CENTER FOR POLICY STUDIES

QUING

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Critical Frame Analysis:
A Comparative Methodology for the 'Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies' (QUING) project

ABOUT QUING
QUING was a 54-month long international research project that aimed to address issues of gender and citizenship in the European Union and to provide innovative knowledge for inclusive gender and equality policies in present (and future) EU member states. QUING attempted to answer two important questions: What are actually gender equality policies in the practice of national and European policy-making? What is the quality of these current policies, especially in terms of their transformative potential, their attention for other inequalities and their openness for voices of the movements that lay at its origin? QUING studied all 27 EU-countries plus Croatia and Turkey, and was divided into five building blocks (LARG, WHY, STRIQ, OPERA, FRAGEN; www.quing.eu). The project ran from October 2006 – February 2011 and it involved twelve project partners across Europe, coordinated by the Institute for Human Sciences (Institute für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen) in Vienna, Austria. The Center for Policy Studies at Central European University (Budapest, Hungary) was responsible for coordinating LARG research tasks and covering the following countries within the research project: Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania.

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CRITICAL FRAME ANALYSIS:

A COMPARATIVE METHODOLOGY FOR THE QUING PROJECT

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1. INTRODUCING THE QUING PROJECT

"Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies" (QUING) is an ongoing, multi-year European comparative research project aiming at analyzing the content and quality of gender+ equality policies in the European Union, its Member States and candidate countries. The project would like to answer the following specific question:

- what differences, similarities and inconsistencies can be found in gender+ equality policies around Europe;
- how is gender and gender equality conceptualized in these policies;
- how does gender relate to other grounds of inequality in these policies;
- how differences in policies among countries can be explained?

The project consists of five pillars: three of those (LARG, WHY and STRIQ) comprise the analytic core of the project, while FRAGEN and OPERA go beyond scientific inquiry by incorporating archival and training activities. The LARG activity is a comparative analysis of differences, similarities and inconsistencies in the field of gender+ equality as found in policy documents produced in the EU and its Member States. It provides an overview of policy development in each country, a collection of the most important policy documents and a systematic analysis of their design and content. The WHY activity aims at explaining the differences identified by the LARG pillar by collecting and analyzing data on potential explanatory factors (including the existence and scope of gender equality legislation and machinery, the strength and composition of gender-relevant civil society, the state-civil society interface, political climate, as well as macro level socio-economic data). STRIQ is a horizontal activity that links together LARG and WHY to assess how intersectionality is currently dealt with in gender+ equality policies. The aim of this activity is to develop a conceptual framework as well as give recommendations on how to design inclusive gender+ equality policies that effectively reduce a larger set of inequalities. FRAGEN complements the analytic activities of QUING by constructing a full text database of documents from the European women's movements and making this database publicly available for other researchers. OPERA attempts to bridge the gap between academic and policy communities through focusing on training activities: findings of other QUING activities will be used to establish operational standards for gender+ training create training manuals and train the trainers. The current paper focuses on the LARG activities within the project and discusses the methodologies used in analyzing the policy documents gathered as part of the project.

The QUING project looks at gender+ equality policies in four issue areas: general gender equality, non-employment, intimate citizenship and gender based violence. The issue of *general gender equality* looks at comprehensive state policies focusing on gender equality and concerns legislation on equal treatment, equality plans and the structure and responsibilities of state agencies promoting gender equality. The issue of *non-employment* turns the well established problem of participation in employment upside down and focuses on the question of who is not employed, who does not need to be employed and for what reason. It covers pension and social insurance policy, active labor market policies, family benefit policies, policies on care (both institutionalized and private), parental leave and reconciliation (flexible and part-time work), as well policies on labor market integration, reducing

occupational segregation and pay gap. The issue of *intimate citizenship* concerns the state regulation of intimate relationships and focuses on questions such as what are legitimate forms of partnerships, how are they to be established and dissolved, and who is entitled to have children or to decide not to have one. It covers policies on marriage and divorce, child custody, recognition of same sex partnerships and partnerships outside of marriage, the notion of family in immigration policies, policies on adoption, assisted reproduction, abortion and voluntary sterilization, and reproductive health in general. The issue of *gender based violence* concerns state responses to violence perpetuating sexual hierarchies and focuses on questions such as what counts as violence and who is seen to be affected by it. It covers policies on domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, stalking, forced marriages, trafficking, honor crimes and female genital mutilation.

The research focuses on the period between 1995 and 2007: the starting point is the year of the Beijing Conference, which brought a renewed interest in gender equality to the international political agenda, as well as introduced the concept of gender mainstreaming to the policy community. While the research mapped policy developments between 1995 and 2007, the analysis focused on the most recent policy developments (major policy shifts or significant policy documents) in each country in each of the issues. Such policy moments were analyzed by looking at a variety of policy documents of different genres including laws, policy plans and reports, parliamentary debates and documents produced by civil society organizations.

2. CRITICAL FRAME ANALYSIS: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As clear from the description above, the ambition of the project is twofold: both analytic and evaluative. First it tries to map and explain the similarities, differences and inconsistencies in gender+ equality policies in Europe, and second, to assess the quality of these policies. To achieve these goals the project needed a methodology that was at the same time capable of pursuing such a large scale comparison and to generate standards on which such a quality assessment can be based on.

The starting point of the research was that gender equality is a dynamic, contested concept that takes on different meanings in different spatiotemporal contexts. The concept travels through space and time, crossing national as well as institutional borders. In this process its meaning is stretched, shrunk and bent (Lombardo *et al.* 2009): "gender equality can be filled with a variety of meanings that arise from different political histories, contexts, struggles, and debates. That is, gender equality is a concept open to interpretation and contestation by different actors." The study of such a concept and such processes of interpretation and contestation necessitate a discursive approach to politics and policy.

In recent years such a discursive approach to policy analysis has achieved significant following among scholars of policy studies (see e.g. Bacchi 1999, Ferree *et al.* 2003, Fischer *et al.* 1993, Fischer 2003, Hajer and Wagenaar 2003, Lombardo *et al.* 2009, Verloo 2007). A key methodological tool used by such approaches is policy frame analysis, the study of how "public policies rest on frames that supply them with underlying structures of beliefs perceptions, and appreciation" (Fischer 2003: 144). Although the concept of frame analysis is traced back to Goffman (1974) and Snow *et al.* (1986), its introduction to the field of policy analysis can be attributed to Schön and Rein (1994). Elaborating on

their definition, Verloo defines a *policy frame* as an "organizing principle that transforms fragmentary or incidental information into a structured and meaningful problem, in which a solution is implicitly or explicitly included" (2005: 20).

The growing popularity of the concept of frames, however, results in similar 'stretching and bending': the concept of frames is used by different authors with quite different meanings. These differences cluster around questions of generality, intentionality and normativity.

Concerning the question of generality, frames are described to be operating on various levels: at the macro level (such as for a whole society, nation or even on the supranational level),[1] at the meso level (such as for type of actors or policy domain),[2] as well as on the micro level when referring to framing processes by individual actors.[3] The question of intentionality focuses on the problem whether frames should be considered the results of practices involving the strategic deployments of certain arguments to influence decision-making or rather unintentional and unconscious accommodation to powerful societal discourses.[4] Finally, authors differ on the question of normativity: some[5] argue for the separation of cognitive and normative aspects and reserve the concept of frames to the former; others[6] call attention to the inherent inseparability of the two. For the purposes of the project, further elaboration of Verloo's definition from 2005 was needed.

While the aim of this paper is not to settle these theoretical debates, it has to be noted that the mutual exclusivity of the positions seems unreasonable if one looks at these questions as related. When looking from a micro and meso level perspective, actors do make intentional decisions and choose between the available competing frames to pursue their goals ('strategic framing'). But the question of which frames are available and can be successfully mobilized in a particular context ('frame resonance', see Snow and Benford 1988) is not up to the individual actors, but is a characteristic of the environment in which they operate. "Deep cultural meanings" (Bacchi 2009), thus, affect framing processes by forming part of the "discursive opportunity structure" (Ferree and Gamson 2002) that framing processes have to align to if they aspire for success. Thus from a macro level point of view such deep cultural meanings matter more than the intentionality of the framing process by specific actors. Similarly, if one looks at frames in particular institutional settings in relation to particular social issues or policy fields (from the meso level perspective) cognitive processes such as perception, labeling and structuring reality seems to dominate, while if one moves beyond specific issues and policy fields and looks at commonalities in the framing across various issues normative aspects inevitably come to the forefront.

Based on these considerations, the project differentiates between three levels of frames: issue frames, metaframes, and document frames.

Issue frames are policy frames that provide a relatively coherent story/reasoning in which issue specific prognostic elements responds to issue specific diagnostic elements. Issue frames are abstract synthetic constructs in the sense that they are not necessarily linked to any one text in their pure form. There is no deterministic relationship between issue frames and the agents articulating them: the frames

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1   See metaframes in Schön and Rein (1994), general frames in RNGS (2005), and master frames in Snow and Bedford (2004).

2   See policy frames in Schön and Rein (1994) and issue frames in RNGS (2005)

3   See micro frames in Sauer (2007), institutional action frames in Schön and Rein (1994), collective action frames in Snow and Bedford (2000),

4   For a comprehensive overview of this topic see Bacchi (2009).

5   See Oliver and Johnston (2000) who propose making a difference between frames and ideologies based on this differentiation.

6   See Schön and Rein (1994), Verloo (2005), RNGS (2005)

can be equally articulated by state and non-state actors, be dominant state frames or contesting non-governmental frames. Issue frames have an inherent normative aspect: by indentifying certain social facts as problematic and proposing changes towards a more desirable state of the world, issue frames cannot avoid being normative and value-driven. On the other hand, issue frames are issue specific, thus normative claims are often encoded in empirical statements about the world; issue frames cannot be reduced to their normative background.

Document frames describe how a particular document or actor constructs the issue at hand. Document frames may overlap with issue frames (a single issue frame is used in a document coherently), but more often they are linked to one or more issue frames, and can articulate fragmented or hybrid versions of those. This notion of document frames was built on the insight that policy documents "are better understood as "assemblages" than as rational sets of interventions for certain purposes. [They result] from struggles, and they often combine elements from different competing actors, either from within the state or from different mobilizing networks outside of it" (Bustelo and Verloo 2009).

Finally, *metaframes* are overarching frames of a higher level of generality that stretch over different policy issues and can be operationalized as the normative aspects of issue frames. An initial set of metaframes likely to be found in documents based on the available literature was already compiled at the beginning of the research (see Walby *et al.* 2007); the list included equality, human rights, economic development, capabilities and well-being, crime and justice, and health. The research aims at refining and amending this list of frames based on the empirical material gathered during the course of the research.

From this short introduction it is clear that the first step of frame analysis has to be the identification/construction of issue frames. The framing of policy issues by particular policy actors or in particular policy documents can be analyzed with reference to how it combines various issues frames. Metaframes can be analyzed by finding common normative claims in issue frames belonging to different policy issues. Thus finding issue frames is a crucial intermediary step both for the analysis of metaframes and for the analysis of framing processes in specific documents.

In order to operationalize the study of issue frames, further elaboration is needed on what kinds of elements build up a policy frame. Although rather tautological, the claim that 'policy frames are frames present in policy documents' is helpful, since it draws attention to the fact that the elements of policy frames are the components that build up a policy document: a list of policy frame elements can be arrived at by analyzing the 'genre' of policy documents. Although often identified as two competing approaches to genres, recent scholarship in the field of genre studies recognizes that genres are at the same time empirical and normative constructs (Gillaerts and Shaw 2006): the description of a category or class of texts as having particular form, content or style at the same time creates a standard based on which similar texts are measured. The following list contains such descriptive/normative features of policy documents:

1. *Problem oriented*. The document contains an analysis of the current socio-economic situation and describes how it differs from a desired/ideal situation.

2. *Causalistic*. The document contains an analysis of what leads to the current situation; how the problems identified can be explained; often assigning responsibility to particular actors for causing the problem.

3. *Future oriented*. The document has a vision about the desired/ideal situation

with which the current situation is contrasted with. This vision is formulated as objectives.

4. *Practical*. The document describes how the set objectives can be achieved: it proposes a variety of activities to pursue (ends-means logic).

5. *Delegative*. The document assigns or delegates responsibilities in terms of who should pursue what activity.

6. *Targeted*. The document described which social groups are affected by the problem, and activities proposed are also linked to specific target groups.

7. *Budget*. The document provides information on how to finance the activities proposed.

8. *Creating authority*. The document uses references to support the claims it makes. The references can include scientific studies, statistics, legislative and policy examples in other countries, expert opinions or references to binding (international) norms, etc.

When analyzing particular documents these features can be translated to questions such as: What is the problem to be solved? Who is affected by it? Who/what causes the problem to appear or reproduce? What is the objective? What needs to be done? Who should do it? What references are used to support the claims? These and similar questions can be called *sensitizing questions* (Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 35) that provide a certain interpretative tool when reading policy document in search for policy frames. Issue frames can be identified/constructed by searching for similarities and differences in what documents say about these questions.

As discussed above, not only do these features describe what policy documents are like, but also provide criteria based on which such policy texts can be evaluated. If a document lacks some of the features, this can be used as a point of criticism. *Theory*-based evaluation or *program* logic evaluation (see e.g. Chen 1990; Owen and Rogers 1999) provides further such evaluative criteria:

9. *Specificity*. The document does not stop at general problem statements and vague wishes, but gives details both in terms of problems to fight and ways to achieve it.

10. *Consistency*. There is a logical consistency between various aspects of the document: the activities proposed contribute (at least in theory) to the desired objectives and respond to the problems identified; the target groups are in accordance with groups linked with the problem (either as being affected by the problem or causing the problem); the impact mechanism of proposed actions correspond to the causal analysis of the problems.

11. *Comprehensivity*. The document gives a comprehensive account of the problem at hand, and discusses the full range of activities that can lead to the realization of the objectives (and proposes to pursue the best of those).

Whether a document measures up to criteria 9-10 can be assessed based on features 1-8. Although consistency is an important criterion, due to the nature of policy documents it very often does not hold true.[7] The methodology, however, allows for systematically analyzing and explaining such inconsistencies. Comprehensivity can be evaluated based on comparing each document to all the other documents dealing with a similar issue to see if some problems identified or solutions proposed by the

7   See section on document frames for a more detailed analysis.

other documents is present or not in the document at hand. The methodology allows for demonstrating blind spots or silences in documents.

As it is clear from above, a frame analysis approach can be used to evaluate policies based on criteria deduced from general features of policy documents and a t*heory*-based evaluation approach. However, Bustelo and Verloo (2009) are right to point out that although frame analysis is a valuable tool when doing policy design evaluation, it cannot be used to evaluate two equally important aspects of policies: policy relevance and policy impact. To assess whether the problems identified are the 'real problems' society has to face and whether the proposed activities will actually lead to the objectives set are questions that cannot be answered by discursive policy analysis.

Nevertheless, based on available literature on democratic theory and gender theory the following further criteria can be adopted, all of which contribute to the likelihood that the gender equality policy is both relevant and the solution feasible.

12. *Inclusive policymaking.* The document makes reference to consultations with a wide range of stakeholders affected by the policy.

13. *Gender-explicitness.* The document discusses the problem explicitly in gendered terms.

14. *Structural understanding of gender.* The document goes beyond mentioning gendered social categories, and has a complex understanding of gender that includes the distribution of resources, relations of power and an understanding of gender norms.

15. *Intersectional inclusion.* The document does not limit the analysis to the question of gender, but looks at how gender and other forms of inequalities (race/ethnicity, sexuality, age, class, etc.) are intertwined.

16. *Commitment to gender equality.* The document explicitly endorses the idea of gender equality and organizes objectives and activities to achieve it.

The 16 points above provide a conceptual framework for critical frame analysis that is well suited for both the comparative study of policy frames in gender equality policies as well as assessing the quality of these policies. It achieves the first purpose by providing interpretative tools to look for certain information in policy documents based on which policy frames can be identified/constructed. It achieves the second purpose by generating a set of criteria and gathering necessary data to evaluate the policy design aspects of gender equality policies.

To put this analytic framework into practice policy documents had to be gathered and their content recorded in a systematic manner. The next section describes the process of how such a research was performed in the QUING project touching upon the methodological practicalities of such large scale, comparative projects of qualitative nature.

3. CRITICAL FRAME ANALYSIS: A METHODOLOGY

3.1. Issues histories

The first step of the research was to compile detailed chronological listings of policy developments in each country in the time period covered by the project. This step followed the methodology of policy process analysis (Sutton 1999): the main aim was to trace when and how issues appeared on the political agenda, who has contributed to the debate and what documents were produced. The types of documents collected includes bills, laws, policy plans, policy reports, party programs, parliamentary debates, Court decisions, consultation papers, position papers, as well as official letters and statements. To complement these primary sources further information about policy developments (such as media coverage, published interviews with actors involved) were also collected. Besides a chronological list of documents researchers were asked to provide short summaries of the key points of each policy moments. Issue histories thus provided a systematic overview of the policy developments in each country, a list of actors that participated in policy formulation, as well as a rich collection of policy documents to analyze.

3.2. Sampling

The next step was to choose documents for analysis from the long list of documents collected for the issue histories. For the purpose of comparability, documents selected had to be similar in topic and type. As part of topical harmonization issue areas were further divided to subissues. General gender+ equality policy was divided to (1.1) general gender+ equality legislation and (1.2) general gender+ equality machinery; non-Employment was divided to (2.1) tax-benefit policies, (2.2) care work, (2.3) reconciliation of work and family life, and (2.4) gender pay gap and equal treatment in employment; intimate citizenship was (3.1) divided to divorce, marriage and separation, (3.2) sexual orientation discrimination and same sex partnership, and (3.3) reproduction; gender based violence was divided to (4.1) domestic violence, (4.2) sexual assault, and (4.3) intersectional violence. Researchers were asked to choose documents for all of the subissues. As discussed above there is a wide variety of policy documents genres, out of these genres four were selected for analysis (1) laws, (2) policy plans, (3) parliamentary debates and (4) civil society texts. Researchers were asked to choose documents from each of the categories. If there were more documents in a country that fitted the criteria above, researchers were asked to choose the ones that are (1) the most recent; (2) the most comprehensive; (3) the most authoritative; (4) the most debated; (5) have the highest potential impact on gender; (6) contain the greatest policy shift. Researchers were asked to choose a minimum of 48 documents (4 types of documents, one for each of the 12 subissues) and add additional documents up to 60 if it was needed to cover the variety of debates and voices in the local context. All together 2088 documents were selected for analysis in the 29+1 countries.[8]

3.3. Coding

Documents chosen for the sample were entered into an online database containing the full text of the documents as well as codes describing various aspects of the document including its context (date,

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8   For a summary of documents analyzed for each issue and type of document in each country see Appendix III.

occasion, audience) and its content. The content of the documents was recorded through the help of qualitative coding following a coding scheme prepared to correspond to the sensitizing questions described in greater details in the previous section.

There were several factors behind the decision to use a combination of data-driven (open) and concept-driven (closed) coding (see Gibbs 2008: 44-45). The advantages of concept-driven coding with the help of a codebook or answering to simple yes/no questions about the document are obvious: it is a fast method to gather comparable data about documents. It is however based on the assumption that (1) the researcher knows the material to code well enough to propose closed codes that cover all important aspects of the documents; (2) the researchers is testing a small number of simple, well formulated hypothesis; (3) the researcher has access to the original document to use quotations and/or to revise coding if necessary. However, neither the data nor the research interests of the project fitted these assumptions. (1) The documents analyzed were not translated to English, but available only in their original language to a few researchers in the team who understood that language. The project needed a coding scheme that can make as detailed information about the documents available in English as possible, since the interpretation of results would be based mostly on the codes recorded.[9] (2) Since the majority of documents analyzed have not undergone similar analysis before, no one was in the position of actually foreseeing what to find/look for in the documents except for some very basic information. A bottom-up-approach was needed to let the documents show their true faces, rather than being interpreted from a perspective indifferent to specificities of local policy contexts. (3) The interest of the project in framing processes sensitive to questions of language use and argumentative strategies are hard to formalize by producing a simple codebook to apply. Based on these factors the documents were coded both with the help of closed[10] and open codes.

In order to strike a balance between the openness of coding and the need to standardize the coding for the purpose of comparison a syntactic coding scheme was used. Syntactic coding (Roberts 1989, Franzosi 1989) is a coding method in which statements in documents are coded as structured sets of simpler codes following a pre-given structure (story grammar). The problem with conventional coding methods is that they either (1) use short codes for individual elements in a text thus disregarding the syntactic relations between them; or (2) use long and complicated codes that are hard to standardize. To understand the first problem better, take the following example. The document contains the sentence "civil society organizations should provide training for police forces dealing with domestic violence issues because they are the ones having enough information". If such a statement is coded with the help of simple codes, one ends up having codes such as [civil society organizations], [police dealing with domestic violence], [training], [have information], but losing the information on how these codes relate to each other in the text. If one were to query documents that assign responsibilities to civil society organizations, it would be impossible to do so since the coding does not record that civil society organizations are mentioned in the text as having a particular responsibility. The solution to this problem is to standardize (set in advance) the syntactic relations that are characteristic of statements in a particular genre of texts, and let researchers use open coding to construct structured sets of open

9   To reduce the risks of these context-independent interpretations, researchers were asked to comment on their coding if they thought the codes might not convey the same meaning in English. Context-sensitive interpretation of documents were incorporated to the analysis by including narrative summary fields as well as preparing country studies summarizing the findings from a local perspective, as well as by asking researchers to comment on the context-independent interpretations by confronting them with their contextual interpretations.

10   For a list of closed questions see Appendix II

codes that follow those syntactic relations. To continue the example above, the statement is a prognostic one that describes a policy action to be implemented. Policy actions are characterized most importantly by an activity that has to be implemented, an actor that has to implement it, and a target group who is affected by the activity. Policy actions often also contain argumentation as to why that action should be used to achieve the given objective, and (at least ideally) contain budget for the given activity. The following story grammar contains the most important elements found in policy action statements.

```
POLICYACTION {
        RESPONSIBLE:
        ACTIVITY:
        TARGETGROUP:
        QUALIFIER:
        MOTIVATION:
        BUDGET:
}
```

With the help of this story grammar, one would code the statement above as:

```
POLICYACTION {
        RESPONSIBLE: civil society organizations
        ACTIVITY: training
        TARGETGROUP: police dealing with domestic violence
        QUALIFIER:
        MOTIVATION: they have information
        BUDGET:  no
}
```

Based on the characteristic statements found in texts belonging to the genre of policy documents and the sensitizing questions described above 10 story grammars were defined to record information found in documents. These are: voice, reference, problem, past policy action, causality, diagnostic dimension, objective, policy action, mechanism and prognostic dimension. [11] Each of these story grammars (similar to the one above on policy actions) contains several fields that are relevant for that type of statement. Some of the fields in the story grammars were more interpretative than the others, using more abstract categories than found in the documents (such as for causality/mechanism dimension, gender dimension, intersectionality dimension). For these fields a closed list of values was used that researchers were to choose from. The guidelines contained detailed descriptions of what each of the codes meant. Researchers were asked to code each substantive statement in the documents with the help of a corresponding story grammar.

3.4. Code standardization

Even though syntactic coding introduces one level of standardization to the coding, open coding still means that in some cases different words were used in the fields of story grammars to code the same basic information. This results from the nature of qualitative coding, since codes are closely following

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11   For a list of story grammars with their structure see Appendix I.

what is said in the texts. For qualitative analysis it matters a lot whether a document is using one label for an activity or social group or another (e.g. homosexuals, gays or same sex couples). But at another level of analysis, such differences are no longer important; more comprehensive and abstract codes are needed. In order to enable both types of analysis the individual codes entered to the system by researchers were organized into a hierarchical structure.

In this standardization process codes that are similar to each other were organized into more general, higher level codes.[12] During this standardization process it was an important principle to try to be relatively free of any theoretical bias, staying as close to the original meanings of codes as possible, and focusing on standardization and logical organization. Rather than using a fixed set of generality levels, the depth of hierarchies vary between the different branches in the categories, allowing both 'flat categories' that simply group codes into a fewer (manageable) number of categories on the same level, as well as categories with several levels of groupings inside so that analysis can be executed on several levels of generality. Besides the flexibility in terms of the depth of hierarchy, codes could be also attached to more than one category, making possible a multi-dimensional grouping of codes. So e.g. the category of 'migrant girls' were added the categories of 'females', 'children' and 'migrants' all organized within even more general categories ('gender', 'age', 'citizenship') within the overarching category of social groups. The hierarchy also allowed for cross-linking categories so that the first decidedly 'un-theoretical' categorization can be regrouped to create more abstract analytic categories. (E.g. linking together institutional actors (feminist NGOs and gender departments), with the social group 'gender' and references to gender-relevant international documents to create the abstract category of 'gendering'). The flexibility of this hierarchical organization means that the analysis of documents can be accomplished on several levels, including detailed comparison of a smaller number of documents as well as comparison of overarching categories among various countries or even the whole database. This bottom up method of starting from close-to-text coding and using groupings to achieve higher levels of abstraction also has the advantage of being transparent: the process of abstraction is traceable in the construction of the hierarchy.

3.5. Frame construction

As described in the conceptual framework, for the purpose of policy comparison *issue frames* are of central importance. Following coding and code standardization the next step was to construct issue frames for each of the four issues. The frame construction process started from the hypothesis that some of the fields in story grammars are more relevant to the core of the frames then others. The fact that a policy includes information on budgeting is important, but will not be a difference based on which frames substantially differ, so is the case for the qualifier, etc. fields. The fields that appeared to be most decisive are the norm, actor, location and causality/mechanism dimension fields. These fields of special importance we named *marker fields*: these were the fields that 'mark' difference between the frames. If documents share certain marker fields, they are likely to share other fields, such as goal, problem, policy action, etc. (to put in a more formalistic model: variance in marker fields explains variance in the other fields). This hypothesis that proved to be partially true was also a practical solution for to starting the frame construction process: it meant that first we had to concentrate on marker fields and later check if the groups of texts created based on the marker fields are in fact similar to each other in other aspects as well.

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12   For some examples of such code hierarchies see Appendix IV

The first step in using marker fields was to reduce the number of codes for each of the marker fields to a manageable number: occurrence frequencies based on the code hierarchies were used to identify the most relevant values for each of the marker fields in each of the issues. As a next step co-occurrence of different marker field – value pairs were looked at to see if there are combinations that appear more often than others These often occurring combinations served as frame skeletons, that grouped together similar documents based on their marker fields. To give an example: the passive actor/target group of 'same sex couples' tends to appear together with the norm of 'equal treatment' and the location of 'economy' while the 'LGBT' or 'gays and lesbians' passive actor/target group tend to occur more often with the norm of 'equality' in general and causality based on 'norms'. This observation is reflected in the differentiation between the equal rights for same sex couples and the transformative equality of LGBT people frames. As a last step the remaining fields (most importantly problem, goal and policy action) of these groups were looked at to check if they are similar as well. In some cases the groups based on the marker fields had to be further divided based on some other fields to arrive at relatively consistent groups of documents.

The frame list (with frame skeletons and the content of other fields relevant for that group of documents) was sent to country researchers to check if they make sense in their local context, i.e. if the frames identified this way cover the major points in the local debates. In some cases frames were adjusted (combined, broken up) to arrive at the final list of frames.

3.6. Mapping frames to documents

As a final step in the data collection/data organization phase researchers were asked to recode documents with the help of the frames on the frame list: to decide if a document belongs to a frame or not. This was partly based on the codes recorded for documents (i.e. frame mapping based on correspondence with the marker field values), while in some cases the presence of the frame was identified even though it was not traceable in the marker fields. In these cases researchers were asked to provide a detailed reasoning of why they think the document matches that frame.

4. CONCLUSION: THE WAY FORWARD

At the current point in the researcher project the data is recorded and organized to enable a variety of comparative analyses to be undertaken. :

- countries or groups of countries can be compared based on the presence/lack of certain frames;
- type of actors or voices can be compared based on the frames they employ;
- more specific comparisons can be performed among countries, types of documents or issues (such as the use of references to the EU or civil society voices; the reliance on civil society actor to implement policies; the use of gendered categories in relation to a particular issue, etc.)

Besides these comparative endeavors problem descriptions and policy solutions in a particular documents can be compared with similar documents in any or all of the other countries to assess the comprehensiveness of the policy. The consistency of policies can also be assessed based on comparing information in the corresponding fields of story grammars (such as whether active and passive actors are addressed also as target groups, or whether the causal mechanism in the diagnoses matches the impact mechanism in the prognosis, etc). The database can also serves as a comprehensive, structured catalogue of social problems and solutions to use in policy design as well as in training policy actors.

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Appendix I: Supertext template

0. META
Document code:
Country:
Full title in original language:
Full title in English:
Audience:
Event / occasion of appearance:
Issue:
Date:
Type/status of document:
Parts of text eliminated:

1. VOICE
Summary
Voice(s) speaking
    VOICE {
    NAME:
    POSITON:
    AFFILIATION:
    LEVEL:
    PERSONALCHARACTERISTIC:
    IDENTITY:
    GROUPREPRESENTED:
}
References
REFERENCE {
    NAME:
    TYPE:
    SUBTYPE:
    DEPTH:
    MODALITY:
    SOURCE:
    LEVEL:
    PERSONALCHARACTERISTIC:
    IDENTITY:
    GROUPREPRESENTED:
}

2. DIAGNOSIS
Summary
Problem statement
PROBLEM {
    ACTIVEACTOR:
    PROBLEM:
    PASSIVEACTOR:
    QUALIFIER:
    WHY:
    NORMGROUP:
    UNDERLYING NORM:
    LOCATION:

}
Past policy action
PASTACTION {
    WHO:
    ACTIVITY:
    TARGETGROUP:
    EVALUATION:

}
Causality
CAUSALITY {

    IN _ ACTOR:
    IN_ACTIVITY:
    OUT_ACTOR:
    OUT_ACTIVITY:
    IMPLICIT:
    DIMENSION:

}
Dimensions
DIAGDIMENSIONS {
    DIAGSTATEMENT:
    INEQUALITYAXIS:
    INTERSECTIONALITY:
    PRIVILEGEDAXIS:
    RELATION:
    ASPECT:

}
3. PROGNOSIS
Summary
Objective
OBJECTIVE {
    TARGETGROUP:
    GOAL:
    QUALIFIER:
    WHY:
    UNDERLYING NORM:
    NORMGROUP:
    LOCATION:

}
Policy action
POLICYACTION {
    RESPONSIBLE:
    ACTIVITY:
    TARGETGROUP:
    QUALIFIER:
    MOTIVATION:
    BUDGET:

}
Mechanism
MECHANISM {
    IN_ACTOR:
    IN_ACTIVITY:
    OUT_ACTOR:
    OUT_ACTIVITY:
    IMPLICIT:
    DIMENSION:

}
Dimensions
PROGDIMENSIONS {
    PROGSTATEMENT:
    INEQUALITYAXIS:
    INTERSECTIONALITY:
    PRIVILEGEDAXIS:
    RELATION:
    ASPECT:

}
4. MAIN MESSAGES OF THE DOCUMENT
Normativity
Balance
Interpretation

5. GENERAL COMMENTS

Appendix II: Summary codes

Gendering of the policy

5. Invoke gender?: yes

6. Use of gender
    a. Men/women: biological : Marginal
    b. Gender as social: Dominant
    c. Not possible to say if biological or social: Not present
    d. De-gendered:

Gender equality framing

7. Use of gender equality relevant?: yes

8. Why wanted
    a. Means to policy goal: Major
    b. An end in itself: Minor

9. Vision or strategy
    a. As vision : Balance
    b. As strategy : Balance

10. Vision
    a. Equality=sameness: Marginal
    b. Equality=difference: Marginal
    c. Equality=transformation: Dominant

11. Strategy
    a. Equal treatment:
    b. Special programmes:
    c. Transformation: Sole strategy

Intersectionality

12. Intersectionality
    a. Ethnicity:
    b. Religion:
    c. Class:
    d. Sexual orientation:
    e. Age:
    f. Disability:
    g. Marital/family status:
    h. Nationality/migrant status:
    i. Other inequalities:

Broad framing of the policy

13. Framing
    a. Equality: Sole frame
    b. Human rights:
    c. Economic development:
    d. Capabilities/well-being:
    e. Crime and justice:
    f. Health:
    g. Other:
    h. Strength of other:

Pressure for policy development

14. Call for action
    a. International level: 0
    b. EU level: 3
    c. National level: 0

Civil society/state interface
    15. Reference to consultations?: no
    16. Including women's organisations?: no

Policy instruments

17. Utilisation of indicators: no

18. Utilisation of statistics: no

19. Proposed action
    a. Legal change: yes
    b. New institution: no
    c. Increased budget: no
    d. New policy: no
    e. Improve implementation: no
    f. Campaigns: no
    g. Statistics/information: no
    h. Specific organisation named: yes
    i. Specific organisation named
        i. State: yes
        ii. Civil society: no
        iii. Semi-state/civil soc: no

Appendix III: Documents analyzed

Table 1: Documents by type

Country	General gender equality	Non-employment	Intimate citizenship	Gender based violence	Sum
Austria	15	34	22	24	**95**
Belgium	19	23	21	28	**90**
Bulgaria	13	18	12	16	**56**
Croatia	14	19	20	11	**64**
Cyprus	14	17	11	21	**63**
Czech Republic	14	15	12	17	**58**
Denmark	10	22	15	15	**62**
Estonia	10	22	15	14	**61**
European Union	15	26	17	23	**81**
Finland	10	20	14	15	**59**
France	10	22	17	17	**66**
Germany	13	27	26	24	**90**
Greece	7	12	10	19	**48**
Hungary	16	42	40	31	**129**
Ireland	11	21	17	13	**61**
Italy	11	21	16	17	**65**
Latvia	7	26	18	14	**65**
Lithuania	10	21	19	19	**69**
Luxembourg	11	22	11	16	**60**
Malta	13	22	10	11	**56**
Netherlands	16	26	17	16	**75**
Poland	25	25	23	22	**95**
Portugal	8	19	14	15	**56**
Romania	24	21	17	18	**79**
Slovakia	12	24	18	14	**68**
Slovenia	10	19	17	14	**60**
Spain	11	17	27	14	**67**
Sweden	11	21	13	13	**57**
Turkey	13	29	17	21	**80**
United Kingdom	8	19	15	12	**53**
Sum	**381**	**672**	**521**	**524**	**2088**

Table 1: Documents by issue

Countries	Law	Policy plan	Parliamentary debate1	Civil society text	Other	Sum
Austria	19	12	51	12	1	**95**
Belgium	11	12	55	12		**90**
Bulgaria	10	9	16	14	7	**56**
Croatia	16	9	24	12	3	**64**
Cyprus	13	10	26	10	4	**63**
Czech Republic	9	13	17	13	6	**58**
Denmark	2	6	26	11	17	**62**
Estonia	14	9	20	18		**61**
European Union	13	15	40	13		**81**
Finland	11	12	24	12		**59**
France	12	12	29	12	1	**66**
Germany	9	12	56	13		**90**
Greece	14	6	17	8	3	**48**
Hungary	27	12	77	11	2	**129**
Ireland	12	13	22	14		**61**
Italy	12	10	29	13	1	**65**
Latvia	11	9	15	14	16	**65**
Lithuania	15	12	20	11	11	**69**
Luxembourg	12	12	21	10	5	**60**
Malta	14	10	15	16	1	**56**
Netherlands	9	16	39	11		**75**
Poland	12	18	52	13		**95**
Portugal	11	14	17	13	1	**56**
Romania	15	12	38	10	4	**79**
Slovakia	10	12	29	12	5	**68**
Slovenia	12	11	22	11	4	**60**
Spain	10	8	29	15	5	**67**
Sweden	8	12	24	13		**57**
Turkey	24	11	30	15		**80**
United Kingdom	13	12	16	12		**53**
Sum	**380**	**341**	**896**	**374**	**97**	**2088**

Appendix IV: Sample code hierarchies

```
Common hierarchy
  actors
    abstract actors
    functional groups
    individuals
    international institutions
    non-state institutional actors
    Professions
    sectoral actors
      abortion
      Academia
      adoption
      contraception
      Crime
      Culture
      economy
      education
      employment
        employees
          atypical employees
          employed with caring duties
          employed without caring duties
          employees as perpetrators
          employees as victims
          employees by country
          employees by other characteristic
          employees by public/private
          employees by size of corporation
          employees by skills
          employees by social groups
            employees by age
            employees by citizenship status
            employees by class
            employees by dis/ability
            employees by ethnicity/race
            employees by family status
            employees by gender
              employees according to gender
              employees of different sexes
              female employees
              male employees
            employees by regions
            employees by religious belief
            employees by sexual orientation
          employees by time of employment
          employees in general
          fellow employees
          illegal workers
          jobseekers
          non-employed
          unemployed people
          voluntary workers
```

```
Common hierarchy
  actors
  causality dimension
  causality type
  frames
  gender aspect
  IC
    IC goals
    IC policy actions
      awareness raising campaigns
      change attitudes/roles
      consultation and social debate
      cooperate
      coordination
      counselling and information
      create protocols/manuals
      decrease social spending
      demonstration
      do something
      educational programmes
      exchange of best practices
      follow example
      framing and approaching
      implement and comply with
      improve implementation
      improve management
      improve quality of services
```