

About the Project

Understanding Europe: the case of gender+ equality policies

The continuing enlargement of the European Union is not only a challenge to its citizens, its politicians and its policy makers. The materialisation of Europe as a whole is just as much a challenge for academics because dominant theories have been developed and tested mainly in Western Europe. Changes in Europe require changes in data collection, data analysis and in theory too.

QUING contributed to this. In its aim to compare gender equality policies across Europe, it was both modest and ambitious. It was modest because it focused on just one case, gender equality policies, and asked rather straightforward questions, such as: what is the content of gender equality policies in the EU-27 plus Croatia and Turkey? What kind of differences and similarities can be found? It was ambitious, because it performed pioneering work, gathering new data for the whole of Europe.

With its original data collection and analysis, QUING addressed two sets of big questions: what is the nature of gender equality policies in the practice of national and European policy-making, what does gender equality mean in these policies, what are these policies trying to do? And also: what is the quality of these current policies, especially in terms of their transformative potential? Do they pay attention to other inequalities? And are they open for voices of the movements that lay at their origin?

For its analysis, QUING could build on the methodology of Critical Frame Analysis that had been developed for the MAGEEQ project. To be feasible, three issues relevant to gender equality policies were studied more specifically: gender-based violence, intimate citizenship and non-employment. Additionally, general gender equality policies, and policies on equality machinery or architecture were analysed. The collection of studies was designed to provide a better understanding of the differences and similarities, and of the quality of gender equality policies. They also enabled the construction of new typologies that are relevant to the whole of Europe. QUING started presenting results in January 2009, and continues to do so after the end of the funding period in 2011.

Using comparative analysis to generate new theory and new ideas for policy practice:
introducing LARG, WHY and STRIQ

The comparative analysis of gender+ equality policies was at the heart of QUING, and aimed at generating new theory, explaining the differences and similarities found. These parts of QUING were named LARG and WHY.

In another part, named STRIQ, the project developed theories on intersectionality, on the relationship between gender inequalities and inequalities originating in ethnicity, class, religion or sexuality. As far as policy practice is concerned, this is one of the most urgent needs in the coming years. At this moment, not only the European Union but a growing number of countries state that they intend to address the various inequalities in one set of policy measures. While it is often stated that gender equality policies are the most developed inequality policies, leading to recommendations to build upon these experiences, policy practice is less rational, and shows more evidence of territorial struggles between groups and organisations representing different inequalities.

Under these conditions, understanding gender+ equality policies means to describe and analyse to what extent and how intersectionality is dealt with across Europe. This allows the construction of a conceptual framework on the relationship between gender inequalities and other inequalities, which ought to be tailored to the needs of policy-makers. A set of QUING intersectionality reports is available [here](#).

Introducing FRAGEN and OPERA

Additionally, QUING also prepared the ground for comparative research on the history of feminist ideas in Europe. This part, named FRAGEN, was both modest and ambitious, too. QUING constructed a database that 'opened' selected core feminist texts to researchers by storing original second-wave feminist texts, along with an analytic description of these texts in English. For all countries, feminist documentation centres helped with the selection and extensive coding of texts that have been influential in the development of feminist ideas in their context. The methodology used for this coding ran parallel to the methodology used for the comparative analysis, allowing to forge links between these two parts of the project.

In the last two years of its 54 months existence, QUING was very active with its last part, named OPERA, actively translating its knowledge into gender training for all actors in policy-making, and developing high quality standards for such training, which are now being tested in practice.