

The term “gender mainstreaming” was coined during the Fourth World Conference on Women, which took place in September 1995 in Beijing. Since then, it has been embraced by various political actors on the national and international realms, as it was agreed that it would represent the principal global strategy to combat gender inequality. But what is gender mainstreaming? The most linear and clear definition of gender mainstreaming was drafted by Teresa Rees, who describes it as “the promotion of gender equality through its systematic integration into all systems and structures, into all policies, processes and procedures, into the organization and its culture, into ways of seeing and doing.” (Rees 2005) At the European level, it has been described as consisting of “the introduction by governments and EU-institutional actors of a gender perspective into all policies and programs, in order not only to analyze their effects on women and men before decisions are taken, but also to implement, evaluate, and review policies and political processes taking gender into account”. (Lombardo and Meier 2008) Gender mainstreaming has been considered to be potentially revolutionary. However, many scholars have criticized its application (as will be explained in the literature review), stating that, while the concept could truly be revolutionary in theory, it has been poorly applied in practice, even in the most advanced and well-organized political systems. In particular, the European Union, which is considered to be fertile ground for innovative gender governance strategies, has not been able to apply gender mainstreaming properly, even after twenty-five years of formally declaring their commitment to it.