women as “an unlimited supply of unpaid . . . labour, able to compensate for any adverse changes resulting from macro-economic policy” (Elson 1994, 42) and to contribute to the realization of the formal market through the “reproduction and maintenance of human resources.” Or put otherwise, “Women’s unpaid work in reproduction and family maintenance is a ‘tax’ that women are required to pay before they can engage in income-generating activity” (Bakker 1994, 5).

Furthermore, I found that some CSPs refer to women as a vulnerable group or even as “the most vulnerable segment . . . of the population” (European Commission 2007h, 29). Women are also often lumped together with other groups that are deemed vulnerable, such as children, elderly, orphans, and “the disabled” (European Commission 2007f, 5). In several CSPs and NIPs, women are conceptualized as passive victims of poverty, sex traffickers, violence, or tradition. This conceptualization of women as the vulnerable victim is stereotyping and leans close to Chandra Mohanty’s (1991) highly criticized objectification or victimization of “Third World women.” This means that women as a category of analysis are defined in terms of their object or victim status or in the way they are affected by, or not affected by, certain systems or institutions (Mohanty 1991). There was no evolution in this conceptualization when comparing first- and the second-generation policy documents. Yet language that empowers is important. As Naila Kabeer (2005) argues, empowerment is not only rooted in how people see themselves—their sense of self-worth—but also in how they are seen by those around them, including how they are seen by (inter)national policymakers in their language. Thus, talking about women as either vulnerable victims or as capable agents plays its part in empowering or disempowering people.

Comparing the language used in the CSPs and NIPs with the language used in civil society documents reveals that civil society actors use more empowering language, giving women as a group a subject, rather than object, status. Civil society talks about women being “very active” (NEWW 2008b), thriving in the nongovernmental sector, and creating “an
environment of hope related to the improvement of the economic position of women” (KARAT Coalition 2009). They also mention strong women’s labor unions (CRTD-A 2004) and protests against globalization (AWMR 2002). EMHRN (2003) even explicitly rejects disempowering language, pointing out that “Muslim women . . . are stereotyped in the North as being suppressed, weak, unable to change their situation, and stuck in a society that is perceived to be static” (1).

Who Has Had a Say?

Looking at the inclusion of women’s organizations in the CSP drafting process, I noticed another imbalance that reveals the limited character of the gender mainstreaming approach, indicating that gender policies in EU/European Neighborhood development aid are “mainstream” and not very transformative in nature. Although an impressive number of references to the importance of including civil society are found in the CSPs, references to feminist or women’s organizations and to their inclusion in the CSP drafting process are much more difficult to find. I found only a single reference in the Syrian response strategy that mentions the importance of “the development of partnerships between public institutions at central and local level, the private sector and civil society (including professional organisations, trade unions, research and academic institutions, local organisations and NGOs, consumer organisations, women’s and youth organisations, charities and the media)” (European Commission 2007h, 23; emphasis added).

Furthermore, the gender policies predominately relied on the UN, World Bank, or government sources for information on gender equality issues. Although the examined organizations explicitly ask to be considered “active partners on the follow-up, monitoring and evaluation” (EMHRN 2008, 1) of gender equality policies, the data suggest that women’s organizations are not given a legitimate voice to provide information on gender inequality. The silence in the CSPs on the inclusion of women’s organizations in the drafting process and the silence on their existence and importance, combined with the almost exclusive use of institutional sources on gender equality indicates that the approach toward gender mainstreaming in EU development aid toward the European Neighborhood is noninclusive. This observation applies to both first- and second-generation CSPs/NIPs. Although the EU has stressed the need for civil society participation in its external relations in various policy documents (European Commission 2002b; 2007c; 2010b; European Union 2006), the data suggest these commitments are rhetorical and are not implemented in practice when it concerns the inclusion of women’s organizations. Some civil society voices are explicitly resisting exclusion from the programming phase, demanding that “participation of civil society, particularly women’s organisations,” in the political dialogue is “strengthened and institutionalized” and that “very clear and transparent procedures” for participation in the programming phase are being established by the EU (NEWW 2007,
Further, civil society voices strongly emphasize their importance in many countries of the region (NEWW 2008a; KARAT Coalition 2009; EMHRN 2008), criticize that “women’s NGO activities are underestimated” (NEWW 2008a, 33), plead for more EU support to strengthen their movements (NEWW 2008a; 2008b), and demand “to be more involved in following up on the implementation” (EMHRN 2008, 4).

CONCLUSION

This article analyzed gender mainstreaming in EU development policy toward the European Neighborhood from 2002 to 2013 to evaluate whether a genuine shift has taken place from a conservative WID paradigm to a transformative GAD paradigm. Policies were considered genuinely gender mainstreamed, and thus potentially transformative, in terms of their formal aspects if they contained an equal number of references to women and men, if gender was part of all programming phases, and if gender issues and gender indicators were included in every budgetary sector. In terms of the substantial aspects, I considered gender to be genuinely mainstreamed, and thus potentially transformative, when the problems and solutions concerning gender (in)equality were framed in a holistic manner that included civil society and their concerns, and involved both men and women.

The quantitative analysis evaluating the formal aspects of gender mainstreaming indicates that the shift from WID to GAD has barely been made. When the policies talk about gender, they mainly refer to women. Furthermore, more than 75% of the budgets from 2002 to 2013 do not include gender issues. Over time, there was a modest improvement in the language and the budget, although large imbalances remain. Only the format of the policy documents can be considered to be gender mainstreamed since there is a clear balance between the integration of gender issues in the analytical parts on one hand and in the action-related strategic parts on the other. All in all, however, the picture is gloomy. The data indicate that the shift from GAD to WID has not been made, even when policies are approached in a minimalistic manner that looks only at the formal aspects of gender mainstreaming. Gender equality issues are barely integrated in sectors with considerable budgets, and gender analysis is mainly about women.

The qualitative analysis adds further proof to this gloomy picture. When gender equality is mainstreamed in development aid toward the European Neighborhood, it is mostly framed instrumentally, as a means to achieve economic growth or poverty reduction. As in early WID tradition, women are used strategically as “an untapped resource who can provide an economic contribution to development” (Moser 1993, 2). The internal EU situation, where gender policies used to be focused largely on internal market issues or on competitiveness and the creation of economic growth, partly explains the economic focus. In this respect, the framing of gender issues in EU/European...
Neighborhood development is similar to and influenced by the intra-EU agenda, where gender mainstreaming is sold as a way of effectively achieving existing policy goals. Although such an approach is less likely to be rejected by institutional actors, it is not an approach to achieve substantive gender equality (Walby 2005a).

Furthermore, conceptions of masculinity and femininity, as well as the gendered division of care work, are not questioned in policy texts. On one hand, women tend to be victimized and are referred to as “vulnerable.” On the other hand, men are barely mentioned. In general, men are the silent norm that women have to catch up with as problem holders. This conception of women as sole problem and solution holders in the gender inequality puzzle fits in the WID paradigm and is contradictory to a genuine GAD paradigm where men and women share responsibility in removing imbalances in society. Last, the policy documents do not mention that women’s organizations were included in the drafting process. Although more research should be conducted to trace accurately how, and by whom, the policy documents were drafted, who has had (in)direct influence, and most important how the final implementation takes place on the ground, I reached two conclusions. First, when I analyzed civil society documents, I noted several organizations felt that they were overlooked by the European Union and should have a bigger say in policymaking and in controlling implementation. Second, my analysis of civil society voices reveals there is a wide breach between how the EU frames gender (in)equality and how regional civil society frames it. Contrary to civil society’s approach, the EU approach toward gender mainstreaming lacks gender analysis and transformative solutions. Much more will have to be done to create a substantially transformative approach toward gender equality in EU/European Neighborhood development policy. Transformation will require changing deeply rooted norms, practices, and structures that are discriminating, and it will demand significant intellectual energies to imagine a changed society and the ways forward. It appears that “giving primacy to woman’s agency” and to “strengthening women’s groups and organisations” (Jahan 1995, 126–127) which have shown to be capable of thinking of such creative solutions, involving both women and men, could be crucial to attain these goals.

NOTES

1. Including the 1995 Council of Ministers Resolution on Integrating Gender Issues in Development Cooperation; the 1998 Council of Ministers Regulation on Integrating Gender Issues in Development Cooperation; the 2000 European Communication on the European Community’s Development Policy; the 2001 EC Communication on the Programme of Action for the Mainstreaming of Gender Equality in Community Development Cooperation; the 2004 European Parliament and Council Regulation on Promoting Gender Equality in Development Cooperation; the 2006 Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States Meeting within the Council, the European Parliament, and the Commission on EU Development Policy: “The European Consensus”; the 2007 EC Communication on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development Cooperation; and the
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2. The Council of Europe is an international organization located in Strasbourg, France, that includes 47 countries of the European continent. It was set up to protect human rights and the rule of law and promote democracy. The EU and the Council of Europe have a long tradition of cooperation because they were founded by the same people and are products of the same spirit and ambition.

3. The delegation is the permanent diplomatic EC staff in the partner country. In implementing the EU’s external policy, the EC relies heavily on its 130 delegations and offices around the world.


5. The analysis of the influence of civil society on EC development policies is limited to what is mentioned explicitly in the Country Strategy Papers and National Indicative Programmes. It is indeed possible that civil society organizations have had more influence on the content of EC aid behind the scenes than is mentioned in programming documents. In-depth process tracing of specific case studies could shine light on the black box of decision making that precedes the programming, while field assessment of the same projects could examine the effects on the ground for gender equality for a wide range of stakeholders.

6. The NIPs of Moldova were excluded from the budget analysis because the NIPs did not contain the complete financial information necessary.

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