Verena Schmidt

Gender Mainstreaming — an Innovation in Europe?

The Institutionalisation of Gender Mainstreaming in the European Commission

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Abbreviations

CEEP	Centre Européen des Entreprises à Participation Publique et des Entreprises d'Intérêt Économique Général (European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest)
COPA	Committee of Agricultural Organisations
COPEC	Comité Paritaire pour l' Egalité des Chances (Joint Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men)
DECODE	Dessiner la Commission de Demain (Literally translated: 'Designing the Commission of Tommorow'. Plan on the Reform of the Commission)
DG	Directorate General
DNE	Detached National Expert
ECJ	Court of Justice of the European Communities
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EP	European Parliament
ESF	European Social Funds
ETUC	European Trade Union Congress
EU	European Union
Eurostat	Statistical Office of the European Commission
EWL	European Women's Lobby
IGC	Inter-governmental Conference
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MAP 2000	Modernisation of Administration and Personnel Policy
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
SEM 2000	Sound and Efficient Management
TFAR	Task Force for Administrative Reform
UN	United Nations
UNICE	Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WID	Women in Development

Acknowledgements

Preface by Ilse Lenz

A new Perspective on Gender Mainstreaming in the European Union

Globalisation has been associated with economic neoliberalism and deregulation. It has propelled the reorganisation of the gender division of labour in various ways: Women leave the fields and work at assembly lines in the South. In the North, they leave the household and go increasingly into irregular flexible work, but they also climb up the hierarchies of global corporations and enter the ranges of middle management. Gender relations become more complex. But globalisation also has the effect of a levelling or downgrading of former privileges of male core workers. Former employment security and wage advantages are also often levelled downwards.

But in globalisation, new 'soft forms of regulation' towards gender equality also have emerged (cf. Lenz 2005). The most important are the UN norms established during the UN decade of women and the EU directives on gender equality at work as well as the gender equality goal in the Amsterdam treaty of 1997. Gender mainstreaming is a key concept which plays a central role in the UN declarations as well as in the EU norms.

The EU has been as a pace setter and model for global governance as being the single supranational institution which can agree on legal rules and procedures for its member states. The signal role of the Commission, of the Parliament and of the Europeans Women's Lobby (EWL) have been highlighted. But while there are a lot of policy papers and prognosis, empirical research on the challenges and problems of institutionalising and implementing gender mainstreaming is only beginning.

In this context, Verena Schmidt's work is highly innovative and important: She starts from organisation theory especially variants of neo-institutionalism (DiMaggio, Powell). She combines this with theories of modernisation and structuration (Giddens) in a new and fruitful research perspective. Her innovative approach enables a major new departure from the present concentration on policy and policy network research. For organization research is the touchstone for the implementation and efficacy of gender policies: It can show whether gender mainstreaming is an innovation in the organisation and thus supported (and maybe also ignored or doubted). It can look at the differential strategies of actors – the top management, male and female femocrats, feminist networks – around this innovation. The people who argue for gender mainstreaming and their motivations become visible as well as the ones who ignore gender mainstreaming or who are dismissive or hostile. Moreover, it can

demonstrate, if a program like gender mainstreaming is simply a new organisational fashion or whether it has been institutionalised and thus become part of core routines of the EU and the EU Commission.

Verena Schmidt starts with these issues and concludes with innovative results which are highly relevant for future research as well as for practitioners and activists in gender politics. Gender mainstreaming has proved to be an innovation for the European Commission and it has gone through institutionalisation processes. But how far does this change lead? Verena Schmidt combines organisation and structuration theory which asks how actors use the rules and resources of an organisation in their strategies. Her results point to a differential innovation and institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming which is characterized by different groups of actors: The European Commission has committed to the concept of gender main-streaming as a leading principle and has established organisational depart-ments responsible for implementation. But it is mainly the gender main-streaming network in and around the European Commission which is well informed and acting on this idea of gender mainstreaming; for them it is rele-vant in knowledge and practices in organisational institutionalisation. Their male and female colleagues in the Commission have diffuse information and limited interest in gender mainstreaming. Following neoinstitutionalism, Verena Schmidt interpretes this as decoupling of gender mainstreaming knowledge and practices in the organisation and not as resistance or hostility. Gender is not a division line in these decoupling processes: Men and women are committed and active – or indifferent. Rather boundaries are observed between commitment and interest for equality of certain policy networks and diffuse information and indifference in other parts of the organisation. The support of the top EU management was crucial; feminist networks are committed as well as a (smaller) group of men. But incentives and rules supporting men's commitment are lacking.

The in-depth organisational analysis of the Commission shows patterns of a decoupled or split innovation and institutionalisation of gender main-streaming. The research approach and this result have far reaching relevance beyond research on the European Commission. Organisations are crucial actors in globalisation and the future of gender equality is linked to the issue how far they will integrate gender justice as an innovation and institution.

This study unfolds an innovative theoretical framework and far reaching results on gender mainstreaming in the European Commission as one of the most important International Organisations. I hope it will find many readers within academia, administrations, social groups and from politically interested citizens.

1 Introduction and Methodological Approach

1.1 Introduction

Since the United Nations World Conference of Women in Beijing in 1995, the concept of gender mainstreaming has experienced an unexpected boom in the European Union (EU) and beyond. Gender mainstreaming was included as a strategy in the Platform for Action which emanated from this conference (UN 1995). In 1996 gender mainstreaming was transposed into a Commission Communication, thereby establishing the principle of gender mainstreaming within the European Commission. In 1999 gender mainstreaming became an integral part of the Treaty of Amsterdam which entered into force that year (European Council 1997). Despite its early limited success, discussions on equal opportunities between men and women and on positive action, had mostly declined. Since 1995, however, gender mainstreaming has become an important issue for discussion at European, national and local levels.

The general idea of gender mainstreaming is to alter what are often marginalised 'women's concerns' into the mainstream of the analysis by ensuring that the effects of all policies and organisational processes on both genders are taken into account. Gender mainstreaming is often regarded as a new paradigm compared to previously used concepts of equal treatment and positive action programmes (Rees 1998).

Starting from the evolution of gender mainstreaming, this book examines the extent to which gender mainstreaming can be regarded as an innovation and institution in a complex organisation like the European Commission. The book has three aims. Firstly, from a policy analysis standpoint I shall examine to what degree the definition and interpretation of gender mainstreaming by the European Commission can be seen as a policy innovation. Secondly and thirdly, from an organisational point of view I shall study to what extent the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission can be seen as an organisational innovation and organisational institution. These are crucial points regarding the current state of the art in organisational studies as well as in EU policy analysis.

In the European Commission's key document on gender mainstreaming (i.e. the Communication 'Incorporating Equal Opportunities for Women and Men into all Community Policies and Activities'), gender mainstreaming is defined as:

not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose

of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situation of men and women (gender perspective). This means systematically examining measures and policies and taking into account such possible effects when defining and implementing them (The brackets were added in the original text; European Commission 1996).

It might seem surprising that gender mainstreaming, which is an interventionist measure, is part of the Commission's[1] political agenda (European Commission 2002c), and that at a time of increasing deregulation of economic markets and economic stagnation, the Commission has chosen to stress its importance. Indeed, equal treatment and positive action policies have been traditionally framed as social policies due to their perceived economic cost. However, gender mainstreaming is often framed as being in the EU's economic interest and therefore the emphasis on it is consequently less surprising.

Within implementation studies, it is feasible to some extend to judge from the implementation of a policy by the political élite in a particular area under its control, how seriously that political élite might take it in other areas (Meuser 1989: 2). However, it is important to take various context indicators into account when analysing this. Taking the concrete example of the Commission, it would thus be partly possible to judge from the Commission's own implementation within the different Directorates General (DGs), whether it in general takes seriously the implementation of gender mainstreaming in policy-making and programme management. In addition, the level of implementation of gender mainstreaming also illustrates the general difficulties and internal power struggles that organisations, in particular public administrations, face, when introducing change.

The Commission is seen as a melting pot of European ideas: Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers of early European integration, once called it 'the laboratory of Europe' where people 'work together'. In a manner, that attests to the birth of the 'European spirit' (Monnet 1976: 208). Indeed, the French anthropologist Irène Bellier stated: 'Hence, the Commission is one of the best places to understand how changes take place in the context of the European Union' (Bellier 2002: 207). Adopting Bellier's point of view, the examination of gender mainstreaming in the Commission can be seen as a test case for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the Member States of the European Union[2], which form part of the 'context

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1   The terms 'Commission' and 'European Commission' are used interchangeably.

2   Legally, the term 'European Union' only denotes the three 'pillars' which were created by the Treaty of Maastricht (European Council 1993). Pillar one incorporated the three founding treaties now forming the 'European Community', pillar two established the Common Foreign and Security Policy, pillar three created the Justice and Home Affairs policy. It has become common practice among scholars writing on European integration to use the term 'European Union' for the 'European Community' and 'European Economic Community', this practice will be followed in this book.

of the European Union' Bellier mentions as cited above. The Commission will be viewed primarily as an administrative organisation[3] and thus the implementation of gender mainstreaming will be analysed from an organisational perspective.

There are a wide variety of publications on gender mainstreaming. Many have been written by consultants or scholars at requests of governments or government agencies. Such studies are normally produced under enormous time pressure. Many are limited to best practice studies where 'best practice' sometimes means any element of gender mainstreaming practice, as the implementation of gender mainstreaming in most Member States remains meagre. This book will provide an in-depth study into the construction and implementation of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission. It is founded in organisation sociology and European integration research. Gender studies will be pursued as an integral perspective.

In the assessment of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the Commission, I shall analyse different frame alignment processes (based on Snow et al. 1986) to discover whether it can be seen as a policy innovation. The term innovation will be considered according to Hauschildt's definition (i.e. from a subjective, processual and normative dimension) because this approach allows to see gender mainstreaming as a potential innovation in a recursive way (Hauschildt 1993).

The innovative element in this book is that for the elaboration to what extent gender mainstreaming can be seen as an organisational innovation and institution, I shall combine elements of the theory of structuration by Giddens (1984) and neo-institutionalism by DiMaggio and Powell (1991a and 1991b [1983]), Zucker (1988 [1977]); Jepperson (1991) and Oliver (1991). Neo-institutionalism enables us to examine how institutions develop as a result of isomorphic processes. Structuration theory is largely an interior view since it studies internal confrontations and structuration processes within the organisation. It enables us to assess the recursive processes between structure and action with regard to gender mainstreaming. The theory of structuration facilitates to focus on the dynamics by which institutions are reproduced and altered.

In this book, I argue that gender mainstreaming was implemented in the Commission due to the norms bestowed upon it by the United Nations and European Women's movements and that their actual activities on gender mainstreaming are decoupled from the structure. This is based on Meyer and Rowan's (1991 [1977]) concept of decoupling and confidence, which means that organisations attempt to fulfil norms expected from them by the outside world, by decoupling elements of structure from activities. For examining the decoupling process further, it is important to adopt an exterior and interior

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3   For a detailed study of the policies of different DGs refer to Pollack/ Hafner-Burton 2000.

view on the European Commission in order to examine its structure, activities and outside pressures.

Neo-institutionalism permits an exterior view on organisations by making it possible to study the connection between the organisation and society. Structuration theory can be used as an interior view since it studies processes within the organisation. Based on DiMaggio's (1998) differentiation of previous neo-institutionalist accounts, I study institutionalisation as a process which allows bringing agency and interest back into the research. This allows us to reflect the power structures within the Commission and among actors who mobilise around gender mainstreaming. Neo-institutionalism enables us to examine how institutions develop as a result of isomorphic processes. Neo-institutionalism moves away from the previously dominating view that organisations take rational decisions despite being bounded by limited information and resources. Rather, neo-institutionalism argues that organisations take the decisions they take, because they believe them to be regarded as rational and that the main aim of the organisation is to increase social legitimacy by these decisions.

Structuration theory facilitates to examine the recursive processes between structure and action. Giddens' (1984) concept of rules and resources will be used to examine the modification of actions and structures, which are necessary for the implementation of innovations. Structuration theory enables us to examine the emergence of particular organisational structures and to examine internal power dynamics within organisations further.

European women's movements such as the European Women's Lobby and academic scholars have criticised the concept of gender mainstreaming as being only weakly supported by the Commissioners and top civil servants when it comes to actually implementing it. This view is critically evaluated in this book. However, even policies that were initially intended as mere rhetoric, can turn into effective policies (Ritti and Gouldner 1979; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Once a problem is treated as politically relevant, even if only at a rhetorical level, political groups can mobilise around it. This mobilisation and lobbying can prevent the policies from continuing to be treated as merely rhetorical.

For the understanding of this book it is important to briefly describe how the key terms of this study will be used. These terms will be further developed in chapter 3. The terms actors, organisation, institution and institutionalisation for the framework of this book will be defined based on neo-institutionalism and structuration theory. This book will examine to what extent the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission can be regarded as an innovation and/ or institution. The European Commission will be analysed as an organisation which consists of different sub-organisations or Directorate Generals (DGs), of which two DGs will be examined in an exemplary way. The institutionalisation or

structuration of gender mainstreaming will be studied with special emphasis on the actors within the organisation. It will be elaborated which rules and resources they possess and which strategic reactions they pursue relating to the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Outline of this Book

Gender mainstreaming is a complex issue. This is partly demonstrated by the mass of definitions and interpretations of gender mainstreaming. For this reason, chapter 2 examines the evolution of the concept and the interpretation of gender mainstreaming by the European Commission. I shall argue that gender mainstreaming was strategically framed by the European Commission to fashion 'shared understandings of the world' (McAdam et al.1996) that legitimate the Commission. I shall also argue that the framing of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission can be regarded as a policy innovation.

Chapter 3 considers the implementation of gender mainstreaming within the European Commission on the basis of organisational theories. The isomorphic model of neo-institutionalism will be used to assess why gender mainstreaming was introduced in the Commission. Structuration theory will be utilised to explain the power struggle inside the Commission when implementing gender mainstreaming. Both theoretical strands will be combined in order to thoroughly examine the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission. Meyer and Rowan's (1991 [1977]) model of decoupling and confidence will be further illustrated and applied to gender mainstreaming. The aim of this is to analyse whether the Commission merely attempts to fulfil norms with regard to gender mainstreaming expected from them by the United Nations by decoupling elements of structure from their actual activities on gender mainstreaming.

In this book, gender mainstreaming will be examined with regard to Hauschildt's definition of innovations (Hauschildt 1993) which will be elaborated in chapter 4. The subjective dimension of Hauschildt is particularly important for the research on the implementation of gender mainstreaming, that is, the issue of to whom the innovation is new. For the introduction of gender mainstreaming, the European Commission adopted a top-down perspective. It is thus important to take the individualistic perspective into account, i.e. whether individual actors are familiar with gender mainstreaming, whether they regard it as something new and whether they intend to actively implement it. In transferring the other aspects of Hauschildt's subjective dimension to the case of the Commission, the micro-economic aspect will be interpreted to mean whether gender mainstreaming is new to DG Employment and Social Affairs and DG Administration and

Personnel. The third and fourth perspectives, i.e. the sectoral economic aspect and the macro-economic perspective will correspond to the relations of the European Commission to other International Organisations. Hauschildt's processual dimension of innovation with regard to the boundaries of an innovation is particularly important to make a distinction between gender mainstreaming and equal treatment and equal opportunity policies. Throughout the book, the 'interactive process perspective' (Slappendel 1996: 118) will be used. This implies taking structures and actions into account and, in particular, examining the dynamic nature of the innovation process, i.e. that gender mainstreaming is continually transformed by the process of implementation.

The fifth chapter assesses the role and function of the European Commission. It places particular emphasis on the administrative traditions and administrative cultures that constitute the background of the Commission. The legitimacy of the European Commission was seriously challenged at the time of the corruption scandal in the late 1990s, which led to the resignation of the entire Commission in March 1999. As a result, a fundamental administrative reform has been brought forward. I shall argue that with regard to equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming, some important changes are envisaged in the suggested reform package. I also bring forward the argument that the Commission used the policy of equal opportunities to increase its own competencies and power.

Chapter 6 examines the environment of the European Commission and looks at the interplay between European institutions and social movements. Within neo-institutionalism, the environment plays an important role. I follow Meyer and Rowan's (1991 [1977] and DiMaggio and Powell's (1991b [1983]) contention that the organisations can become isomorphic with their environments. I shall argue in this chapter that the interplay between the international women's movement, the UN and the Commission were of utmost importance for the introduction of gender mainstreaming. The introduction of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission can be regarded as an example of mimetic and coercive isomorphism. Partly gender mainstreaming was implemented in the Commission because the environment created uncertainty (mimetic isomorphism), partly it was implemented because of pressure from the UN level (coercive isomorphism).

The empirical chapter (chapter 7) analyses the construction of gender mainstreaming within the Commission. I shall argue that gender mainstreaming has become an institution for those who are part of the gender mainstreaming advocacy-network. For them, gender mainstreaming has led to standardised interaction sequences and these are clearly self-reproducing. However, the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming has not spread beyond the relatively small group of gender experts and thus the institutionalisation of the concept remains limited.

In the conclusion, the theoretical questions will be assessed with the findings of the empirical chapter. Summarising the results of the first research question, i.e. the extent to which gender mainstreaming can be seen as a policy innovation, we can conclude that gender mainstreaming was strategically framed by the Commission in Adams et al.'s (1993) definition to fashion 'a shared understanding of the world'. All four frame alignment processes that were initially developed theoretically by Snow et al. (1986) for Social Movement Organisations and which were transposed to public administrations by Rein and Schön (1993) took place with regard to gender mainstreaming in the European Commission. With regard to the second research question, i.e. examining the extent to which gender mainstreaming can be seen as an innovation, the subjective dimension of Hauschildt (1993) is particularly important as it allows to distinguish between the actors who are part of the gender mainstreaming advocacy-network and those who are not. Those actors who are members of the gender mainstreaming advocacy-network generally see gender mainstreaming as an institution and an innovation, while the others usually only have limited knowledge on gender mainstreaming.

It is first of all important to explain the methodological approach and the operationalisation of the research undertaken for this study. This book is based on triangulation, i.e. quantitative elements combined with qualitative elements. Expert interviews were conducted with actors within the Commission and in the environment of the Commission. This will briefly be elaborated in the following.

1.2   Methodological Approach

This part focuses on the research methodology and procedures used in this study. While the late 1960s and 1970s were characterised by a fundamental dispute between positivists and proponents of qualitative research, there are now few who see quality and quantity as the fundamental dichotomy in social science research (Robson 1993: 303). Recently, attempts have been made to build bridges and seek a rapprochement between the respective approaches (e.g. Westie 1957; Denzin 1989 [1970]). In this study, quantitative and qualitative elements will be combined in order to match the strengths of qualitative approaches to the weaknesses of quantitative approaches and vice versa by means of triangulation.

The benefits accrued through the use of triangulation both as design strategy and as an analytical tool are considerable since they allow for the clustering and organisation of disparate yet related data. No single research method will ever capture all of the changing features of the social world under study (Robson 1993). While triangulation is not an end in itself, with

any approach based upon a singular methodology some unknown part or aspect of the results obtained may be attributable to the method used (Macauley 2001: 82).

The implementation of gender mainstreaming within the Commission is elaborated in a twofold way: The processes and changes are examined in a qualitative analysis by means of expert interviews. The situation in the Commission is also examined quantitatively by looking at gender differences between different grades of personnel. This is important since one indicator of gender mainstreaming is positive action, which includes balanced decision-making by women and men. The methodology for this quantitative part is explained within the quantitative section in chapter 7 since it is closely linked to the data.

Definition of Experts

In a modern knowledge-based society, there is a large variety of experts. However, there is no absolute definition of the term 'expert', rather it is a positional term. Whether an actor was asked for an interview for this book depended on his or her potential knowledge or experience of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the Commission. This does not suggest that these are experts per se or 'experts from sociological mercy' (Meuser/ Nagel 2002: 73). They are merely experts for the particular research question of this study.

For this book, people were asked to contribute as experts when they were in a direct way responsible for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in their daily work. One reason why actors were approached for an interview was their participation in the formulation and monitoring of the implementation of gender mainstreaming through their work in Committees within the Commission or in the European Parliament or in the European Women's Lobby. Other reasons why employees were approached to serve as experts were when they had strategy formulation or advising functions was part of their job or when they were responsible for monitoring, auditing or evaluating general policies within the Commission, and, last but not least, when they were involved with training and personnel management.

It is important that not only those in the higher management positions were addressed as experts but also and especially those on the second and third level. It is usually at those levels that decisions are prepared and implemented and hence presumably the most detailed knowledge on the internal structure and events is available here (Meuser/ Nagel 2002: 74).

Sampling

There are two fundamentally different sampling strategies: pre-determination of the sampling and the determination of the sampling structure during the course of research. The selection of the sampling method should depend on the aim of the research, i.e. whether the research is trying to chiefly verify or falsify existing theory or to develop new theory. Pre-determination of the sampling means that a field is structured into different social groups before the empirical survey or enquiry. This method is particularly useful for the differentiation, verification and further analysis of the assumed similarities and differences between certain groups. However, it is less useful for developing a theory since this approach limits the scope for the development and change of a theory (Flick 1998: 81).

The German psychologist Uwe Flick (1998) describes a third way to combine the pre-determination and theoretical sampling methods: thematical coding (Flick 1998: 206-211). This approach was followed in this book. Thematical coding is based on Strauss (1991) and was particularly developed for comparative studies where different groups are defined which are linked to the research question from the outset. It is assumed that the different groups which are sampled have different perspectives on a particular issue. The different groups are thus pre-determined and are not developed according to the interpretation at that particular moment as is the case with Strauss' approach (Flick 1998: 206-211). Theoretical sampling is done within the groups to select specific cases.

In this book, in the beginning of the research process, the field was structured into different social groups regarding DGs, hierarchical position and function. During the course of research, the theoretical sampling within these different groups resulted in the realisation that these groups did not show any significant difference. Therefore, the sampling structure was determined by means of theoretical sampling.

The theoretical sampling process fits well to the recursive theory model of structuration theory developed by Giddens (1984) and the process variants of Neoinstitutionalist theory of DiMaggio (1988) and Zucker (1991) which form the basis of the theoretical framework of this study.

The basic principle of theoretical sampling consists in the selection of cases or groups of cases according to concrete content criteria according to their relevance instead of their representation. The sample is chosen according to the (expected) value of new perspectives for the developing theory, based on the state of the art of theory. The central question for the selection of data is 'Which groups or sub-groups do I next take into account for the data aggregation? For what reason?' The possibilities of multiple comparisons are endless, therefore groups must be chosen according to theoretical criteria (Glaser/ Strauss 1975: 47). Because of the numerous possibilities for

the inclusion of more people, groups and cases etc., there the necessity of defining criteria arises, that is, of narrowing down the potentially endless possibilities by defining selection criteria. These criteria will be grounded in theory, where the theory developed from empirical analysis, is the benchmark. The criteria are: how promising is the next case, and how relevant it might be with regard to the developing theory?

A second, similar question is, when should the researcher stop including new cases? Glaser and Strauss develop the criteria of 'theoretical saturation' (Glaser/ Strauss 1975: 61). Saturation means that no additional data can be found through which the researcher could further develop the properties and significance of the category (Flick 1998: 82-3). Saturation, however, can be an ambiguous concept in the research process. Research is usually dependent on external factors such as funding and it is thus not usually possible to seek complete saturation without constraints. Another critical point is that some researchers might never find their work saturated.

With regard to the research question, a variety of strategies was used to select potential interview partners. The implementation of gender mainstreaming is relatively new within the Commission and thus two DGs, DG Employment and Social Affairs and DG Personnel and Administration were examined. There were two reasons for this: Firstly, both of these DGs have Equal Opportunities Units. The one which is attached to DG Employment and Social Affairs coordinates gender mainstreaming on the policy side, and although the policy side of Member States is not at the centre of interest here, the Equal Opportunities Unit provides important know-how for the implementation of gender mainstreaming within DG Employment and Social Affairs. DG Employment and Social Affairs was one of the first DGs to become involved with gender mainstreaming as a result of the introduction of gender mainstreaming into the Structural Funds in 1994. These funds are, in fact, partially administered by DG Employment and Social Affairs.

The Equal Opportunities Unit in DG Personnel and Administration coordinates the implementation of gender mainstreaming within the Commission. Due to the Commission's internal mobility scheme, according to which all civil servants should change unit after five years at the most, various people who used to work in the Equal Opportunities Units are now responsible for its implementation in other units and thus gender mainstreaming expertise is being spread throughout the DGs. Additionally, the primary concern of both DGs is with employment in the widest sense: DG Personnel and Administration with regard to the internal work organisation, DG Employment and Social Affairs with regard to employment policies and work organisation in Member States. Hence by tradition they have been most reflective of the issues of equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming. The reason behind the selection of two DGs (rather than a larger number) was

mainly practical; the aim of the study was not to examine the largest possible breadth of actors but rather, to make an in-depth study of particular contexts.

29 expert interviews were conducted, of which 25 were with employees from the Commission – 13 from DG Employment and Social Affairs and 12 from DG Personnel and Administration. Eight of the 25 interviewees were men and seventeen were women. 19 of the 25 interviewees belonged to the grade 'A' (administrators and managers). From the 19 'A' interviewees, six were working in management, 13 were administrators, three interviewees were assistants and another three were secretaries. Two Members of the European Parliament were interviewed and two employees from the European Women's Lobby, all four interviewees were women. The interviews lasted between half an hour and one and a half hours each.

The Commission employees interviewed came from different hierarchical levels and grades. Ten were involved directly with gender mainstreaming, 15 were selected because their job description included work organisation or strategic management in the widest sense. Those interviewed were mostly civil servants but Detached National Experts[4] were also included. The interviews took place in Summer 2000 and Winter 2001/2002. All interviewees were ensured of anonymity and thus only their general status group[5] (management, administrator, assistant, secretary) is mentioned. However, most interviewees are administrators and managers, since they were most directly concerned with the implementation of gender mainstreaming. The distribution of interviewees from the European Commission is also illustrated in table 1 according to gender, hierarchical level, whether they are part of the gender mainstreaming advocacy-network and for which DG they work.

Those working within the lowest grade within the Commission, 'D' grades who do mostly manual work were not included in this book. A pre-test with six different 'D' grades showed that they were not familiar with the concept of gender mainstreaming or indeed with other policies of the Commission. Furthermore, they did not participate in the customary induction or training courses of the Commission and thus this limited knowledge is not surprising.

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4   Detached National Experts are employees from national civil services who are seconded to work at the Commission for several years.

5   For a description of the differences between the grades, refer to chapter 7.

Table 1:   Breakdown of the Interviews conducted within the Commission

	Women	Men	Total
Total	17	8	25
DG: Employment and Social Affairs	8	5	13
DG: Personnel and Administration	9	3	12
Part of the Gender Mainstreaming Advocacy-Network	8	2	10
Hierarchical level:			
A – Manager/ess	3	3	6
A - Administrator	8	5	12
B - Assistant	3	0	3
C - Secretary	3	0	3

Source: Own illustration

Empirical Design

Thus, it is important at the outset of the study to convince Commission officials that the suggested research will be carried out in an ethical manner according to the guidelines laid down by the British and German sociological association[6], by, for example, reassuring them that the results of the interview would de made fully anonymous. This goes hand in hand with carefully respecting something that was said 'off the record' i.e. when the speaker did not want a piece of information or a comment to be quoted. The interviewees were asked if they agreed to the interview being taped. They were also told that they could request to have the tape recorder stopped at any point, that they could have me delete passages, and that they could refuse to answer individual questions. No one took advantage of the offer to have the tape recorder stopped or to have individual passages deleted. However, some actors refused to answer individual questions and volunteered 'off the record' information after the end of the interview. Such information has not been used in this study. The interviewees were assured that the information would be anonymous, i.e. their names, nationality and DG are not stated in the text. Two people did not want their interviews recorded. During these interviews I took extensive notes which I typed up immediately afterwards.

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6   For the complete ethical standards in Sociology, refer to the ethical standards of the German Sociological Association (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie) (1992) and its British counterpart the British Sociological Association (1994).

Interview Questions

The purpose of the interviews was to capture the conceptions, meanings and attitudes of the employees towards gender mainstreaming. The interviews contained questions on the following five broad topics: The professional background of the actors, the understanding of gender mainstreaming by actors, the possible commitment to gender mainstreaming and the perceived institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming. Finally the actors were asked what they saw as barriers to the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

The interview started with 'warm-up' questions on the professional background of the actors i.e. how long they had been working for the Commission and in which areas they had worked on.

The second issue focused on the interviewees' understanding of gender mainstreaming and their opinion on gender mainstreaming, i.e. what the actors associated with gender mainstreaming and how they would design gender mainstreaming. The interviewees were also asked what they regarded as success criteria for gender mainstreaming. Since the implementation of gender mainstreaming is viewed as a process in this book, it was particularly important to assess how the interviewees viewed this process. The interviewees were queried what changes they perceived with regard to gender mainstreaming and on which occasion they first took account of gender mainstreaming. They were also questioned what they thought of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the European Commission. In addition, I requested them to elaborate on their understanding of innovations, to provide examples of successful and unsuccessful innovations within the Commission and to what extent they thought gender mainstreaming was an innovation. The last question of my second set of questions was on the most important role models of the European Commission and the DGs they were working in[7].

The third set of questions circled around the possible commitment of the actors to gender mainstreaming. The interviewees were queried whether or to what extent they were involved with gender mainstreaming and whether gender mainstreaming was part of their administrative routines.

The fourth interview topic was about the perception of actors to what extent gender mainstreaming can be seen as institutionalised within the Commission. I enquired to what extent there existed a common understanding on gender mainstreaming between different actors and between different DGs and whether the interviewees cooperated with other DGs or organisations on gender mainstreaming.

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7   As will be explained towards the end of this chapter, questions on the differences between DG Employment and Social Affairs and DG Personnel and Administration were stressed more in the beginning of the research process.

The fifth set of interview questions was about possible barriers the interviewees saw with regard to the implementation of gender mainstreaming. They were asked to what extent they themselves encountered problems with the implementation of gender mainstreaming. They were also queried how they felt about sanctions with regard to gender mainstreaming.

Interpretation of Results

There are two fundamental questions with regard to the interpretation of results: firstly the methodology of interpretation and secondly, the validation of data.

The interpretation of results was made according to the qualitative content analysis developed by the German psychologist Philipp Mayring (2000). This method aims to preserve the advantages of qualitative content analysis as developed within communication studies and to transfer and further develop them into qualitative-interpretative interpretation steps of analysis (Mayring 2000: 3).

Inductive category development means that the development of categories is made transparent, which is not yet the norm. The central idea of qualitative text analysis is that categories are developed as closely as possible to the original text.

For this book, the inductive elements of Mayring's approach were followed. The categories for the selection of text passages were determined according to the set of research questions, i.e. how gender mainstreaming is implemented in the European Commission. This was done by following the interview texts closely, with the categories from the theoretical framework in mind. In the beginning of the research process, the differences between DG Employment and Social Affairs and DG Personnel and Administration played an important role. The research categories partly circled around the role models of the DGs, the relation of each DG to the other DGs and to the rest of the Commission and the working culture within the DG. After the subsumption of these categories and their revision using the interview material, the differences between actors of the different DGs with regard to gender mainstreaming were insignificant. Therefore, the questions on particularities of both DGs were reduced and the following categories were examined: the understanding and construction of gender mainstreaming, interests and resources of actors, rules of gender mainstreaming, resources of gender mainstreaming, barriers to the implementation of gender mainstreaming, gender mainstreaming as an institution, the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming and gender mainstreaming as an innovation.