

## Introduction: Why gender...

Why gender inequality as a research case?

### Gender

inequality is not a simple problem, but a highly political problem, meaning that there is no real consensus about what the problem is exactly, about why and for whom it is a problem, about who is responsible for the existence of the problem, who is responsible for solving it. This means that there is an ongoing political power struggle over these definitions. The words that are used in the context of gender mainstreaming habitually suggest consensus, but more often than not these words - inequality between men and women, differences between men and women, equal opportunities for men and women - function as buzz words: they allow the illusion of consensus, until a hidden difference of opinion can no longer be concealed.

### Studies on the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming

in the European Union show that its revolutionary potential is endangered by distortions due to shifts in gender equality concepts connected to national differences, or by a lack of articulation of its goal. In view of the Enlargement and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, they warn against a focus on employment or on technocratic instruments and are concerned about the lack of attention for Eastern European realities and for other structural inequalities.

Moreover, Gender mainstreaming is a typical example

of a strategy that involves not only multiple levels in governance, but also multiple shifts in governance. Multiple levels because it involves not only national or regional state bureaucracies, but also institutions in fields like science and economy. Multiple shifts in governance, because the strategy aims at a reorganisation of policy processes, and a shift in responsibilities. The strategy of Gender Mainstreaming aims at a multiplication of actors, policy areas and policy levels (Council of Europe 1998).

The ongoing political struggle over the definition

of gender equality, the implementation problems in Gender Mainstreaming and the connection to multiple shifts in governance are three good reasons to choose gender inequality as a research case for a study on policy framing.