Thesis evaluation Michela Procoli

Student details:

Name: Michela Procoli

Studentnr: 2672863

E-mail: m.procoli@umail.leidenuniv.nl

Programme details

Programme: European Politics and Society

Specialisation:

EC: 30

Evaluators:

First: A.I. Richard

E-mail: a.i.richard@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Second: Marta Warat

E-mail: marta.warat@uj.edu.pl

Thesis details:

Title: The European Commission: a Champion in Gender Mainstreaming?

Is the thesis in your assessment free of plagiarism?

Yes to my knowledge the thesis is free of plagiarism

A.I. Richard: turnitin ok
Marta Warat: The student provided a broad list of sources which were used in the thesis.

Can the thesis be made publicly available in the Leiden University Repository?

it can be made public throught the repository.

Summary assessment/comments

A.I. Richard: Thesis on an interesting topic, that would have benefitted from more primary research and analysis, but which was written under difficult circumstances. This shows determination and perseverance and is something to be very proud of.

Marta Warat: The Author demonstrates a good knowledge of academic literature the dissertation draws on and profound knowledge of the dissertation's subject matter. However, the theoretical part is not convincingly and systematically followed in the empirical section. The Author tends to rely on existing literature and analysis with a weak attempt at originality.

Criteria

Knowledge and insight

A.I. Richard: Interesting thesis on a topical question based on a large amount of literature.

Marta Warat: The thesis aims at analyzing gender mainstreaming as a strategy of the European Commission to enhance gender equality. This is a timely and clearly important topic to a broad variety of academic and political actors: despite the commitment to gender equality and some successes in this area, the equality between women and men has not been achieved in many areas yet.

The dissertation has a clearly defined research problem: Michela Procoli wants "to give a comprehensive explanation as to why the gender mainstreaming strategy has not fulfilled its promises within the EU, and finding answers in its uneven application on the institutional level – in particular on the level of the European Commission, major promoter of gender equality among the EU institutions" (p.3-4). The research objective clearly draws upon the existing studies while the research questions could be actually much ambitious. As it stands now, the dissertation focuses mostly on the barriers and factors hindering gender equality, but it would be also interesting to broaden the scope of research objectives and examine the achievements or/and good practices. Moreover, while describing research objectives, the Author could be sometimes more precise whether the main focus is on gender machinery within the European Commission (i.e. all main actors operating in the EU as suggested e.g. on p.25) or the European Commission and its policies/strategies. Michela Procoli's ambition to capture both the broader context of GM in the EU and the specificity of the European Commission could be a suitable topic for the dissertation but it requires deeper analysis (also of primary data) and comprehensive presentation of the EU approach to GM which goes beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Michela Procoli demonstrates comprehensive knowledge of the topic in questions and she refers to the extensive literature on gender mainstreaming and EU gender equality policies. This is one of the strengths of the thesis. The Author shows the ability to synthesise the existing literature, but she has failed to exploit the potential of the topic by providing the analysis of primary data. It is also surprising that there is little reference to the up-to-date body of literature on GM and the European Commission's strategy and some key approaches (e.g. while discussing the

feminist institutionalism, the Author could refer to Acker or Connell).

Assessment: good   **Weighing:** n/a

Application knowledge and insight

A.I. Richard: While the thesis addresses numerous theoretical approaches to gender mainstreaming the methodology of the thesis is not very clearly defined. The thesis would have benefitted from a more in-depth analysis, based on (more) primary research, of how a certain policy developed.

Marta Warat: Overall, the Author provides a solid analysis of the gender mainstreaming strategy. The dissertation shows enthusiasm for the topic and the literature consulted is broad. However, there are areas in which the dissertation could have been strengthened:

- The dissertation does not provide information about the methodological aspects. The Author does not inform about the methodology used to examine the research problems that are outlined in the Introduction. It should be clearly stated whether the dissertation is based on secondary and/or primary data (and the rationale for choosing data) as well as how data was analysed.

- Michela Procoli refers to several theoretical approaches which she finds useful to examine the data. This is generally well-done. However, while the choice of the theoretical approaches (such as organizational theory, social movements theory, feminism institutionalism) is right and they proved to be useful in explaining data, they should be better explained (main assumptions, usefulness for analysis, rationale for choosing particular approach) in the dissertation. Moreover, each of the theoretical approaches Michela Procoli refers to has developed their own theoretical frameworks by drawing on different concepts and giving attention to different aspects. The Author does not provide a deeper reflection on this diversity within approaches discussed and does not extend her analysis beyond the article by Lavena and Ricucci. What is also lacking here is the indication of how these concepts will be applied in Michela Procoli's research and how the existing scholarship may be helpful in examining the research problems.

- The content of Chapter 2 is also slightly confusing. On the one hand, it presents some theoretical assumptions, but on the other – it shows how these theoretical approaches have been already used to analyse GM. While I think that both: literature review and theoretical background are needed, they are blurred and the Author could expand on them.

- Some findings/opinions should be supported by arguments to provide a better insight into a discussion (e.g. on p.35 Michela Procoli refers to Minto and Mergaert, Freedman and Krosnell and claims that the logic of appropriateness aims at maintaining "the gendered status quo" but she does not put forward arguments/evidence to support this statement or she describes a dual approach (p.47) but does not answer a question why there is an issue with the principle of accountability and compliance).

- The main weakness of this dissertation is a lack of analysis of primary data. The original empirical data seems to be very limited and does not offer much new insight into the topic in question. The dissertation as it stands now

presents policy analysis/analysis of institutions conducted by other researchers and available in the existing literature. This leads to a situation that some parts are more descriptive while there is a potential for further interesting analysis (as it is already visible in case of policy analysis starting on p.44). For example, it would be interesting if the Author examines the documents with GE strategies/policies/measures (such as) or minutes from the meetings of GE bodies/institutions. Some of the barriers/problems identified as hindering factors (lack of personnel, lack of budget) could be examined in this way. It would be also interesting to look at the definition of GM in the documents/minutes, which areas of GE are mentioned and provide the assessment of the measures/strategies.

Assessment: (more than) satisfactory   **Weighing:** n/a

Reaching conclusions

A.I. Richard: The conclusions follow logically from the material presented. However, the thesis remains very descriptive and could have developed a more original line of argumentation.

Marta Warat: The Author reflects on the research problems and answers the research questions to a great extent. However, some parts of the dissertation are too descriptive and underdeveloped – a stronger analytical contribution is needed and expected. The dissertation covers also a broad range of topics and as a result, the answers provided to some research questions are not profound. The conclusions are based on the presented material.

Assessment: good   **Weighing:** n/a

Communication

A.I. Richard: Generally well written and well structured thesis.

Marta Warat: The dissertation fulfils the formal requirement. Michel Procoli uses appropriate academic language and properly cites the sources. Yet, the quotations are poorly referenced as there are no page numbers for each quotation. There are minor language mistakes – e.g. the Author uses the expression "gender machine" (e.g. on p.25) while in the literature it is usually "gender machinery".

The dissertation is well-organized but it is worth considering providing the definition of GM (and how it was developed) before the literature review which presents theoretical approaches already applied to examine the concept.

Assessment: good   **Weighing:** n/a

Learning skills

After a tricky start Michaela developed a new proposal independently and wrote it all up with great determination and despite everything managed to hand in her thesis on time. This is a great achievement.

Assessment: good   **Weighing:** n/a

Formal requirements

A.I. Richard: ok

Marta Warat: Michela Procoli's dissertation meets formal requirements.

Final assessment

On 30-06-2020 this thesis is graded with a 6.7

Signatures

A.I. Richard   Marta Warat