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The Europeanization of regional governance has long been addressed through the sole lens of the regional policy of the European Union, hence almost exclusively from a top-down perspective. Yet, limited attention was paid to the different types of regions considered, especially as regarding the emergence of regions with a legislative capacity and which are integral to domestic political systems (Carter & Pasquier, 2006). Meanwhile, attempts to capture the complexity of domestic change as consequence of Europeanization processes have mainly focused on the State-level. Putting forward the EU pressure for adaptation as one of the main impetus for legislative and policy change, often led consecutively to neglect the role of regional domestic agents and institutions.

However, if we adopt a more inclusive definition to Europeanization, as suggested in this article, we might consider the impact of Europe on the regional level also in terms of policy practices and paradigms, ‘ways of doing things’ and social learning (Baisnée & Pasquier, 2007; Graziano & Vink, 2008). Additionally, discursive usages of Europe, especially as part of centre-periphery dynamics, are also likely to produce (or contribute to) legislative and policy change, even in the absence of pressure for adaptation. This led us to engage the regional dimension of Europeanization through the politics of Gender Equality, a field of public action where this pressure is clearly put on the national level of governance, but where hard-law instruments coexist with a number of soft Europeanization channels.

Accounting for the multi-level dimension of policy making is of specific relevance as Spain is one of the most far-reaching countries in Europe in terms of regionalization. Since early 1980’s, on the basis of the statutes of autonomy adopted in the Spanish regions (*Comunidades Autónomas*, CC.AA), a number of policy fields have been transferred to regional self-governments. Despite the fact that Spanish constitution ascribes to the State the responsibility for ensuring citizen’s equality, Spanish regions have thus extended competences and administrative capacities in the field of social policies, for instance (Gallego *et alii*, 2003). While it is true that institutionalizing gender equality firstly occurred at the national level and then at a different pace in the 17 regions, it can be argued that some regions have held the leadership in the past ten years, thus contributing to shape nation-wide gender equality policies.

Similarly, whereas it could be assumed until recently that the EU policy framework had relatively little impact on the making of equality State policies in Spain (Lombardo, 2004), there are some evidences that “Europe finally hit home”: through a process of norm diffusion fostering mainstreaming instruments (for which UE incentives have not been the sole external intervening variable) and more recently, in the form of a shift from implementation-oriented measures toward “hard” anti-discrimination provisions (Lombardo & Verloo, 2009, Forest & Bustelo, 2009). It will be the main argument of this paper that Europeanization also affected the making of equality policies in the regions to a relevant extent. In order to assess whether policy practices on the sub-national level are Europeanized or not and, if so, which channels of Europeanization have been privileged, it will be necessary to address the diversity of the afore-mentioned phenomena, i.e., the wide range of processes addressed by Europeanization studies, and the differential patterns of Spanish multi-level governance.

As regarding the former, our paper draws on the sociological and discursive turns to be noticed in the literature, especially among authors inspired by neo-institutionalism (Radaelli, 2004a, 2004b). Hence, it is referred to Europeanization not merely as European integration, but as a set of processes ranging from norms adaptation and diffusion or policy transfers to mutual learning and even the “cognitive usages” of Europe in a context of political bargaining or interest aggregation (Jacquot & Woll,

2003). Consecutively, for the sake of clarity, various paths of Europeanization will be distinguished, since Europe certainly does not hit sub-national entities the same way it affects national polities, even where both clearly overlap as it is the case in multi-governed Spain. As regarding the various patterns of regionalization in Spain, those are to be illustrated by the respective records of self-governed regions in the field of gender equality and its highly differentiated patterns of institutionalization.

Since the QUING project in which this paper originates, mainly addresses the making of gender equality policies in the contexts of nation-states, it fails to account for the variations of such policies on the sub-national level. Given that the latter has turned to be one of the driving forces of the relatively rich record of Spain in institutionalizing gender equality, it makes highly desirable to question its contribution to the overall framing of equality policies. Simultaneously, this paper attempts to capture different patterns of Europeanization at the regional level, emphasizing the level of good practices and policy transfers, as well as the discursive usage of references to the EU by regional actors as an integral part of contentious centre-periphery politics. Therefore, it intends to contribute to the sociological and discursive-institutionalist approaches of Europeanization within the frame of a multi-level polity.

In a first section, we attempt to set a common research agenda from the sectional *and* the multi-level approaches to Europeanization, to be applied to the case of gender equality. After pointing out the challenges attached to a complex assessment of domestic dynamics of Europeanization in a multi-level polity, we uncover the still pending ones as regarding the analysis of Europeanizing gender policies. Section 2 consecutively depicts the dual paths of institutionalization of gender equality policies in Spain – both at the regional and national levels –, paying attention to some structural features of Spanish contentious regionalization, described in terms of “asymmetric instability”. Pointing out the shift to be observed from a weak to a “strong” Europeanization, section 3 contemplates three different avenues for Europeanization (Law-making and Institutions, social learning and political usages), emphasizing the two latter and drawing a set of hypotheses for a plausible research agenda.

Advocating a complex assessment of the Europeanization of gender in multi-governed polities, we thus try to frame two broad-based questions: (a) who is learning what from whom? And (b) is gender equality soluble into self-governance?

1. Sectional vs. multi-level approaches to Europeanization: towards a common research agenda?

1.1 Europeanization under a regional scope

The Europeanization of regions as a top down process

As Pasquier and Carter (2006) point out, it can be argued that the Europeanization of regions has been mainly analysed as a top-down process and through two different “narratives” both considering the regions as “one level of a multi-level polity, either *empowered* or *disempowered* in the process” of European integration. According to a first narrative, drawing on Hooghe’s and Mark’s (1996, 2001) standpoints on the strengthening of regional governing capacities towards a “Europe of regions”, it has been considered that European institutions were engaged along with regions in a multi-level *normative* game, aiming at strengthening both supranational and regional arenas, possibly to the expense of nation-states. As a consequence of this rather prospective start point, the design of EU regional policies, and the process of allocation of structural funds have been privileged by researchers,

being considered the driving force of subsequent bottom-up developments such as the institutionalization of regional representation at the EU-level and the transnationalization of regional political activity. The former, in particular, has received a considerable amount of scholarly attention, be it through the institutionalization of a consultative body (The Council of the Regions), of well-established networks (Assembly of regions, Council of European Municipalities and Regions) or the building of individual lobbying capacities at the EU level by a number of sub-national entities. Whilst making a huge contribution to the understanding of the multi-level dimension of the governance within the EU, these approaches do share a common assessment of multi-level politics as one “of separate components”. Indeed, regional politics and policies are considered to develop separately from national ones and therefore, to be affected by Europeanization through specific channels such as the management of EU cohesion funds.

By contrast, another (more recent) narrative identified by Carter and Pasquier analyses the regional scenario of Europeanization as the one of a disempowerment, since competences held by regions with legislative powers are increasingly shared with the EU¹. Although it also refers to multi-level politics as separate components (from the regional to the supranational), this second approach nonetheless sheds light on the ongoing transformations in the nation-states, of which the Spanish regionalization process gives a clear example. Instead of constituting stabilized categories (the State, the EU, the Region), the different elements of a multi-level games are undergoing consistent changes over time, which are shaping their mutual relations. In particular, “thinking in terms of the ‘EU-centre’ versus ‘the region’”, those narratives usually miss the *domestic* centre-periphery dynamics, which are, as we will argue, of particular relevance when it comes to the making of equality policies in Spain. It is also worth to note that the most common start points for analyzing the multi-level dimension of Europeanization focus on a relatively narrow set of policy fields and instruments (regional policies, structural cohesion and solidarity funds). Hence, it is suggested that European regional entities are affected by the domestic impact of Europe as far as they are concerned by EU cohesion policies or ‘disempowered’ of some competences they have been granted by central States. Instead, we suggest that focusing on a sectional policy (gender equality) helps capturing the complexity of domestic dynamics by tracking Europeanization beyond top-down mechanisms and administrative capacity building, giving prominence to soft mechanisms and centre-periphery dynamics.

Capturing the complexity of domestic dynamics

While it can be investigated to what extent Europeanization modifies centre-periphery relations by altering the capacity of local governments to access to political resources external to the nation-state, it is also worth to study how these relations are contributing to shape the paths of Europeanization at the regional level. This makes necessary to bring the study of (domestic) centre-periphery dynamics into the research agenda on the multi-level dimension of Europeanization. Those dynamics are strongly influenced by the typology of regional actor to be considered. Often underspecified, this category covers *de facto* a wide range of political and/or administrative institutions that are engaged in very different games with State authorities. One key element is whether those actors do or do not have legislative powers. Then, the category of legislative

¹ In the case of Spain, despite the Constitutional Court denied the central state an exclusive competences as regarding transposition, it can be argued nonetheless that the central state *de facto* holds the monopoly for transposing EU-legislation even for those policies falling under the exclusive competencies of the CCAA (Börzel, 2002: 103-105)

regions can be further declined between those that stem their political capacity from a devolution process from the ones engaged with the central State in a contentious process of edification of their self-governing capacities. Another aspect would be the degree of politicization of regional identities that makes some regions more prone to “upload” their claims to the European level and to look after a legitimization *from above* (Keating, 2007). These dynamics, in particular, contribute to extend the application of the very concept of Europeanization beyond the issues of compliance and adaptation (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). Meanwhile, they draw attention on those policy fields which have been primarily undergoing a strong EU-ization², but which fall, at the same time, into the scope of competences of some sub-national entities.

Tanja Börzel (2002) thus contemplated the impact of Europeanization on centre-periphery institutional politics in Spain and Germany. Unlike German Länder, she argues, Spanish CC.AA initially opted for by-passing the gate-keeping position of the Central State vis-à-vis the EU and/or fighting the ongoing (re-)centralization of their competencies under the *alibi* of Community Law transposition, rather than for multi-level cooperation (Börzel, 2002: 107). This feature, however, sheds light on the internal differentiation of regionalization processes. If we refer to the above-mentioned elements that help to distinguish between different types of regions in Europe, it shall be underlined that in Spain, sub-national entities have not been formally entitled to a same nor a different amount of competences by the Constitution, but did access to autonomy at slightly different paces and following different institutional tracks.

It is thus a matter of fact that the Charta magna of 1978 recognizes the specificity of three “historic communities”: the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia, which received a constitutional guarantee as regarding the development of their self-governing capacities, to be labelled a “fast-track” to autonomy (Art. 143). Meanwhile, a rather *sui generis* slow-track (art. 151) was left opened to other territories that could organize their access to regional authority, under strict proceeding conditions. Moreover, while *all* becoming legislative regions, the degrees of institutional capacity³ and of politicization of regional identities varies considerably from one *Comunidad Autónoma* to another and so does the spectrum of political and social actors represented on the regional level. While Moreno (1997) stresses the influence of “ethno-territorial concurrence” in Spain, Börzel emphasizes the former criteria, pointing out that except Catalonia, the Basque country, Galicia and Andalusia, most of the CC.AA “have shown little interest in systematically participating in European policy-making (...) partly because they lack the resources to establish direct access to the European policy arena” (2002: 111). These differentiating patterns make an overview of the domestic centre-periphery dynamics even more complex and even more valuable, to our point of view, an entry by the politics of gender equality.

Far from being exclusively located on the level of constitutional politics, this very complex dynamics of which a top-down approach on the multi-level dimension Europeanization fails to accounts properly, affects the flesh and bones of regional politics and policies in Spain. Regional politics, as a fully internal part of national political system, thus contributed to shape the domestic impact of Europe (Keating, 2001, 2007) and through the latter, we argue, the very content of Gender Equality policies in Spain. In order to assess of the role played by the EU policy framework in the matter and to advocate a joint research agenda, it is however necessary to briefly

² In the sense of being increasingly addressed by the EU-level through regulation and policy instruments.

³ They are informal differences in terms of influence on national politics/policies, rather than from a formal/legal point of view

account of the limitations of the literature on the Europeanization of gender equality policies.

1.2 Europeanizing gender policies in the member States

Towards an actors-oriented and bottom-up analysis?

If the history and development of EU gender equality Law is well known and has been often referred to when analysing (gendered) welfare regimes in Europe (Beveridge, 2008:11), it has been nonetheless at the core of a limited number of studies dedicated to European integration (for a review of the literature, see: Forest & Lombardo, 2009). Rather than focusing on the processes by which claims in favour of gender-friendly policies were uploaded from the national to the supranational level, for instance, most of these studies have concentrated on the EU-level of policy making, thus analysing the content of Gender equality regulation or the building of epistemic communities in the sense of Haas (1992). To a (much) lesser extent, the uploading of the advocacy of women's interests to the EU-level has been investigated, both through the lens of social movements literature (Banaszak, 2003), as a part of collective interests intermediation (Helferrich & Kolb, 2001) and as a process of professionalization (Cavaillé, 2006).

Meanwhile, following Börzel and Risse's insights (2003), there has been an increasing interest for the domestic impact of Europe: that is, the way regulations and policy practices or paradigms developed at the EU-level consecutively shape national policies, politics and polities. Understood as "a process of institution-building at the European level in order to explore how Europeanization processes impacts upon the member states" (Börzel & Risse, 2003: 59), Europeanization was thus conceptualized in terms differing from those of integration or convergence (Radaelli, 2004a). While there has been a growing literature contemplating Europeanization processes as an *explanandum* (a thing to be explained) rather than an *explanans* (an explanatory variable), the contribution of gendered approaches to the conceptualization of the domestic impact of Europe has been scarce, so far⁴. Drawing on historical institutionalism, Ulrike Liebert (2003) attempted a first comparative mapping of the patterns of Europeanization in the field of gender Equality policies. Focusing on six member States, her study sheds light on the diverging patterns of Europeanization of gender Equality policies, which illustrates that increased diversity, instead of convergence, is one of the plausible outcomes of norm adaptation (See: Héritier, 2001).

Even more recently, a few approaches have focused on the Europeanization of gender equality policies mainly through its instruments: benchmarking, Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and, more specifically, gender mainstreaming. Yet, beyond a critical assessment of its operationalization (Mazey, 2000 ; Woodward, 2003), some of the most recent contributions adopt a constructivist perspective (Bruno, Jacquot, Mandin, 2006; Jacquot, 2006), "questioning the assumed political neutrality of the instruments used as 'new' soft modes of governance". Gender mainstreaming, in particular, is analysed as a kind of social engineering and through its subversion by the priority agenda of the European Employment Strategy, which makes it "less Europeanized as an instrument for reducing gender inequalities than as a mean for

⁴ From a top-down and an historical-institutionalist perspective, Caporaso and Jupille (2001) thus explored the comparative impact of EU legislation on the making of equality in France and the UK, emphasizing domestic respective institutional heritages and the way it shape the paths for internalizing EU legal order. More recently, Geddes and Guiraudon (2004) have adopted a similar perspective concerning the impact of EU anti-discrimination policy in Britain and France.

promoting the development of the labour force and its flexibility” (Bruno, Jacquot, Mandin, 2006: 519, 531). In a less politicized (and controversial) way, Beveridge *et alii* (2008) also make a valuable contribution to the study of the instruments of EU gender policies, thus making clear that the Europeanization of gender does not consist exclusively in the implementation of the *Acquis*.

Whether focusing on hard-law or soft mechanisms, some of the gendered approaches to Europeanization suggest an increased attention for the role of domestic actors⁵. So far, however, the sociological point of view on European integration, to be mainly associated to the contribution made by French political science to the literature (Ménon, 2006) still counts with a limited number of gendered perspectives (see: Forest & Lombardo, 2009). Although still incipient, the interest for the actors of the Europeanization of gender equality has nonetheless received new incentives, as the Eastern Enlargement⁶, despite its unprecedented conditionality, revealed the complexity of the domestic ‘logics of appropriateness’ and the contentious dimension of the politics of Europeanization (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005; Neumayer, 2006).

Europeanizing gender policies in the regions: the missing agenda

While still coexisting with a monitoring of implementation (see, for instance: Falkner & Treib, 2008) and comparative approaches of the patterns of Europeanization in policy discourses both at the EU- and the domestic levels (Lombardo and Meier, 2007; Lombardo, 2004), a growing number of studies is likely to draw on historical-institutionalist, cognitive and sociological-institutionalist approaches to the Europeanization of gender. Three dimensions (institutional heritages; knowledge and practices; actors and socialization) that better account for the complexity of the games revolving around Europeanization processes. Nonetheless, in spite of the steps taken towards the three afore-mentioned research directions, existing literature still fails to take properly into account the multi-level dimension of European politics *and* politics. Therefore, we argue that a sectional approach as the one focusing on gender equality policies would gain increased relevance if drawing on a multi-level perspective, appropriate when it comes to the analysis of the domestic impact of Europe. Falling into the scope of this “missing agenda”, the Europeanization of gender policies at the regional level might provide useful insights on the nature of the logics at stake in respective national arenas. Additionally, adopting both a sectional *and* a multi-level point of view will be of added value if considering the different venues for Europeanization at the domestic level, to be located in institutions, practices and actors.

In this perspective and for the above-mentioned reasons, Spain undoubtedly provides a valuable case-study. In order to capture the complexity of centre-periphery dynamics in the field of gender equality and to suggest the outline of a plausible research agenda, it is nevertheless necessary to address the general features of the institutionalization of gender equality policies in the Spanish context.

2. Patterns of institutionalization of gender equality policies in Spain

2.1 An “asymmetric instability”: some basic features about Spanish federalism

Spanish “quasi-federalism”

⁵ For instance, most of the contribution to Beveridge’s edited volume raise issues about actors who participate in OMC processes.

⁶ That has coincided with the ‘constitutionalization’ of the principle of gender equality in the Amsterdam treaty, and its institutionalization through gender mainstreaming.

Spain is one of the most affected countries in Europe by a process of regionalization. During the last thirty years, its regions have experienced an outstanding and to some extent unexpected development, building their own institutions and exploiting their legislative and political capacities. In spite of this sharp evolution, constitutionally speaking, Spain is not a federal state. Even if the presence of some key elements such as regional institutions or competences characterizes it as federal, there are some missing elements, namely an explicit reference in the Spanish Constitution, which make it an odd case. These specificities let the scholars to label Spain as quasi-federal, federalizing or non-institutional federalism (See for instance Aja, 1993; Colomer, 1998; Máiz, 1999). Despite it is nowadays comparable to other well-known federal states such as Germany, the construction of the ‘State of Autonomies’ during the transition has actually determined its subsequent development. The willingness to solve the Basque and Catalanian ‘problem’, two regions that had historically pushed for self-government, derived in the inclusion of the ‘regional issues’ as part of the constitutional agenda. Instead of recognising a federal state with some concrete regions, the Constitution only opened the possibility to create them, giving the opportunity of being out of the autonomic process. Besides, as already mentioned, it established two different tracks for acceding to the autonomy, a fast-track (art. 143) for the historic regions (Catalonia, Basque Country and Galicia), and a slow-track (art. 151) for other territories. Additionally, the presence of some ‘differential elements’ such as the regional languages or some special fiscal regimes, completed this fragmented landscape⁷. All these elements, that is, to conceive the ‘State of Autonomies’ as a process rather than a defined and closed model, and to establish a principle of asymmetry between the historic regions and the others, actually make the difference. Some scholars affirm that the influence of these initial decisions clearly inform us about the presence of *path dependency* processes (Máiz *et al.*, 2002). The open character of the Constitution, the presence of different and negotiable tracks, as well as a multi-national context enriched by some differential elements have therefore shaped the subsequent development of the autonomic state.

The creation of the regions in the historic communities triggered the emergence of other 14 Autonomous Communities plus two Autonomous Cities, Ceuta and Melilla, which encompassed all the national territory. However, there still were two groups of regions with different competences and capacities. These differences have always been favouring the presence of tensions between symmetry and asymmetry, homogeneity and heterogeneity, and sameness and difference, elements that would be one of the underlying forces driving the construction of the autonomic state (García Roca, 2005; Máiz *et alii*, 2002; Colomer, 1998). These inherent tensions have indeed led to a *spillover* phenomenon, by which the slow-track communities continuously tried to acquire similar competences and capabilities and, consequently, the fast-track communities sought to be differentiated once again by acquiring new prerogatives. The cycle *differential fact- comparative grievance- mimesis effect* was therefore consolidated (Moreno & Arriba, 1999). The main parties made some attempts of harmonization, which led to a relevant convergence of both groups of regions⁸. However, the dynamic instability of the Spanish decentralized state remains active,

⁷ The presence of these differences *de facto* (languages, historic fiscal systems etc.) brought about the inclusion of some differences *de iure* in the Constitution (García Roca, 2005).

⁸ Agreements of the Socialist Party with the UCD and the Popular Party which took place in 1981 and 1992 respectively treated to organise the autonomic process as well as to introduce some equalising elements (Blanco Valdés, 2008).

deriving in what has been described as a ‘competitive federalism’ (Colomer, 1998) or a “competitive regionalism” (Börzel, 2002).

Contentious (a)symmetry: regionalization in Spain

To borrow a concept from atmospheric dynamics, these developments can be analysed in terms of “(a)symmetric instability”, as Spanish regions were not explicitly granted with similar competences by the 1978 Constitution, and have been competing since either to assume a leadership in self-governance capacities or to maintain an institutional symmetry between their prerogatives. Such a differentiation is already pervasive among the historic communities that have been the driving force of Spanish regionalization process since early 1980’s. The Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia and Andalusia thus reveal the role of ruling parties, civil society and, alternatively, nationalism, regionalism or autonomism as the principle upon which centre-periphery dynamics are constructed.

The degree of ideology attached to regional identity surely provides one of the key elements to distinguish between different patterns of regionalization in Spain, since it has made some regions more prone to claim for distinctive (more extensive) competences (Keating, 1999). Such dynamics have been facilitated by the role played by the leading political parties in these regions: the Galician Popular Party, the centre-right Basque nationalist party and Catalanian *Convergència i Unió*, which ruled nearly two decades in their respective regions, as well as the Republican left of Catalonia, did provide crucial support to the two ruling parties in Madrid from the 1990s onwards. Although claiming for more extensive competences on the basis of obviously different ideological grounds⁹, all together they have contributed to set up the common law as regarding self-governing capacities in the 17 CA. In fact, whereas the Spanish constitution left the State model itself somewhat underspecified¹⁰, in an attempt to “contain” centrifugal forces to the historic communities, the space left opened for interpretation has been also taken over by other communities in order to catch up the train of self-governance launched in Catalonia and “Euskadi”.

For instance, Andalusia, *de facto* constitutes a fourth “historic community”, as it has been engaged in a strong politics of autonomy since the early 1980’s, meanwhile the regional section of the Spanish socialist worker’s party that rules the region since 1978 has been providing one of the strongest contingent of voters to the PSOE. Given that the crucial political role played by leading regional forces concerns both regionalist and pro-centre, left-wing and right-wing parties, Spanish regionalization can therefore be described also as the result of a ‘contentious (a) symmetry’. Indeed, for the above-mentioned reasons, historic communities and Andalusia have been the driving force of the developing of Spanish self-governments. Catalonia and the Basque country have been eager to argue of their specific legitimacy recognized by the constitution to maintain their leadership/specificity in terms of self-governing capacities (de Miñón & Lluç, 2001). Meanwhile, other regions, initially promised to a “slow track” path

⁹ By ideological grounds, we mean on the first place the different patterns of regionalism and nationalism often competing in a very same region and giving different degrees of relevance to identity factors such as ethnicity, language or the condition of being native. Of course, classical rokkianian cleavages traditionally shaping political competition are also at stake.

¹⁰ In fact, while competences were closed-listed, the process by which it shall be allocated and coordinated between different levels of governance remained a matter of contention and interpretation. As a consequence, during the 1980s, the case law of the Constitutional court mainly revolves around this issue, as well as various pacts concluded among the main political forces (Subirats & Gallego, 2002).

towards autonomy, have argued of their insularity, their under-development¹¹ or, implicitly, of an historical commitment toward Spanish unity, to bridge the gap and compensate this dissymmetric institutional blueprint by extending their own competences¹².

2.1 The regionalization of gender equality policies in Spain

Regionalizing social policies

When referring concretely to social policies, decentralization process has had strong consequences. First of all, in accordance with the Constitution, social assistance is an 'exclusive competence' of the autonomous communities (art. 148). The state only preserves competences on basic legislation which stem from its general mandate on promoting equality among citizens. As a result, social policies have been included in the autonomic main rules, the Statutes (*Estatutos de Autonomía*), as a regional policy domain. Furthermore, given the flexibility of the constitutional provisions, a wide range of activities such as those related to social services or to women's policies have not only been claimed but also developed thanks to this open framework?. The result is a policy domain with a clear multi-level character, where national, regional and local levels, as well as the EU, have carried out their respective actions (Gallego *et al.*, 2003). Like other fields, competitive and mimetic forces have been reported. Thus, initial programmes undertaken by some fast-track regions triggered comparable policy developments in the other ones.

In words of Arriba and Moreno, "the *Comunidades Autónomas* have followed patterns of mobilisation rooted on a self-perceived 'comparative grievance': no region wants to be left behind. These perceptions have interacted in a conflictive manner with the 'differential fact' claimed by the Spanish 'historical nationalities: Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia. These are more interested in maintaining a higher degree of home rule as compared with the rest of the Spanish *Comunidades Autónomas*. The combination of these processes has resulted in a *de facto* policy equalisation and in an incentive for policy innovation in those Spanish regions which have been traditionally lagging behind the 'modernised' ones" (Moreno and Arriba, 1999).

In this case, inherent tensions related to the autonomic system can be understood as a spur for *policy innovation*, which actually has had positive effects on redistribution (Maiz *et alii.*, 2002). In other words, the 'demonstration effect' has contributed both to equalize policy outcomes and to foster experimentation (Moreno, 2007). In spite of this concurrent evolution, has regionalization led to differences among autonomic communities? In addition to inter-regional competition, intra-regional dynamics also gained relevance due to the different agendas and strategies they have brought about. This partial heterogeneity gives the possibility to address the *autonomic welfare regimes* comparatively. Decentralization has indeed affected different dimensions of social policies, influencing both their operative dimension -how to proceed- and their substantive dimension -what to address and to what extent- (Gallego *et alii.*, 2003). The constellation of actors, the pre-eminence of public or market-oriented instruments, as

¹¹ Albeit only insularity is referred to in the Art. 143 of the Constitution, both aspects are known as 'hechos diferenciales' (differential features) in the Spanish constitutional case law.

¹² Curiously enough, the politics of autonomy have long been abandoned to the field of Constitutional Law and remained quite under-investigated by Spanish political science. Strongly oriented towards model-testing, the latter still faces many difficulties for integrating the huge plurality of variables intervening in a multi-level polity. For an attempt applied to the analysis of voting, see: Balcells I Ventura (2006). For similar reasons, Spanish researchers often adopt a comparative perspective (for example: Aguilera de Prat, 2002)

well as the colour of the government, tend for instance to vary from one region to another. This unstructured landscape is to be strengthened by the presence of other decentralized issues such as education or health policies which have been progressively transferred to the regions during the last decades. As result, it could be argued that to some extent the core of the welfare state has been already regionalised and that the relevance of the territorial variable can no longer be overlooked (Moreno and McEwen, 2005). Furthermore, tensions between regional differentiation and equality among individuals are still at stake. Even though the state has attempted to harmonise and to impose its leadership in the regionalisation of social policies, the lack of co-governmental structures, which is inherent to the Spanish quasi-federal model (Agranoff, 1993), as well as the centrifugal forces coming from some regions, have not paved the way for the inclusion of common principles and instruments¹³.

From imitative to competitive institutionalization: the case of gender policies

Gender policies are an integral part of these regional competences and reproduce most of their reported patterns. Beyond addressing these issues as a regional responsibility, the Statutes also mention the ‘promotion of women’s’ as a field of regional competence. While in the first years of the autonomic development gender topics were actually not at stake, the creation of the *Women’s Institute* in 1983 sparked off the establishment of the regional state feminism. Starting from 1988 when the Basque and the Andalusia institutes were created, all the regions set up concrete equality machineries which were clearly inspired by the WI (Valiente, 1995, Martínez, 1997; Bustelo & Ortals, 2007). As well as in the whole construction of the regional institutions, those equality bodies showed a high degree of mimetism with the national one. As it has been argued, the urgency on creating the regional structures during the decentralization process, the lack of a constitutional general model or the fact that the administrative elites came from central institutions can be understood as main elements explaining the strong *institutional isomorphism* between both levels (Ramió & Salvador, 2002). In this case, *path dependency* once again explains the extent to which initial decisions also have their influence on the institutional architecture. As we can infer, *institutional isomorphism* is an accurate concept for approaching regional equality machineries as well, since they almost reproduce the national model based on an independent organism (*organismo autónomo*) with its own staff and budget.

Similar tendencies can be perceived by having a look at the instruments, given that the approval of the first regional equality plans derived from their introduction at the national level. Along with mimesis, gender policies also manifest patterns of *competitiveness*. Thus, it could be inferred from a general overview of this twenty-year history, that policy innovations have been transferred from one region to another, leading to a quite dynamic “politics of policy transfers” where nobody wanted to be the laggard. What is more, a closer perspective points to the presence of an incipient regional leadership, by which from several points of view, the national level is no longer the most advanced one (Alonso, 2009). The recent regional equality acts are a great example of this incipient leadership, since many regions had passed their respective texts before the national *Effective Equality Act* was approved in 2007. Obviously, the role played by the historic communities is once again the engine of the cycle *differential fact- comparative grievance- mimesis effect*, given that Catalonia, the Basque Country, Andalusia, and more recently also Galicia, have been vastly

¹³ One of the few co-governmental instruments are the Sectional Conferences that have been created by the state since 1981 onwards in order to coordinate and to harmonize regional policies. Social and gender policies count with a Sectional Conference since 1990 and 1995 respectively.

recognised as the regions counting with the most innovative gender policies (See: Bustelo and Forest, 2009).

This fragmented and regionalised landscape is to be enriched by the presence of the EU, be it as a normative framework, a toolbox for policy instruments or a factor of legitimacy on the domestic scenes. Thus, in the case of Spain, the convergence of the national, regional and also the local level, with the EU policies brought about one of the policy domains where the multi-level character is the most relevant (Gallego *et alii.*, 2003; Novo & Martinez, 2002).

3. When Europe (finally) hits home

3.1 What is at stake? Europeanizing gender in Spain

The study of the Europeanization of gender equality policies at the regional level and of the new opportunity structures it shaped for domestic actors, can hardly be isolated from the developments at the State-level. Patterns of Europeanization in Spain have long been those of a rather limited impact of the EU policy ‘model’ on the instruments developed to tackle gender inequality (Lombardo, 2004). Yet, this initial balance of the domestic impact of Europe was merely restricted to an assessment of the diffusion of EU norms and most consolidated policy instruments as gender mainstreaming. Meanwhile, it overlooked the variety of channels through which societies are facing processes of Europeanization and the contentious form the latter is likely to assume when confronted to domestic institutional heritages and politics.

A typology of policy transfers: institutionalization, social learning and usages

Even if we limit our scope to the sole dimension of policy transfers, i.e., of processes “by which knowledge of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system, is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system” (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996: 344), those go far beyond norm adaptation and include the cognitive dimension of social learning that consists in the diffusion of practices, methods and concepts. Therefore, it is useful to precise the typology of processes which will be referred to as possible avenues for Europeanizing gender equality policies.

First, beyond the issue of importing institutions or policy solutions from the supra-national level, what is at stake is a process of institutionalization: to what extent institutions developed to tackle gender inequality in Spain are institutionalized and stabilized and how did the European policy paradigm did contribute to its institutionalization? Furthermore, is such a contribution delimited to the State-level, which is the most likely to be addressed by EU institutions, or does the process of institutionalization also affects infra-State actors and entities?

Then, in particular as EU gender equality policies have a strong legislative and/or binding content but are being continuously extended in the form of soft-law instruments, it is necessary to address the latter. Recent contributions to the analysis of EU soft governance instruments, illustrate the limitations inherent to this positivist distinction, since it is proven that “measures which are ‘hard’ from a positivist perspective i.e. which have formal binding force, will have hugely different rates of implementation”, while “‘soft’ measures may at times produce greater impact (...), for example if they give rise to ‘pro-active’ measures to combat inequality, rather than a (negative) injunction not to discriminate” (Beveridge in Beveridge and Velluti, 2008:27). Additionally, allegedly ‘soft’ instruments as gender mainstreaming, the Open

method of Coordination or benchmarking, are strongly knowledge-based: their diffusion cannot be separated from a process of social learning in which a variety of actors are involved. It will be of special interest to question whether those instruments, which are designed to be multi-level, have had some impact on policy making at the infra-State level.

Last but not least, policy transfers, be it in one of the two afore-mentioned forms, shape new opportunity structures for domestic social, administrative and political actors. It is now widely known that the EU legal order and the principles stated in EU documents provide the raw material of intensive political struggles on domestic scenes, either as a source of legitimacy or a matter of discontent (Baisnée & Pasquier, 2007). These different kinds of political “usages” (or instrumentation) thus contribute to explain the huge diversity governing the adaptation of EU-inspired legislative and institutional mechanisms in the member States (Jacquot & Woll, 2003). Meanwhile, soft instruments leave an even broader room for states to negotiate their compliance, since it does not intend as much as harder policy-making to produce homogeneity and convergence.

From weak to strong Europeanization?

Although “enforcement and implementation have never been particularly strong or explicitly prescribed in the case of gender equality Directives” (Lombardo & Verloo, 2009), Spain complies well with EU legislation in the area of gender-based discriminations. It remains true, however, that until the shift toward harder policy-making to be observed after the Socialist party won general elections in 2004, the impact of the EU has been rather limited, as the priority was given to the institutionalization of gender equality in the forms of policy plans and positive action. At the same time, the main legislative references remained fully national, as the Constitution or the Worker’s status (1980), and equality machineries developed their own policy paradigm (although under a still *sui generis* form), grounded in the promotion of equality and an increasingly structural framing of gender-based inequalities. Similarly, top-down dynamics such as the generalization of Equality plans and latter on, the adoption of Equality acts in Spanish regions (Bustelo, 2009) also demonstrates the pre-eminence of the State over any other source of policy transfers, at least during the two first decades of the institutionalization of gender equality policies. Nonetheless, pioneering studies focusing on the diffusion of EU-modelled policy instruments in Spanish regions (Alonso, 2007), invite to adjust the lens in order to grasp a grass-root Europeanization. Additionally, it can be argued that recent modifications in the Spanish policy paradigm as regarding the issues of gender equality and non-discrimination, reflect the growing impact of the EU policy framework.

These changes can be analysed with respect to two major trends. First, Spain increasingly addressed gender-based discrimination through hard-law since 2004. Moreover, seven regional equality acts have been approved, most of it before the national one was passed in 2007¹⁴. Although such acts are quite differentiated regarding their scope and implementation instruments (Bustelo, 2008), a clear trend can nonetheless be detected, and more regional acts are to be expected. This cumulative but heterogeneous effort undertaken both at the national and the regional levels, is to be related to the strong pressure to be exerted from the EU-level in order to adapt general anti-discrimination legislation. If Spain claimed to have transposed both Directive

¹⁴ Navarra (2002), Castilla y León and Valencia (2003), Galicia (2004), País Vasco (2005), Baleares (2006) and Murcia (2007) and Andalucía (2007) both after the national one.

2000/43/EC and Directive 2000/78/CE through limited provisions introduced by 2003, transposition was done very quickly and only a limited number of institutions, with restricted budgets and competences, have been created to fight against other inequalities. Hence, although the transposition of anti-discrimination EU directives makes compulsory the creation of an Equality body for preventing discrimination on the grounds of racial and ethnic origin, the announcement of the creation of such a council was not fulfilled until late 2007 (Bustelo & Forest, 2009). Consecutively, in June, 2007, the European Commission notified Spain for not implementing Directive 2000/43/EC correctly; this is the second step before formal infringement procedure. One of the reasons for this lack of attention to other inequalities might be the clear priority that gender issues received during the first Rodríguez Zapatero's. Yet, if we refer to Börzel & Risse's insights pointing pressure for adaptation as the main mechanism of Europeanization (2003), it seems clear that the misfit with EU-regulation in the field of anti-discrimination, much greater than in the area of gender equality, has contributed to substantial changes in the making of equality in Spain.

Whilst the EU probably initially hit Spain to a major scale than it is currently admitted, recent changes to be mentioned at the national level do not constitute a guarantee of stronger Europeanization. Indeed, the new anti-discrimination policies are likely to be limited by a (juridical) logic of compliance, meanwhile it is unclear whether evolutions in the regions reflect to a similar extent the blueprint promoted by the European Union.

3.2 Beyond a normative assessment: the paths of gender equality policies in Spain

Legitimatization from above? Naming the EU in regional equality acts

The main argument of this paper, i.e., that Europe also hit the regional level in Spain, stems from one of the empirical findings of the QUING project: in the sample of analysed parliamentary debates, the voices of peripheral national and regionalist parties such as the Basque nationalist party or the Catalanian republican left, were among those that most often referred to the EU policy framework to advocate changes in Spanish legislation (Forest & López, 2009, Forest & Platero, 2008). It is therefore not surprising that consistent references to the EU are also to be found in the policy documents on Gender equality issued in the CC.AA. Those, however, point out different paces in introducing references to the EU, as well as different patterns (and degrees) of Europeanization.

Whereas the first generation of regional policy plans aiming at fostering gender equality made almost exclusively reference to the domestic institutional order (Constitution, national equality plans), during the 1990s, the focus moved towards the UN and the UE, with especial regard to gender mainstreaming. Regarding the latter, references were strongly linked to the Treaty of Amsterdam and the IV Framework Programme for Equal Opportunities. During the 1990s and early 2000s, naming the EU received stronger emphasis in those CC.AA benefiting from structural funds (Andalusia, Galicia) and those where local politicians were especially interested in circumventing the State-level in prospect of references to a supranational order (Basque Country, Catalonia). EU directives, policy frameworks and paradigms are also echoed, with more or less emphasis, in the regional equality acts adopted since 2002 onwards. Amongst the most inclusive and thoroughly designed, the acts enacted in Andalusia and Catalonia include numerous mentions to the *acquis* in their preliminary section. There are also evidences of direct compliance: in some cases, the EU policy and legislative frameworks are not only taken as a potential source for policy transfers and

isomorphism, but as a direct and binding legal reference to be complied also with by regional texts and policy instruments (For instance: Equality Act of the Basque Country, 2005). Naming the EU in regional normative and policy documents has also been fostered by the generalization of equality plans to other strands of inequality than gender. As an example, the Ist Action plan for disabled women in Andalusia, approved in November 2008, expounds a critical assessment of regional, national and international provisions in the matter, thus illustrating a recent trend consisting in going beyond EU requirements (see: Bustelo & Forest, 2009)¹⁵.

In order to map the main evolutions as regarding the direct impact of the EU on the institutionalization of equality policies at the sub-national level, it is of added value to address simultaneously the Europeanization of equality in Spain from a cognitive perspective, mainly through the different avenues for social learning opened by gender mainstreaming, the OMC or fund-rising activities. Empirically grounded in the analysis of policy texts and exploratory interviews conducted in 2009 with high-ranking policy makers in Galicia¹⁶, we intend to provide a first overview of the patterns of Europeanization at the regional level.

The cognitive properties of fund-rising: the case of Galicia

Following the intuitive reasoning that strictly correlates the impact of the EU at the sub-national level with EU funding and its regional policy (Carter & Pasquier, 2006), then it is interesting to examine the case of those regions that receive strong financial support by the EU Structural Funds. Thus, it could be argued that the financial incentives might have an effect on making these regions more ‘open’ to the EU policies as well as more interested on ‘learning’ its ‘way of doing things’. In this case the EU has the opportunity to make the regional policies closer to its own priorities, europeanising the sub-national agenda. Besides, the SF are also to be understood as relevant instruments as regards gender policies. Since the end of the 80s SF are expected to contribute to equality between men and women (Braithwaite, 2000). Moreover, since 1996 all the specific funds (ESF, FIFG, EAGGF, ERDF) as well as the communitarian initiatives should include gender equality as a transversal principle, meaning that all their respective activities should be revised in order to be financed¹⁷. This revision includes for instance an *ex ante* evaluation of the situation of men and women or a general mandate on sex-disaggregated data. Given these main requirements, it could be expected that the sub-national level tends to introduce gender mainstreaming for having access to the EU funds. What is more, it has been argued that “the Community programmes can act as catalysts of good practice, the Community financing giving credibility to innovative initiatives. (...) For equal opportunities organisations and officers in some regions and Member States (such as Ireland), initiatives at European level, and by the European Commission, are used to push progress at national level” (2000)

¹⁵ A similar trend is to be noticed in the most recent documents elaborated in Catalonia. See, for instance: Catalanian *Interdepartmental Plan for Non Discrimination of Homosexual and Transgender People* approved in 2006.

¹⁶ Semi-structured interviews (28-4 April-May 2009) with Carme Adán (Autonomic MP, Ex-General Secretary on Equality 05-09), Ana Luisa Bouza (Autonomic MP, Ex- Director of the Galician Service on Equality 05-09), Xavier Ferreira (Ex-General Secretary of the Vice-presidency of Equality and Welfare 07-09), Modesta Riobó (Ex-President of the Non-Permanent Commission on Women’s Rights of the Galician Parliament 05-09), Xulia Guntin (Ex- Sub-General Director of the R&D Plan Management 06-09)

¹⁷ *Council Resolution of 2 December 1996 on mainstreaming equal opportunities for men and women into the European Structural Funds*, Official Journal C 386 , 20/12/1996 P. 0001 - 0003

Spain and its respective regions are in a priority position when referring to these sorts of resources. Thus, given that SF are very territory-focused¹⁸, this country has received a remarkable amount of funds since the entry in the EEC. Furthermore, some of the Spanish regions have been characterised as *objective 1* during this period, having the possibility to co-finance many of their respective policies. This is the case of Galicia, which since 1986 takes part in this group of regions. Nowadays, during the current SF period (2007-2013) it is a *convergence region*¹⁹ receiving more than EUR 5 million (Ministerio de Administraciones Públicas, 2008), position that will change in 2013 when the new SF period begins. But, given this long experience on applying to the EU resources, has Galicia developed a special ‘openness’ to the EU? What is more, does this ‘openness’ affect gender policies, and more concretely, gender mainstreaming? As it has been argued, the presence of material incentives makes Europeanization more likely, stating that Spain would be included in the group of countries that are expected to be more Europeanized (Liebert, 2003). Regarding Galicia, it is clear that the presence of these funds has to some extent shaped its internal policies. First of all, and in line with other autonomous communities, Galicia has modified its institutional architecture in order to deal with EU procedures. Thus, departments focused on managing the EU funds (i.e. *Directorate on Economic Planning and Communitarian Funds*) and on establishing official relations with the European level (i.e. *Secretariat on External Relations*) have been set up aim at building management capacities within the regional government. Besides, and in line with other regions, Galicia opted for creating a specific organism aim at providing with technical support, the *Galicia-Europe Foundation*. It encompass a wide variety of functions from keeping the government highly updated about EU policies, to training the administrators and helping on elaborating proposals to be financed. Both the political and the technical structures show the extent to which Galicia has been institutionally adapted in order to deal with the EU policies.

Mainstreaming gender in Galicia

When referring concretely to gender policies, the EU seems also to have had an impact on this community. As well as in other regions, these sorts of policies started by having a high degree of mimesis with the national ones. If we have a look at their main instruments, the equality plans, we would indeed perceive that IW’s agenda and strategies were almost copied. This pattern partially changed during the 90s, when the EU gained relevance. In the case of Galicia, this evolution meant that since the third equality plan approved in 1998 references related to EU gender policies have clearly prevailed. What is more, the inclusion of gender mainstreaming as a policy instrument seems to be brought about by the international influence, especially due to its consolidation in the EU level (Alonso, 2008). This impact can be inferred by having a look at the large number of explicit mentions related to gender mainstreaming key documents such as the *Community Framework Strategy on Equality between Men and Women (2001-2005)* or the *Treaty of Amsterdam*, which show that the focus have moved beyond the national level. One of the elements that could shed light on this shift is the fact that the EU funds have been one of the main financial sources for Galician gender policies. Its equality machinery, the *Servizo Galego de Igualdade (SGI)*, indeed

¹⁸ The focus on some territories ca be inferred by taking into account that two thirds of the EF are allocated to helping convergence regions, and that, in addition, Spain gives the 90% of its EF also to theses sort of communities.

¹⁹ *Commission Decision 2006/595/CE of 4th August 2006, which establishes the list of regions eligible for financing by the Structural Funds as part of the Convergence objective in the 2007-2013 period.*

acquire a 70-80% of its budget by applying to SF, especially to the ESF²⁰. This fact has determined that this body has not only been very receptive to EU priorities and requirements, but also that it has had to acquire a high degree of expertise on dealing with its procedures. The SGI have therefore become quite specialized on managing European programmes financed by EU funds and initiatives, having concrete staff for these sort of tasks. More precisely, up to now it has led 26 programmes which were totally focused on gender issues²¹. In order to do so, it had to get the know-how by making contacts with the EU institutions and to do a continuous follow-up on its policies.

Anyhow, gender mainstreaming implies a broader involvement, which embrace the government as a whole. As result, can we find patterns of Europeanization in other policy issues due to SF commitment with this strategy? In the case of Galicia, EU funds have also a great presence in some concrete areas such as agriculture, industry or research and development. This means that if their respective departments want to get financial aid, they have to introduce gender perspective in their projects. The SGI had a relevant role on providing some expertise on how to revise the proposals. The pending question is whether or not this initial and assisted introduction of gender mainstreaming could lead to their inclusion in the *policy routines*. When referring concretely to R&D policies, we could provide with some additional clues. As we have seen, it is one of the topics where Galicia receives strong financial support, with about a 12% of the total conceded ERDF funds. Additionally, this policy domain counts with a strong European framework marked by the presence of the *European Research Area* and the *Open Method of Coordination* as a key instrument, both posing the EU level as a strong reference, even for the regions (Kaiser and Prange, 2005, 2004). What is interesting here is that gender mainstreaming is supposed to be present through this ERA, as the EU has claimed in several occasions (See for instance European Commission, 2000). Thus, in this case the mandate coming from the SF is reinforced by the inclusion of equality in the R&D related agenda. This confluence could probably make this policy domain more open to mainstreaming. When referring to Galicia, a slight revision of the recent activities of the department in charge of R&D policies gives the possibility to maintain this hypothesis. Although national and regional policies can not be rejected as a relevant influence, the main actions regarding gender equality have much to do with the EU impact. On the one hand, the creation of a *Women and Science Unit* in the Galician government has been quite inspired in its EU counterpart²². The idea was that of creating an interdepartmental structure aim at including gender perspective on R&D and educational policies. With this purpose EU documents were consulted and the EU W&S Unit was contacted. Although the national W&S Unit was also a reference, their department-focused structure was considered less appropriate than the EU one, which is more transversally conceived, with a wider *manoeuvre* capacity²³. In line with this, the recently approved *Galician Program on Women and Science 2008-2012* explicitly recognises the great influence of the European Commission recommendations and plans, which have been thoroughly revised in order to elaborate this document. Both elements, institutional and policy influence, point to the necessity to broaden the analysis on Europeanization in gender policies. The presence of EU funds in several

²⁰ Interview with Ana Luisa Bouza (Director of the SGI).

²¹ See <http://www.xunta.es/auto/sgi/>.

²² The Women and Science Union of the European Commission belongs to the Research Directorate-General and it is focused on creating networks of women and science, and on monitoring European women scientists' progress towards equality.

²³ Interview with Carme Adán (General Secretary on Equality)

domains in fact opens up the possibility to explore the extent to which gender mainstreaming is more likely to be introduced due to EU material incentives, especially in the regional level.

Conclusions

In the context of multi-governed Spain, the question “who is learning what from whom?” could only receive a complex answer. On the one hand, institutional isomorphism has been a key feature of the autonomic process, with the national level being (almost) faithfully reproduced by the regions. Policy instruments and agendas also manifested this pattern, as it has been clearly exemplified by gender policies, which introduced equality machineries and plans in response to the Women’s Institute example. Furthermore, other structural elements such as the lack of a closed model, the presence of a certain degree of asymmetry between fast and slow-track regions or the leading role adopted by the historic communities, especially Catalonia and Basque Country, helped to construct a “*differential fact- comparative grievance- mimesis effect cycle*”. Due to this quite competitive and mimetic dynamics between regions, policy learning has also to do with inter-regional relations. When referring to gender policies, it is especially relevant to address this *peer learning* since the regional level has to some extent acquired the leadership in this field. Here, *path dependency* and the specificities of the Spanish context seem to shape learning processes.

Nevertheless, given the multi-level dimension of this policy issue, remarkably since the introduction of transversal instruments such as gender mainstreaming and the Open Method of Coordination, the EU impact has also to be regarded. Since regional institutions are developing their own policy instruments for tackling gender discriminations, making direct and explicit references to the EU legal order²⁴, Spain perfectly fits with the “emerging picture of a polity with multiple, interlocked arenas for political contest” (Hooghe and Marks, 1996). First empirical results discussed in this paper suggest that “naming Europe” in regional policy and legislative documents is likely to follow different logics according to regional polities, from the diffusion of EU gender mainstreaming along with EU structural funds, to the politicization of gender equality within the frame of regional “politics of identity”²⁵. These hypotheses would deserve to be tested on a much larger scale, exploring how political contention around self-governing capacities, nationalist discourses or the importance of EU-funding interact to shape the responsiveness of Spanish regional polities to the policy discourse of the EU on gender equality.

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²⁴ As it is in the case of the Basque equality Act.

²⁵ Policy making, as well as social and political mobilization in Catalonia and the Basque country can hardly be isolated from the *politics of identity* into which both regions have been involved in the past decades. In fact, the quest for self-governing competences, tax transfers and, above all, linguistic primacy and/or nationhood have shaped the content of any policy area. If policy making in democracy is also about producing social cohesion and loyalties, then this has been of special relevance for regional polities in quest of greater autonomy. In Catalonia, just like in the Basque country, policy making is deeply influenced by the goal to develop the political primacy of the regional level over the central one, and at the same time, to produce stronger ties between citizens and their regional government. The strong, albeit differentiated, development of regional equality policies can be read as a part of this consistent effort.

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