

# Forschungsstelle Osteuropa an der Universität Bremen

Research Centre for East European Studies at the University of Bremen

## **Changing Europe Summer School III Central and Eastern Europe in a Globalized World**

**Bremen, 28 July – 2 August 2008**

sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation

[www.changing-europe.org](http://www.changing-europe.org)

### **Noemi Kakucs: Contested Global Strategies: Can and Will Gender Mainstreaming Become Local in Hungary?**

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## Abstract

The aim of the paper is to analyse some of the core conceptual and implementational aspects of the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming in Hungary. Relying on a content analysis of policy documents in the field of gender equality policies issued by the Hungarian national government and parliament under EU guidance, and of semi-structured interviews conducted with Hungarian policy makers, representatives of women's NGO and independent experts, the paper offers an insight into how the representation and interpretation of gender mainstreaming is constructed at the level of policy making and emphasises that this representation determines the chances of the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming in Hungary. It concludes with arguments that prove both the conceptualisation and institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming in Hungary is conceptually inconsistent and undermined by internal contradictions.

## 1. Introduction

During the last decade of the twentieth century, gender mainstreaming (hereafter GM) emerged rapidly and spread throughout the world as a new policy approach/tool aiming to combat gender inequalities. GM is defined as an innovative strategy that requires a radical redefinition of political and policy values and the insertion of gender equality as a fundamental goal in all policies. Besides the UN, the European Union (EU) has become a leading actor in the development of GM as a new policy approach; however, its gender equality policy was originally shaped within the framework of employment, only later extending to other gender equality issues.<sup>1</sup> The recognition that gender inequalities falling outside the employment context also affect the employability of women and the competitiveness of national economies has pushed the EU to expand its regulations into the area of social policy in order to be able to benchmark the divergent labour market and social policies of the member states.

This paper aims to explore the way the transfer and institutionalisation of GM took place in Hungary, a new member state where the introduction of GM was more a result of external pressure from the EU during accession negotiations rather than that of an internal societal development. The specific goal of this paper is to find out how GM has been conceptualised by the Hungarian policy makers, which, in turn, has affected its institutionalisation and implementation. This is especially relevant, since although the few studies available on the institutionalisation of gender equality policies in Hungary<sup>2</sup> offer a detailed description of the institutional and policy developments, they do not offer a discursive analysis that would shed light on the structural and ideological hindrances that obstruct the implementation of gender equality by the actual policy makers. It starts by offering a general theoretical framework on GM with a special focus on the EU context and the enlargement process. The second part of the paper presents an analysis of the conceptualisations and institutionalisation of GM in Hungary by examining the institutional and policy developments in the field of gender equality, and exploring how the policy makers within this setup see GM and what this means for the implementation of this strategy. For the analysis, two main methods of data collection were used: a content analysis of policy documents, official reports with relevance to GM issued by different institutions and semi-structured interviews<sup>3</sup> with Hungarian public officials employed at vari-

1 Walby, Sylvia: *The European Union and Gender Equality: Emergent Varieties of Gender Regime*, in: *Social Politics*, 2004 (Vol. 11), No. 1, pp. 4–29; Morgan, Kimberly J.: *Towards the Europeanization of Work-Family Policies? The Impact of the EU on Policies for Working Parents*, in: Silke Roth (ed.): *Gender Issues and Women's Movements in the Expanding European Union*, forthcoming 2008.

2 OSI: *Monitoring the EU Accession Process: Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*. 2002., Budapest, New York: Open Society Institute, 2002; Krizsán, Andrea / Pap, Eniko: *Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. Monitoring Law and Practice in Hungary*, Budapest, New York: Open Society Institute and Network Women's Program, 2005; Krizsán, Andrea / Zentai, Violetta: *Gender Equality Policy or Gender Mainstreaming*, in: *Policy Studies*, 2006 (Vol. 27), No. 2, pp. 135–151.

3 The interviews were conducted between April and May 2006. Their distribution is as follows: 2 with representatives of women's NGOs (marked A1 and A2); 2 with independent gender experts (D1 and D2); 6 with public officials employed at different institution of the state administration (B1 from the Ministry of Labour and Employment Policy; B2, B3 and B4

ous institutions of the state administration at the national and local level, with representatives of women's NGOs and with independent gender experts. However, this analysis can only offer a limited view on the conceptualisation of GM in Hungary as the majority of the informants employed in the state administration are public officials involved in the process of dealing with gender equality policies or representative of the civil sector.

## 2. Theorising Gender Mainstreaming

As GM aims to introduce long-term changes in gender regimes, it requires high level political commitment and comprehensive implementation strategies while the immediate results are not visible. Thus, the analysis of the process of the institutionalisation and implementation of GM has become a great concern for feminist scholars theorising on its conceptualisations,<sup>4</sup> its scope and methods of implementation,<sup>5</sup> as well as its relation to other approaches to gender equality.<sup>6</sup> Several definitions have been propagated, which might create confusion. Nevertheless, they highlight the difficulty of developing an appropriate definition that could capture all the transformative dimensions of this new approach to gender equality without reifying or omitting anything.

GM as a strategy was designed to complement the already existing equal opportunity policies and positive action measures by addressing the problem of gender inequality 'at a more structural level, identifying the gender biases in current policies, and addressing the impact of these gender biases in the reproduction of gender inequality.'<sup>7</sup> It aims to target both women and men and to include a reconceptualisation of gender equality by focusing on gender and not on women alone, which implies the recognition of the relevance of men's lives to the equality debate. This implies that a successful gender equality policy depends on the mutual support of equal opportunity and treatment policies, positive action measures and mainstreaming. However, a crucial problem of the mainstreaming strategy and of gender equality in general lies in their conceptualisations. How can one define gender equality? What does gender equality mean in the Central European and/or Hungarian context? What exactly is to be achieved by GM?

For an effective implementation of GM, several conditions have to be met. Apart from the necessary gender budgeting, gender disaggregated statistics and the development of tools for assessment (such as GIA, gender proofing), there is a need for non-material conditions such as political commitment at all levels, gender equality machinery with a great deal of influence on and access to policy, a receptive political atmosphere, etc. Moreover, GM is effective only if it is applied by both policy makers and gender experts working together in order to eliminate effectively the unintentional gender bias of seemingly

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from the Directorate for Gender Equality in the Ministry of Youth, Family and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, B5 from the National Development Office, and B6 from the Equal Treatment Authority), and for a comparative dimension, 2 with officials from the local level administration.

- 4 Bacchi, Carol L.: *The Politics of Affirmative Action. Women, Equality and Category Politics*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 1997; Bacchi, Carol Lee: *Women, Policy and Politics: The Construction of Policy Problems*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 2001; Eveline, Joan / Bacchi, Carol: *What are We Mainstreaming When We Mainstream Gender?*, in: *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2005 (Vol.7), No. 5, pp. 496–512.; Rees, Teresa: *Reflections on the Uneven Development of Gender Mainstreaming in Europe*, in: *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2005 (Vol. 7), No. 4, pp. 555–574.
- 5 Beveridge, Fiona / Nott, Sue / Stephen, Kylie: *Mainstreaming and the Engendering of Policy-making: A Means to an End?*, in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2000 (Vol. 7), No. 3 (Special Issue), pp. 385–405; Pincus, Ingrid: *The Politics of Gender Equality: A Study of Implementation and Non-Implementation in Three Swedish Municipalities*, Örebro: Örebro University, 2002.; Rubery, Jill: *Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality in the EU: The Impact of the EU Employment Strategy*, in: *Industrial Relations Journal*, 2002 (Vol. 33), No. 5, pp. 500–522.
- 6 Bacchi, Carol L.: *The Politics of Affirmative Action. Women, Equality and Category Politics*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 1997.; Bacchi, Carol Lee: *Women, Policy and Politics: The Construction of Policy Problems*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 2001; Verloo, Mieke: *Another Velvet Revolution? Gender Mainstreaming and the Politics of Implementation*, Vienna: 2001.
- 7 Verloo, Mieke: *Another Velvet Revolution? Gender mainstreaming and the politics of implementation*, IWM Working Paper No. 5, 2001, Vienna.

gender-neutral policies. Nevertheless, as various case studies at the EU level show,<sup>8</sup> even at the level of EU institutions the implementation of GM remains the task of gender experts alone. This attitude reveals a technocratic approach to GM and gender issues in general, which not only depoliticises the process, but also circumvents the personalisation of gender issues by bureaucrats. The unfortunate result is little or no mainstreaming

### 3. Gender Mainstreaming in the Hungarian Context

The gender equality policy in the EU focused primarily on equal treatment and opportunities for women, and GM, as a new strategy, has been incorporated only later in EU policies. As GM is a relatively new policy approach within the EU, with some member states having more inclination towards its institutionalisation than others, the accession of the CEE countries creates a challenge to gender equality policies and GM in particular. This is because the institutionalisation of GM in the EU-15 countries coincided with the processes of Eastern enlargement. The accession of post-socialist CEE countries, which had a different experience of gender equality policy different to the Western European countries, poses a serious challenge to EU policy, which – in order to be effective – has to be both vertically and horizontally integrated within these ‘masculinist’<sup>9</sup> democracies still struggling with post-socialist legacies and neo-liberal demands. Having these differences in mind, the paper proceeds with a short overview of the conceptualisations and institutionalisation processes of gender equality policy and GM in Hungary by looking at institutional developments in the national machinery, policy documents drafted and adopted under EU guidance, and interviews.

The second half of the 1990s witnessed the re-emergence of national machineries as a requirement of the 1995 *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. As the first step, the gender equality agency, initially called the Secretariat for Women’s Policy (to be renamed several times) was established within the Ministry of Labour.<sup>10</sup> Since then, however, any restructuring in the government and each parliamentary election have caused changes in the institutional status of the machinery. The institution was reorganised several times to merge eventually into the equal opportunities apparatus, which included equal opportunity policies formulated with reference to the issues of ethnicity, disability and gender. Consequently, by the beginning of 2006, only one small department was dealing with gender equality issues, while its status in the newly created governmental coalition was not really important and its activities barely visible. Thus, one could assume that in Hungary the re-establishment of the gender equality agency was pursued to satisfy international demands rather than initiatives based in society. The experience of the gender equality agency being integrated not only into the ministries of labour and employment but also into those of social and family affairs, and of constantly being subject to the whims of the government, shows that gender equality policy is not only narrowly framed in terms of labour and employment as well as family related policies but also lacks legitimacy in Hungarian politics.

During the accession talks, as with other CEE countries, the implementation of EU norms and standards has unfolded through a top-down dynamic and taken the form of highly bureaucratic intergovernmental negotiations. The legal harmonisation of the Hungarian legislation with the relevant EU directives, identified by Kirzsán and Zentai as the first stage of the developments in gender equality policy, was followed by a more policy-oriented phase, with Hungary joining various EU level policy processes, which required

8 See, for instance, Pollack, Mark A. / Hafner-Burton, Emily: Mainstreaming Gender in the European Union, in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2000 (Vol. 7), No. 3 (Special Issue), pp. 432–456; Schmidt, Verena: *Gender Mainstreaming – The Institutionalisation of Gender Mainstreaming in the European Commission*, Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2005; Woodward, Alison: *European Gender Mainstreaming: Promises and Pitfalls of Transformative Policy*, in: *The Review of Policy Research*, 2003 (Vol. 20), No.1, pp. 65–88.

9 Watson, Peggy: *Politics, Policy and Identity: EU Eastern Enlargement and East–West Differences*, in: *Journal of European Public Policy*, 2000 (Vol. 7), No. 3 (Special issue), pp. 369–384.

10 Krizsán, Andrea / Pap, Eniko: *Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. Monitoring Law and Practice in Hungary*, Budapest, New York: Open Society Institute and Network Women’s Program, 2005.

the introduction of the EU concept and tools.<sup>11</sup> Thus, a complex situation emerged in which GM was pushed from above to be implemented by a government in which there was not a gender equality agency with enough influence on policy to monitor the implementation. This situation also called for increased involvement by societal actors (both academic experts and women's NGOs) to make up for the lack of a proper agency and exert general pressure from below in order to make the GM work. Nevertheless, since according to the underlying principle of GM, the implementation of mainstreaming policy is the task of all policy makers rather than that of a separate institution, let us now proceed with an investigation of how GM is defined by important policy documents prepared under EU guidance in order to better grasp the overall Hungarian strategy for GM.

As there are no comprehensive policy documents on gender equality or official strategies introducing GM in Hungary, our analysis is limited to some EU documents. These include the *Joint Inclusion Memorandum*<sup>12</sup> signed in 2003 with the European Commission, the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2004)*<sup>13</sup>, as well as the *National Development Plan (2003)*,<sup>14</sup> prepared in order to define the criteria for EU Structural Funds. Before that, the new legislation on anti-discrimination, the 2003/CXXV Act on Equal Treatment and Promotion of Equal Opportunities should be mentioned, as it is a fundamental element of gender equality policy. With its adoption in December 2003, Hungary achieved *de jure* fulfilment of all formal legal requirements relevant to gender equality imposed by the EU. However, the Act suggests that the core element of the Hungarian gender equality policies is to be understood only in a very limited way: as equal treatment and equal opportunities policies.

The two most important documents regarding GM in Hungary are the *Joint Inclusion Memorandum (JIM 2003)* and the *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (NAP 2004)*. These two documents were the first to officially introduce the concept of GM into the Hungarian policy-making context. In both documents, GM is regarded as a horizontal principle and integrated within the larger agenda of social inclusion. A common trend in both documents is that they use the principle of mainstreaming in reference to other disadvantaged groups<sup>15</sup> (*NAP 2004*, 20, *NCST 2004*, 21), thus limiting the importance of gender. In contrast, GM is understood and translated in the Hungarian documents as equal opportunities for men and women. The two documents reveal a major discrepancy in the Hungarian conceptualisation of GM: while the *NAP (2004)* used the term 'mainstreaming' in a general sense referring to the principle of taking into consideration all disadvantaged groups' needs, the *JIM (2003)* employs the concept in reference to the process of creating equal opportunities for women. As a result, although these two documents are supposed to set out the Hungarian GM strategy, neither can be regarded as having a comprehensive approach to it.

Still, within the framework of the social inclusion agenda, another important policy document in Hungary is the *National Development Plan (NDP 2003)* prepared in order to make efficient use of the EU structural funds. This document elaborates more on GM since it has to comply with the regulations of EU programme. Equal opportunity issues are also discussed in the *Plan* in reference to the questions relating primarily to the Roma, women (identifying sub-groups of special needs) and disabled in an attempt to articulate an intersectional approach to the overlapping structures of exclusion.

11 Krizsán, Andrea / Zentai, Violetta: Gender Equality Policy or Gender Mainstreaming, in: *Policy Studies*, 2006 (Vol. 27), No. 2, pp. 135–151.

12 Hungarian Ministry of Health, Social and Family Affairs: *Joint Inclusion Memorandum on Social Integration (Társadalmi Befogadásról szóló Közös Memorandum)*, Budapest: Hungarian Ministry of Health, Social and Family Affairs, 2003.

13 Committee to Combat Social Exclusion: *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion: Hungary 2004–2006*. Draft, <http://www.icsszem.hu/main.php?folderID=1375&articleID=4961&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>, 2004.

14 Hungarian Government: *National Development Plan*, Budapest: National development Agency, 2003.

15 Committee to Combat Social Exclusion: *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion: Hungary 2004–2006*. Draft, <http://www.icsszem.hu/main.php?folderID=1375&articleID=4961&ctag=articlelist&iid=1>, 2004. 'Emphasising the principle of *mainstreaming* in the Hungarian context means that combating poverty and social exclusion is more than a narrowly interpreted task of the social welfare system. Instead, it is an issue of general validity requiring work from all policy areas including all possible levels of administration.'

Although the *NDP* looks like a comprehensive measure to ensure gender equality, it is so only in theory. In reality, although GM should be a horizontal principle,<sup>16</sup> only two out of the five operational programs focus as defined in the *NDP* on the need to promote equal opportunities for both men and women. As a result, the policy documents represent women as one of the three main disadvantaged groups – side by side with the Roma and the disabled. All the policy initiatives were framed according to the principle of GM whereby women were targeted as a disadvantaged group with the aim of (re)integrating them in the society. The group of women is further narrowed down to sub-groups of unemployed, undereducated, inactive women and young mothers, and they are represented as the ‘needy’ facing social exclusion in need of urgent help. All the operational programs of the *NDP* (2003) frame the gender problem in a very limited sense, only as a labour market phenomenon. They emphasise the reconciliation of work and family life, development of childcare facilities, entrepreneurial culture and the role of the social economy. Indeed, the short- or medium-term implications of such regulations could be regarded as beneficial for women. However, they also demonstrate a narrow understanding of gender equality policy used by Hungarian policy makers to solve the problem of gender inequality.

Both the English and Hungarian versions of the *NDP* reveal the same dissimilarities in the general representation of GM as a strategy as in the two previously discussed EU documents. It comes as no surprise that the Hungarian version of the *NDP* presents a much weaker commitment to any kind of policy measure beyond that of promoting equal opportunities and clearly evades the use of positive action. Such shifts in representation and meaning of terminology can be interpreted as a conscious effort aimed at achieving balance between the transnational norms to be adopted and the demands of Hungarian society. Consequently, the policy makers themselves can be considered as veto holders that obstruct the institutionalisation of new norms and values. What this means in the case of Hungarian GM is that the miscommunication of gender equality policies shows a compliance with the mainstream societal view of gender politics.

While the policy documents show that GM is understood as securing equal opportunities for men and women, the interviews show varied patterns of conceptualising GM. The meanings attributed to GM can be grouped as follows: (i) GM as a strategy aimed at creating equal opportunities for men and women, (ii) politically correct definitions of GM, and (iii) definitions that reveal a complete unawareness as far as the meaning of the term is concerned. Nevertheless, only a few of the interviewees highlighted the issue of translation as a determining factor in understanding and implementing GM in Hungary.

The definitions of the first type are as follows: ‘the general validation of equal opportunities, and influencing sectoral policies, the two together add up to GM’ (B1), ‘a strategy aiming to create similar opportunities for women and men ... women and men with different social and economic backgrounds should have the same chances ... it is a long-term strategy’ (A2), and ‘a comprehensive conception, which is included in the policy document that deals with EU funding ... it is a consistent strategy based on *equal opportunities* for both genders’ (B5). As the examples show, there is conceptual confusion about GM among public officials at the national level and the representatives of women’s NGOs. However, the public officials at the local level had not even heard of it, and they could not even guess the meaning or explain the terms *gender* and *mainstreaming*. They regarded a separate strategy for achieving gender equality as unnecessary and were instead in favour of propagating equal opportunities policy on other grounds like ethnicity, age, educational and financial background.

In contrast to the unawareness of the officials at local level, the second group of definitions collected displays a thorough knowledge of gender equality policies and GM. Both B2 and D2 defined GM as the ‘inclusion of a *gender perspective* in all policy-making and policy-implementation processes at all levels and all stages’ (B2) as well as ‘from the viewpoint of employees’ (D2). As A2 put it:

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16 In accordance with the obligation laid down in Art. 1 of the General Regulation, the National Development Plan strategy defines gender mainstreaming as a horizontal principle which means that the differences between the conditions and needs of women and men should be systematically considered in the process of planning, implementation and evaluation of all measures of the NDP. (NDP 2003, 193)

*the concept as such is not well understood in Hungary. They believe that GM is a project, when it should be a comprehensive principle to be applied in rethinking and re-evaluating all the old and new policies, ... and in all general or action provisions, in policy making and policy implementation, in all spheres of social life the men-women issue is taken into consideration.*

The three types of mis/understanding GM correlate to the assumption that there is a division at the level of national government between, on the one hand, public officials in general and the femocrats and individual gender experts on the other. While the public officials interviewed had unclear an understanding of GM, most societal actors and femocrats demonstrated a deep knowledge of the term. Presumably, taking these results into account, one could claim that familiarity with the concept barely extends beyond the group of femocrats, gender experts and some representatives of women's NGOs. This situation implies that the expertise on and the actual execution of GM are radically separated and do not interact during the implementation of the principle at policy-making level. The efficiency of the very process could be, therefore, called in doubt.

Furthermore, the conceptual confusion among public officials involved in policy making can also contribute to the mis/translation of the term into equal opportunities policies, as seen in the policy documents. This confusion could be one of the reasons why GM as a principle fails to be included in the actual implementation of NDP projects by local governments. The huge gap between the knowledge of the government level officials, regardless of the inconsistencies, and local level officials also hints to the fact that the effective transfer of gender equality policies and GM from the international level to the domestic level is rather problematic. It seems that international policy directives get stuck somewhere in-between the national and local level, unable to reach the wider public.

During the interviews, the informants' views on the institutionalisation of GM were divided as to whether gender issues should be dealt with separately (feminist bureaucrats, women's NGOs and gender experts) or within the frame of equal opportunities (local government officials). As mentioned above, the local government officials often argued that women's issues should be a part of a broader agenda of equality politics and not a basis for separate strategy and actions, while all the other informants thought of the institutionalisation of GM in a highly technocratic and bureaucratic manner. They argued that it should be included in all policy areas, the whole procedure being under the supervision of a gender equality agency. Although all claimed that it was not important what kind of position in the hierarchy of institutions (ministry, directorate, department) the agency occupies, they envisaged an influential gender equality agency integrated at government level.

The view that the institutionalisation of GM should unfold as a separate institutional mechanism suggests that the very process would provide legitimacy for gender equality policies in general. Since most of my informants were deeply engaged in gender issues, their views on implementing GM in a technocratic manner expressed both their hopes and fears. On the one hand, the process can provide legitimacy to the gender equality strategies, whereas, on the other hand, the inclusion of GM in all policy processes might undermine the need for positive action measures or separate regulations, and ultimately their own positions. However, from the viewpoint of policy makers less involved with gender issues, it could also be interpreted as resistance to implementation and leaving the task to gender bureaucrats and gender experts.

While B1 argued that the implementation of GM is the responsibility of gender experts at the decision-making level 'who could influence the different departmental policies,' both B5 and D2 highlighted the fact that GM 'requires additional effort for all policy makers to think over all policies from a gender perspective, the same with the projects ... additional effort without any visible results' (B5). Unless such political support is readily available, no implementation of GM seems possible. As gender equality policies have been introduced under the normative pressure of the EU, the accession countries adopted a minimalist

attitude towards it.<sup>17</sup> The low level political commitment to gender equality policies can be attributed to the dual influence of EU pressure and the legacy of the past. B1 claimed that:

*GM lacks tradition in Hungary as, on the one hand, it is a newly introduced foreign issue, while, on the other hand it is a socialist escapee which is over-dimensioned and has to fight for its legitimacy (emphasis added).*

Thus, supra-national pressure for GM can only have a lasting effect if it manages to gain domestic support and/or adapts to local conditions, which has not been the case yet for Hungary.

The duality between the general application of GM by all policy makers and the involvement of experts poses the question of how should GM be institutionalised when the necessary conditions of implementation are not met. Besides this aspect of implementation, the informants also stressed other, sometimes more specific, obstacles hindering the process of GM, such as, for instance, the lack of commitment at the highest political level and the lack of expertise and knowledge. While B1 attributed the failures to the lack of well-trained staff, A2 claimed that public officials 'should regard the equality policy issues more as a field of special expertise and less as an administrative duty; experts should be involved not only in consultation but also in implementation and monitoring.'

A successful model of implementing gender equality policies and GM would also require open policy-making processes between governmental departments as well as between the state, social and civic actors<sup>18</sup> to ensure the legitimacy of gender equality issues. Theoretically, the EU pressure for gender equality policies and inclusion of GM in policy making could have strengthened the influence of some women's NGOs or experts on decision making. The respondents' views on cooperation between the gender equality agency, women's NGOs, and individual gender experts were in many cases contradictory, however. Some informants blamed the national machinery for not collaborating with the women's NGO; some attributed the lack of cooperation to institutional bureaucracy, and others underlined the negative attitude of the Ministry. In contrast, A1 claimed that the Ministry is very cooperative and that the radicalism and lack of professionalism of some women's NGOs makes cooperation difficult. Contradictions notwithstanding, all interviewees highlighted the need for an umbrella organisation embracing all women's organisations that could facilitate the access of women's NGOs to policy. Finally, B3 highlighted the responsibility of both individual experts and the representatives of women's NGO in promoting their agenda through individual bargaining instead of common action. As the responses suggest, there is no common view and no consensus on cooperation even among the few individuals (either civil or state actors) who deal with gender issues in Hungary. If cooperation between the gender equality agency, the women's NGOs and the independent experts does not exist, the opportunity to influence policy cannot develop into cooperation powerful enough to exert pressure from below.

In conclusion, my informants favoured the institutionalisation of GM in a highly bureaucratic and technocratic manner despite the fact that some highlighted the possible threats (such as, for instance, the marginalisation of gender equality) and the need for cooperation with women's NGOs. This suggests that gender equality politics lacks political legitimacy, and femocrats, gender experts and women's NGOs wished to restore that legitimacy via the establishment of a strong governmental apparatus, which in turn would legitimate their occupation and institutional existence. The failure to institutionalise GM could be attributed to the staff's low level of expertise in the agency and to the lack of cooperation between state and civil actors. However, the mere fact that GM is translated to equal opportunities both by some of my informants and the policy documents shows that its legitimacy does not depend ultimately on the few employees of an agency lacking in policy access and influence, but on veto holders at higher levels in the state administration.

17 Bretherton, Charlotte: Gender Mainstreaming and EU Enlargement: Swimming against the Tide?, in: Journal of European Public Policy, 2001 (Vol. 8), No. 1, pp. 60–81.

18 Beveridge, Fiona / Nott, Sue / Stephen, Kylie: Mainstreaming and the Engendering of Policy-making: A Means to an End?, in: Journal of European Public Policy, 2000 (Vol. 7), No. 3 (Special Issue), pp. 385–405.

## 4. Conclusions

GM entered the Hungarian political context only recently as a requirement of the EU legal harmonisation process; thus the present situation of gender equality policy and GM in Hungary shows little progress. Until now, Hungary has not adopted any strategic policy document to introduce GM, but has incorporated some elements of gender equality policy from EU documents. The policies adopted are limited in scope with a strong orientation towards the labour market. The term itself has been adopted by the key policy documents, albeit only at formal and rhetorical levels.

It can be argued that the limitations of implementing GM in the Hungarian context stem from the fragmented nature and subordination to equal opportunities politics. The political influence of the Gender Equality Agency is rather marginal and the demand to include the principle of GM in policy making and policy implementation is scarce. Firstly, for GM to unfold effectively in Hungary, several conditions have to be met; among them proper gender budgeting, training and the development of assessment tools can be counted as the very first steps. Secondly, the concept and aims of GM, as well as the methods and tools of its implementation, should be clarified and developed so that not only gender experts but also policy makers at all levels know what the term encapsulates. As long as confusion is at play among policy makers and the chaotic application of policy measures continues, the term gender mainstreaming will remain an empty concept on which various meanings will be imposed.

Though Hungary is already a member state, it still has much to do in establishing the necessary conditions for introducing an effective GM strategy. As the implementation of GM varies from one EU member state to the next – the concept is vaguely defined and differently understood even within EU institutions – and because EU legislation cannot prevent haphazard implementation at the national level, it is questionable whether GM will be efficiently incorporated into all policy areas at all levels and stages of policy making in the near future.