INDICATORS OF GENDER:
THE EUROPEANISATION OF SLOVAK POLICIES TACKLING 'VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN'

Dissertation submitted to obtain the degree of doctor in a joint doctoral programme at the University of Antwerp and the Comenius University in Bratislava to be defended by

Veronika Valkovičová

Promoters: Doc. PhDr. Oľga Gyárfášová, PhD | Prof. Petra Meier, PhD

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ABSTRACT

VALKOVIČOVÁ, Veronika: *Indicators of Gender: The Europeanisation of Slovak Policies Tackling 'Violence against Women'*. [Dissertation Thesis] – Comenius University in Bratislava. Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Institute of European Studies and International Relations. – Tutor: Oľga Gyarfášová – University of Antwerp. Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Political Science. – Tutor: Petra Meier. Bratislava: UK, 2019, 217 p.

Recent developments of European Union policymaking in the area of gender equality, including the area of 'violence against women', led to the adoption of indicator-based tools of policymaking, such as benchmarking, ranking, and good-practice sharing. The shift towards these tools aimed to strengthen the role of the European Union within the area subsumed under the principle of subsidiarity by appealing to the concept of 'evidence-based policymaking'. While a considerable body of theoretical literature has already been developed in this regard, empirical studies observing the real impact of these tools within EU Member State policymaking have so far been scarce. Relying on a discursive-sociological institutionalist approach tracing processes and practices, this case study aims to study such impact. It more particularly investigates the impact of indicator-based tools upon a variety of public sector and non-governmental actors in the Slovak policymaking environment. It studies these tools with the aid of theories on (non)learning, and governmentality, and the broader setting of Europeanisation studies.

Key words: indicator-based tools, benchmarking, ranking, good-practice sharing, policies tackling violence against women, Europeanisation, governmentality

ABSTRACT

VALKOVIČOVÁ, Veronika: *Indicatoren van gender: Europeanisering van het Slowaakse beleid Bestrijding van 'geweld tegen vrouwen'*. [Dissertation Thesis] - Comenius University in Bratislava. Faculteit der Sociale en Economische Wetenschappen, Instituut voor Europese Studies en Internationale Betrekkingen. -Promotor: Oľga Gyarfášová - Universiteit Antwerpen. Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen, Departement Politieke Wetenschappen. - Promotor: Petra Meier. Bratislava: UK, 2019, 217 p.

Recente beleidsontwikkelingen in de Europese Unie op het gebied van gendergelijkheid, waaronder op het vlak van 'geweld tegen vrouwen', hebben geleid tot de ingebruikname van op indicatoren gebaseerde beleidsinstrumenten, zoals benchmarking, ranking en uitwisseling van goede praktijken. De verschuiving naar deze instrumenten had ten doel de rol van de Europese Unie binnen het onder het subsidiariteitsbeginsel vallende gebied te versterken door een beroep te doen op het concept van "empirisch onderbouwde beleidsvorming". Hoewel in dit verband reeds een aanzienlijke hoeveelheid theorie is ontwikkeld, zijn empirische studies die de werkelijke impact van deze instrumenten binnen de beleidsvorming van de EU-lidstaten observeren tot nu toe schaars. Vertrekkend van een discursief-sociologisch institutionalistische benadering ter tracering van processen en praktijken, is deze case studie erop gericht een dergelijke impact te bestuderen. In dit proefschrift bestuderen we meer in het bijzonder de impact van op indicatoren gebaseerde instrumenten op diverse publieke en niet-gouvernementele actoren in de Slowaakse beleidsomgeving. We bestuderen deze beleidsinstrumenten met behulp van theorieën over kennisoverdracht, (niet) leren, en governmentality, en dit in de bredere setting van de Europaniseringsstudies.

Trefwoorden: indicator-based tools, benchmarking, ranking, uitwisseling van goede praktijken, beleid ter bestrijding van geweld tegen vrouwen, Europeanisering, governmentality

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

This thesis and its research has been conducted over the period of four years, during which the moral panics on 'gender ideology' in Europe steadily gained on resonance. Slovak policymaking, being not an exception, has been affected by this anti-feminist opposition oftentimes clad in seemingly 'scientific discourse'. Previously formed 'velvet triangles' of feminist actors are being disrupted with the continuous sidelining and precarisation of the work of the feminist non-governmental sector. It seems that the understanding of the role of the international policymaking tools and the so-called 'gender expertise' needs to be revalued in light of these developments. By doing as much, this thesis aims to pay attention to processes of knowledge transfer and non-learning, which we tend to take for granted or approach with uneducated bias.

My personal acknowledgement for support of this doctoral research is primarily dedicated to my family, and most importantly to my parents Juraj Valkovič and Daniela Valkovičová to whom I am thankful for their relentless support. First, I am grateful for their belief in my studies of gender equality politics of which they knew very little at the beginning, yet they provided me with the privilege of not questioning my career choices, they only fostered them. And second, if it were not for their emotional and material support through my chronic illness, this thesis would have been finished at all.

My sincere gratitude also goes to both of my supervisors – Oľga Gyárfášová and Petra Meier who guided me and who have always had faith in my work - despite the setbacks and that it took a long time to manifest.

I am also most grateful to my close friends and colleagues at both of the faculties, the feminist killjoys who helped me to develop this thesis as they aided me to make sense of what was oftentimes not constructive ideas, just some petrifying havoc. Thank you all, but most importantly a huge thank you to Kristína Kállay, Pavol Hardoš, Matej Makovický, and Zuzana Maďarová.

INTRODUCTION

"In God we trust, everything else we audit."
(Sam Fleming, CEO Third National Bank, USA)

Throughout 2015, I worked as a trainee at the Department of Communication and Outreach of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Not as a researcher, but as a communication and stakeholder cooperation trainee, and my task was to aid with the development of a variety of stakeholder communication processes. The objective of FRA has been to provide independent evidence-based assistance and expertise. The means to this end is transforming research in the area of fundamental rights and equality into indicator-based tools of policymaking – indexing, ranking, benchmarking and good-practice sharing. An 'indicator' is understood as a social technology which is based on the practice of quantification, comparisons and creation of hierarchies (Desrosières, 2016). By this practice, FRA makes use of a particular type of information in order to communicate a wide variety of information to a variety of stakeholders. As such, it strives to turn social reality into simplified and comparable numbers. Eventually, the comparative nature of the tools allows FRA to be critical of fundamental rights in each EU Member State by the power of the 'relative comparison'.

During my one-year experience of working for FRA, an internal employee Task Force was developed and put into operation. The objective of this collective was to 'measure the impact of FRA's work at the national level'. A set of processes was to be developed within the agency with the intent to measure its own impact according to established external evaluation recommendations. There was presently a sense of urgency within the Communications Department. The 2007 regulation clearly states that the core objective of the agency is the *"provision of comparable and reliable information and data at the European level in order to assist the Union institutions and the Member States in respecting fundamental rights"*, as well as it states that the agency's performance is to be evaluated both internally and externally. However, how does one measure such agenda? How can we even capture the impact of such work which aims to provide evidence for policymaking? How would FRA itself get to know

whether its work is useful among 28 Member States (with a combined population of over 500 million)? While my contract at FRA ended after a year and I was not able to follow the Task Force further, in the meantime a number of realisations occurred to me (and my co-workers as well, I believe): 1. FRA will never acquire relevant information by simply asking stakeholders at the national level how its work has transformed the national policies. 2. FRA does not have the capacities to monitor 28 Member States in order to trace learning stemming from their own indicator-based outputs. 3. If we want to study the impact of international indicator-based tools at the EU MS level, one must start with a case study research. At the same time, it is crucial to go beyond the level of ministerial officials and reach out to a variety of stakeholders.

The objective of my employment soon became my research interest as I looked for the theoretical background which would help me understand the various queues of indicator-based tools' impact. As I began delving into the recent scholarship in the field of Europeanisation and gender equality policies, the research proposal acquired its contours mostly within the Slovak activist environment, which shaped my own interests. As the topic of 'violence against women' has been high on the Slovak activist agenda (and the so-called 'velvet triangle' of Slovak policymaking) for decades now, this area has also benefitted extensively from the interest of both governmental and non-governmental actors. Such claim can be supported by a look into the *National Strategies for Gender Equality*, and the fact that this area has had separate strategic and framework documents. As will be explained further, the policies tackling violence against women are dominated by a discourse focused on women and emphasise the gendered nature of violence experienced by women. The nature of this discourse led to the agenda becoming separated from the topic of 'violence against children' - it is currently also institutionally separated from policies tackling human trafficking. Furthermore, as it will be explained later, despite being high on the national policymaking agenda, the topic of 'violence against women' has not been, to this day, significantly influenced by European Union 'hard law' compared to the equally dominant topic in Slovak policymaking – labour market gender equality. When we talk about European Union policies tackling violence against women, we can only talk 'softly'.

Within the two decades, the implementation of gender equality policies has been described by most scholars as a significant challenge (or worse). For example, Kantola and Lombardo (2017) currently identify the following struggles which have been blocking developments: lack of prioritisation, lack of resources, lack of support from people with authority, agenda culminating only among some individuals. To a considerable extent, these struggles have been the result of the principle of subsidiarity. However, this situation has been troubling the policymakers at the EU level and the public policy scholars for over two decades. Despite the principle, new developments were slowly appearing where the agenda gradually found its way. These developments were based on much 'softer' frameworks for tools of policymaking – such as informal rules of conduct, carriers of a particular discourse on gender equality issues, which were based on hermeneutical perspectives to gaining impact at the EU MS level (Lombardo, Forest, 2012). But how did this change come about and what impact did it have on the national-level policymaking?

The objective of this case study is to first look at the shift towards indicator-based tools and then focus on the impact of this 'soft' turn in policymaking. In this light, two significant developments need to be considered. First, it is the stalemate with regards to the 'conventional' modes of policymaking at the EU level in the field of gender equality policies (incl. violence against women). Second, it is the general shift of EU policymaking towards the paradigms of New Public Management and 'evidence-based policymaking' as a quest to solve conflicts and doubts of legitimacy by promoting different forms of 'de-politicised expertise'. As such, this study makes a case for a broader perspective of the indicator-based tools, which also takes into consideration the larger reforms of EU policymaking as institutionalised by the European Commission *White Papers* of 1993 and, more importantly, of 2001. By promoting new paradigms for EU policies based on the discourses of evidence-based policymaking and New Public Management, the reformers did not only aim to promote 'expertise' as a panacea for the perceived democratic deficit. They also happened to infuse the 'soft' areas of policymaking (e.g. social policies) by adopting a new, more 'technocratic' vehicle to run in the areas previously ridden with 'ideological' and politicised struggles. Such shift allowed for the adoption and support of new approaches/tools, such as the Open Method of Co-

ordination and gender mainstreaming, which also helped to develop a new discourse on 'gender expertise' as a relevant input to international and intergovernmental policymaking. Another by-product of this was the establishment of European Union structures as a leading authority in the 'gender expertise in policymaking' (Hoard, 2015).

These transformations allowed for new venues in areas such as 'violence against women' (or 'gener-based violence' as we often come accross within the EU policies). Hereby, the European Union policymaking has been consistently steered into the realm of indicator-based tools, particularly with the appeal of the Council Presidencies (starting with 2004 and later with 2010, 2012) and the agenda of the European Commission through its good-practice sharing programmes and research endeavours (e.g. Eurostat surveys, Mutual Learning Programme on Gender Equality), (Beveridge, 2012). After the initial initiatives adopted by the Council Presidencies, the European structures gave way for the new wave of 'agencification' and the creation of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the European Institute for Gender Equality (Wonka, Rittberger, 2010), whose mandates build upon the concept of evidence-based policymaking despite the fact that they focus on highly 'politicised' areas such as fundamental rights and gender equality.

The aforementioned developments of European Union policymaking in the area of 'violence against women' have been of interest to the academia in the beginning of this decade. Such scholarship has adopted the post-positivist objective of forwarding European Union gender equality policies at the level of EU Member States, rather than describing the developments of EU-level institutionalisation. But as mentioned before, the theoretical knowledge itself had to develop with these new solutions to existing problems. Scholars have been consistently pointing to the requirement of studying 'soft' tools of European Union policymaking which lack legal consequences, yet may still feed into the national policymaking with the power of 'the discursive' and 'the social' (Beveridge, 2012). Where direct impact is difficult to trace, the demand for observing the indirect and various impacts begins and a new scholarship of Europeanisation had to develop. Such advancements were in line with Radaelli (2002), who advocated for a new perspective of Europeanisation – i.e. studying the EU policies by

looking at the 'relative impact of Europeanisation', thus drifting away from the analysis of the 'degree of Europeanisation' in order to study the empirical effects of European Union structures and institutions. Or even further - to look at Europeanisation from the perspective of 'layering of European impact' or even approaching 'the European' as a pool of resources (Minto, Mergaert, 2018). Such perspectives are very much welcome with regards to indicator-based policymaking, because when it comes to quantifiers, one can no longer simply look at the conventional concepts of 'misfit' and veto points at the national level. While these conventional frameworks were previously useful with regards to the formal norms and 'the hard law' whose adoption was much more easily traceable at the level of the MS, the impact of the new tools seems to be more complex and much less easier to be measured. Such lack of 'measurability' of the impact of indicator-based tools is also supported by the significant scholarship of intergovernmental cooperation which links indicator-based tools to the concept of 'Foucauldian governmentality' and a new form of rationality of 'quantifiers' aimed at simplifying the objective of auditing – i.e. comparing, dividing, creating hierarchies, and controlling (Fougner, 2008; Manokna, 2013; Sokhi-Bulley, 2014). This case study thus aims to test whether such scholarship of 'governing at a distance' can feed into the Europeanisation studies, currently coping with the shift away from 'the hard law'.

However, while there has been some theorisation of the 'soft' nature of these tools and their impact (i.e. empirical effects) at the national level, specific case studies have been missing so far (e.g. Forest, Lombardo, 2012). Due to the personal objectives stated above and the apparent niche within the scholarship, this case study adopted the core research question aimed at the Slovak policymaking area of 'violence against women'. Hereby, we want to 'simply' ask: *How have the EU indicator-based tools (i.e. benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing) been influencing Slovak policy-making in the area of violence against women?*.

However, while case studies of empirical enquiries into indicator-based tools' impact have been missing, the scholarship has nonetheless been prolific in providing adventurous scholars with suggestions on the approaches to be adopted. When the EU policymakers proposed new tools, the scholars proposed a new institutionalism. The

discursive-sociological institutionalism adopted within this case study is, in essence, a feminist perspective to studying policymaking, as it allows us to adopt a actor-centred and phenomenological epistemology. It aims to look at the individual, what they learn, in which practices they engage and how they are linked to the dominant discourses on specific issues. With discursive-sociological institutionalism, the intergovernmental cooperation is studied through the experience of an individual actor. Such approach allowed this case study to proceed with one of the observations of the FRA Task Force – the influence of the indicator-based tools and their role should be studied among a wide range of actors at the national level. By studying the environment of the so-called state feminism and its velvet triangles (McBride, Mazur, 2016), we are allowed to look at both public sector actors and the non-governmental environment. In this sense, this case study also falls among the so-called deconstruction studies of Europeanisation, which is focused on the *"[p]rocesses of EU policy transposition result in diverging rather than converging patterns, and offer analytical lenses for understanding how political change occurs"* (Kantola, Lombardo, 2017, p. 149).

Furthermore, rather than looking into how the actual change happens within policies, this case study focuses upon its actors and scrutinises the practices of learning and resistance to it. In order to answer the core research question, this study first enquires about the presence of these tools within the framings of the strategic policymaking documents, as it later moves on to partial enquiries about the types of learning and non-learning (i.e. resistance) that occur, as well as about the role of the tools among actor coalitions. Stemming from the assumption of Forest and Lombardo (2012) that 'Europe hits home in various ways', we believe that it is necessary to study how individuals 'do things' with regards to the EU structures. As such, this case study adopts the approach to learning as a form of practice within policymaking, which is understood as a conflictual environment *per se* (Parkhurst, 2017).

This case study of the discursive-sociological institutionalism and its phenomenological approach seeks to understand the role of knowledge, what different types of learning occur and where they eventually lead. Inspired by Weiss (1979), this case study asks how knowledge (i.e. processed information) gets to be actually used (or dis-

regarded). Furthermore, this study aspires to go further than 'learning – non-learning' or 'applied or non-applied' knowledge. Forest and Lombardo (2012, p. 20) claim that the studies of sociological and discursive institutionalism provide a different picture of Europeanisation processes: "*it is perhaps more complicated to interpret and less easy to generate models for, but it is also probably closer to reality*". The reality, as posited before, is that learning among the core stakeholders does not occur steadily and the use of knowledge is not only instrumental - it can be resisted and has to be recognised as filtered through the concept of bounded rationality (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, Halligan, 2015). In the Foucauldian sense, the use of a particular piece of information (i.e. knowledge as processed information) can even serve the purpose of 'creating a subject'. Therefore, simply focusing on whether the tools are being recognised and passed on as forms of knowledge at the EU MS level costs us the chance of going further and attempting to understand how expertise in the field of gender equality (i.e. gender expertise) is transferred or resisted within this area ridden with ideological conflict (Verloo, Van Der Vleuten, 2009; Bruno, 2009). Does the knowledge itself feed into the construction of the concept of an 'expert'? Is knowledge relevant for the understanding of the international layer of policymaking? Can we approach it as a pool of resources?

In order to study learning as a practice related to indicator-based tools, this case study goes among the 'knowers', the perceived 'experts' present within the public sector, non-governmental sector and academic representatives. The communication partners of this research fall under two Slovak advisory bodies invested with the agenda of providing consultations, opinions and creating frameworks for policymaking – the Committee on Gender Equality and the Expert Group on the Elimination of Violence against Women. In order to fulfill the objectives of the set research question and the principles adhered to by the feminist researchers, this case study adopts the data collection and analysis methods of narrative reading, frame analysis and narrative and cognitive interviewing under the umbrella methodological approach of process/practice tracing. This analysis was conducted within the studied time frame from the establishment of these organs until their demise (for the Expert Group) or the change of the membership (Committee).

In the spirit of discursive-sociological institutionalism, this study avoids the conventional organisations of policymaking, such as the Slovak National Council as the main organ of legislature. Instead, it is invested in the work of the non-governmental and public sector employees, as well as the governmental level of policymaking. It conducts the analysis by looking at the work and practices of those who move across the structures, create the frameworks of policymaking, advocate and lobby, as well as uphold the 'discursive' framework of policies tackling violence against women. In this sense, the communication partners are 'the epistemic elites' of gender equality policymaking in their dispositions as bureaucrats, experts and diversity workers. As a result, this case study is not interested in the processes of policymaking *per se*, from the perspective of conventional 'input and output' which tends to be focused on political elites. Rather, it looks for practices of knowledge transfer and resistance of the stakeholders. In the spirit of feminist international relations described by Ackerley and True (2010), this case study aims to adopt the feminist epistemology to studying international relations by focusing on the individual and their (phenomenological) ability to understand their own networks, practises and agenda. In addition, acknowledging my personal experience of working at FRA and my involvement with the Slovak feminist movement as the major forces behind this research endeavor, this research hereby declares the positionality of a post-positivist study within the feminist international relations. Engaged not only in the objective of studying the level of 'the international', the study aspires to help shaping 'the national' and 'the local' to foster gender equality policies.

However, on the road to discovering the answers to the core research question and related enquiries, this case study ventured in the area where it was not initially aimed to go. Soon after the initial readings of meeting minutes of the studied advisory bodies and the informal debates among the Slovak feminist activists, it has been clear that the presence of the indicator-based tools within the bodies cannot be detached from the so-called rhetoric and discourse of 'gender ideology' on (gender) equality policies (as we summarise in Chapter 3). This rhetoric has been increasingly occupying a significant amount of European political science scholarship, but the presence of the rhetoric with regards to the indicator-based tools disclosed a new potential for future studies thereof. The presence of actors making use of the 'gender ideology' and their

considerable success in the Committee on Gender Equality vis-à-vis the 'feminist actors' inspired us to adopt the perspective focused on epistemic communities - with regards to the 'gender ideology' as a rhetorical resource and its presence within the realm of the scientific discourses of policymaking (as inspired by Kuhar, 2015; Korolczuk, 2016).

While this case study is affected by the limitations of time and space, its objective is the extension of Europeanisation studies. The Slovak policies on gender equality have been developing with the aid of the 'the European' since the pre-accession period of the late 1990s. Hereby, 'the politics of sandwiching' (Roth, 2007), characterised by the interplay of local pressure and international requirements, has played a paramount role for these policies. However, this study of the post-accession developments displays no harmonious and uninterrupted developments. Set in the post-accession period, this case study looks at how this concept has been revalued in the spirit of the recently observed advancements. These include primarily the backsliding of gender equality policies in the Central and Eastern European region, but also the distancing and precarisation of the feminist non-governmental sector (Krizsán, Roggeband, 2018). Essential for the conclusions of this study are also the developing normalisation and mainstreaming of the 'anti-gender rhetoric' with its value-based euro-scepticism (Slootmaeckers, Sircar, 2017) and 'pseudo-scientific' discourse (Kuhar, 2015).

Eventually, this case study focused on the 'relative impact of Europeanisation' develops the simple idea promoted Van Dooren and colleagues (2015) that the objective (and the possible effect) of the indicator-based tools is to teach, to account, to steer and to control. This thesis holds the title 'indicators of gender' - meaning the practice of quantification of a complex social structure. However, this case study prompts us to depart from the simplistic understanding of the 'indicators' applied within the field of gender equality policies as simple quantifiers. They are not merely modes of communication which aim to transform complex social phenomena into a simpler language – that is to translate the complexities of 'gender' as a structuring structure (Harding, 1986) into a scale or an index. Within this case study, the indicators appear to be part of a much broader transformation at the national level, which seems to be fueled by the

European level policymaking and agenda. Furthermore, despite their potentiality as 'technocratic' instruments, the tools happen to be 'gendering' the topic of violence (i.e. indicating the gendered cause and effect of violence). As Foucault concludes: *"In appearance, it is merely the technical solution of a technical problem; but, through it, a whole type of society emerges"* (Foucault, 1998, p. 216). However, such understanding of the tools as 'techniques of power' is yet to be fully embraced by the scholarship on EU indicator-based tools, not only in the area of gender equality policymaking, but also in the area of fundamental rights. While the indicator-based tools can be understood as technical solutions, these areas of policymaking have much more than just 'technical problems'.

Therefore, this humble proposal is not to dismiss the agenda of establishing 'impact' Task Forces such as the one at FRA, or to dismiss the evaluations of the individual organisations and agencies devising the indicator-based tools. The case study and its findings simply propose a more complex perspective of how we can understand 'impact' when it comes to knowledge transfer and indicator-based tools as 'soft' solutions to very complicated problems. In view of the euro-sceptic political discourses nonetheless appealing to question the 'value of facts' within policymaking, these tools emphasise the principles of 'evidence-based policymaking' as a way out. Therefore, studying their impact is of broader consequence to European Union and international organisation studies. This case study also calls for a more complex perspective to be adopted by independent auditing companies and organisations which commission them. Thus, the research hereby presented is motivated by the current urgency of studying the 'role of knowledge' within policymaking structures. In view of the moral panics of 'gender ideology', gender competence/expertise needs to be approached as a particular form of expertise which carries ideological perspectives to social structures. The existing scholarship, which has been rather sceptical of the implementation and impact of gender mainstreaming, has left us with a rather gloomy outlook. Motivated by it, this case study aspires to complicate the matters much further with 'quantifiers' in order to discuss the solutions to blocked learning and to foster the development of EU policymaking in the area of gender equality.

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The first chapter of this thesis aims to 'set the field' for the case study by delving into the recent developments of the European Union gender equality policymaking, as well as its subsequent scholarship which has evolved from the newly adopted paradigms. This chapter leads to the argument that a new 'policymaking rationality' has been developed with the adoption of indicator-based tools within the field of gender equality policymaking. So far, this act has been understood as a panacea for a variety of challenges faced within the European Union policymaking structures.

The second chapter 'sets the framework' for the study of the impact of the indicator-based tools of European Union policies tackling 'violence against women'. As we choose to look at learning as a practice which may or may not occur for a variety of reasons, the chapter summarises the significant scholarship on the topic of learning, non-learning and the role of bias and bounded rationality. In order to understand the role of knowledge within policymaking structures, and specifically within advisory bodies riddled with agonistic struggles and conflict, this chapter also looks upon the role of knowledge and its transfer within the framework of epistemic communities and actor coalitions.

In order to 'set the scene' for the case study, the third chapter introduces the recent developments of Slovak gender equality policymaking, including in the area of 'violence against women'. Particular attention is being paid to two forces – the impact of the international layer of policymaking, which has also impacted the transformations towards the paradigms of New Public Management and evidence-based policymaking; and the influence of the so-called 'reactively oppositional' actors, who can be described by their particular use of the 'gender ideology' rhetoric and discourse in the field of gender equality policies.

The fourth chapter dedicated to 'setting the research tools' introduces the umbrella methodological approach of practice tracing as a specific version of process tracing. In order to study practices of knowledge transfer, the approach to data collection and analysis is threefold – first we aim to study the presence of the tools within the

so-called 'issue frames' of the national strategic and framework documents via frame analysis, as we move on to the narrative reading of the meeting minutes of the studied advisory bodies, and finally, we approach the extensive cognitive and narrative interviewing of the members of the studied advisory bodies.

Chapters five and six aim to report on the findings and are divided according to the partial research questions of this case study. Chapter five is dedicated to 'actor-centred perspectives' as it aims to report on the directly observed and 'spoken about' practices of learning and non-learning in the context of what the actors and the strategic documents understand as the most pressing challenges in the policymaking area. On the other hand, chapter six of 'epistemological perspectives' looks at the role of the indicator-based tools play in defining and constructing 'relevant expertise', 'the role of the European Union structures', or even the 'relevant expert' among the members of the studied advisory bodies. This chapter is also focused on the role of the tools within the negotiations of the actor coalitions present within the advisory bodies.

Finally, this thesis ends with a section on discussion and conclusions, summarising the main findings with regards to the research questions. The conclusions also discuss the limitations of the research - on one hand they address the case-study design of the thesis, and on the other hand acknowledge the shortcomings of the chosen approaches to data collection and analysis. The discussion closes with suggestions and avenues for future research - not only in the field of Europeanisation studies, but also for the research of the concept of the 'gender ideology' rhetoric, as well as the opposition towards (gender) equality policies in Europe.

1. SETTING THE FIELD: EUROPEAN UNION GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES – TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

This chapter will first introduce the recent material and discursive developments of European Union public policies on gender equality, gradually advancing within the framework of parallel tinkering, tailoring and later on transforming (Rees, 1995), or as some may understand the process - the strategic shift from 'hard' measures to complementary 'softer' approaches (Fores, Lombardo, 2012). The chapter further on puts the European Union 'violence against women' policies within the context of these developments, as it moves on inductively to scrutinise their evolution from the broader perspectives of the European integration studies and international governmentality studies. Eventually, this chapter argues that the constraints experienced within broader EU structures (i.e. democratic deficit and lack of transparency and accountability), including the constraints specific to gender equality policies (i.e. principle of subsidiarity and highly ideological nature of policies) led to the shift towards indicator-based policymaking tools as a form of new governmentality – a new rationality.

1.1 The Evolution of European Union Gender Equality Policies

The original competence of the European Community within the field of gender equality was embodied in the Article 119 of the *Treaty of Rome* (1957), which initially concerned the area of labour market. As such, the principle of gender equality within the scope of the employment has quickly become the integral part of the European Union (EU) framework of policymaking (Rubery et al., 2004). However, within the past decades, the tools and approaches adopted within the framework of gender equality (including 'violence against women') have evolved outside of the directive scope of the hard law due to the constraints on EU's agenda and the boundaries of subsidiarity (Rossilli, 2000; Kantola, 2009; Kantola, 2010). The evolution of these policies has so far been represented in terms of three phases, or layers: equal opportunities, positive action, and gender mainstreaming (Kantola, 2009; Walby, 2011). Recent develop-

ments within EU policymaking lead to the adoption of new instruments of policymaking, which can be understood as 'soft measures' as opposed to previously dominant 'hard law' instruments (Forest, Lombardo, 2012). Furthermore, these measures also seem to be based on different objectives, for example, Beveridge (2012) writes of 'soft measures' as measures of knowledge transfer – i.e. rules of conduct which in principle have no legally binding force, but may nevertheless have political effect[1]. While this gradual shift into the 'soft mode' has been reflected within the academic literature specifically in relation to gender mainstreaming, the adoption of gender mainstreaming within EU policymaking cannot be understood within its singularity as 'the' discursive shift and a new approach detached from broader reforms on EU governance (Kantola, 2010; Walby, 2011). The following section explains the evolution and the development of the policies which laid the foundations for what we understand as a 'new rationality'.

Within the EU policies on gender equality, the *Treaty of Amsterdam* has been oftentimes declared to be a milestone, as it single-handedly extended the EU gender equality policies agenda within the area of anti-discrimination 'hard law', as well as it shaped the contours of the *European Employment Strategy*. The treaty and its Article 13 invests the community of states with the mandate to combat discrimination on the grounds of gender, race and ethnicity, religion and belief, age, disability, and sexual orientation[2] (Ostner, 2000; Kantola, 2009). Within the newly established framework, the *Employment Equality Directive 2000/78/EC*, as well as the *Goods and Services Directive 2004/11/EC*, both led to the crucial extension of the principles of gender equality, including outside of the labour market (Masselot, 2007). After the *Treaty of Amsterdam* secured the broadening the agenda, the *Lisbon Treaty* put further onus on the topic of social exclusion. At the moment, the EU directives on gender equality extend to the areas of equal pay, equal treatment in employment, to pregnancy protection, parental leave, access to goods and services (Kantola, 2009). However, already a

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1 According to Beveridge (2012), many scholars use the term 'soft law' in a very loose manner in order to speak of anything that 'is not law, but is normative'. Therefore, according to the author, many scholars use the term interchangeably with the term 'policy'.

2 According to Joanna Kantola (2009), the *Treaty of Amsterdam* also resulted in a new focus upon 'multiple discrimination'. While the inclusion of gender as a protected ground within the anti-discrimination policies benefits from a wide array of areas, the EU policies have been extensively criticised for the lack of intersectional perspective.

decade ago Masselot (2007) argued that the principle of gender equality had been also guaranteed within the EU policies as a solid human right through its establishment within the European Union *Charter of Fundamental Rights*.

After tinkering, the tailoring within EU gender equality policies was assured by the road to affirmative (positive) action (as temporary compensatory measures), which however, was not smooth (Ostner, 2000; Kantola, 2009). The non-binding formulations within the treaties created uncertainties and confusions, which were later addressed by a number of decisions of the European Court of Justice (Rossilli, 2000; Kantola, 2010). However, the application of positive action upon an established and developing framework of anti-discrimination norms can be understood as a form of policy 'layering'. This process of 'layering' later created a gateway for new policymaking paradigms, as well as a variety of new measures to be adopted within the area of gender equality (Minto, Mergaert, 2018).

Since the early beginning of the new millennium, it was apparent that the framework previously established for particular areas of policymaking would have to evolve in the other directions, as opposed to the coercive 'hard law' measures (Schimmelfenning, Sedelmeier, 2005). As Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier (2005, p. 221) contend: *"[l]arge-scale breaches and infringement procedures in themselves would [have been] detrimental to the mutual trust in the ability and willingness of all members to play by the rules on which the internal market is based"*. As such, EU Member States sought to adopt non-coercive policymaking measures and instruments, which would be able to assure a certain level of autonomy of EU Member States, and thus would create a leeway within the policymaking structures (Héritier, 2002). In relation to this particular period, Bruno (2009) highlights the shift from the traditional Community method[3] of decision-making and the emerging discourse of 'competitiveness' and 'evidence-based governance' in policymaking. But it has been so far questioned by scholars how this evolution occurred without EU MS being resistant to it. Saurugger and Terpan (2016) for example identify three different cases which led EU Member

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3   Within her work, Bruno (2009) also argues that it was in particular the heavy handed, bureaucratic and not too inclusive Community method which led the actors present at the EU level to look for new solutions.

States to comply with the adoption of non-coercive policymaking tools within EU intergovernmental policymaking. According to the authors, the adoption of 'soft' tools occurs when states count with the option that the tools will in the long term lead to the creation of a 'shadow of hierarchy'[4] or the creation of a hard law framework. The second reason may be the need of the states to retain sovereignty at all costs and the third would be related to the state's preference of learning over litigation.

To put the recent developments within the field of EU gender equality policies into the perspective of public policy studies, the past two decades of EU policymaking led to the establishment of social learning and capacity building as crucial incentives among EU Member States' policies (Krizsán, Popa, 2010). In the same vein, Saurugger and Terpan (2016) point to the continuously blurring line between 'hard and soft' modes of governance[5] within EU policies, especially within policies subsumed under the principle of subsidiarity. While subsidiarity may be predominantly viewed as the division of competences, according to Jacquot (2017), it can also be perceived as an area of intergovernmental cooperation, which is ridden with instability and lack of consent. Among the 'indicator-based tools' which appeared within this environment ridden with uncertainty, subsumed under the principle of subsidiarity, the tools of benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing gradually became institutionalised with the desire to address many of the previous shortcomings, by drawing onto learning and knowledge transfer. Hereby, an indicator is understood as a *"[n]amed collection of rank-ordered data that purports to represent the past or projected performance of different units. The data are generated through a process that simplifies raw data about a complex social phenomenon [...]. The data, in this simplified and processed form, are capable of being used to compare a particular units of analysis [...], synchronically or over time, and to evaluate their performance by reference to one or more standards."* (Davis et al., 2012 p. 74)

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4   Hereby, the 'shadow of hierarchy' is understood as a presence of a controlling mechanism, even if it retains an informal form (Radaelli, 2008).

5   We understand 'governance' as developed by Shore (2011) in relation to the advent of the 2001 European Commission *White Paper on 'European governance'*. The author understands governance as a diverse and layered decision-making process which feeds off a variety of multi-level actors and stakeholders.

The practices of benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing have been already gradually institutionalised in the pre-accession period of many EU Member States (Schimmelfenning, Sedelmeier, 2005), as well as through the mechanisms of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and gender mainstreaming (Dehousse, 2003; Hubert, Stratigaki, 2011). According to Kantola and Lombardo (2017), the adoption of gender mainstreaming as a policymaking principle within the EU policymaking structures resulted in the recognition of an array of important tools (including the concept of gender segregated data) to be institutionalised as legitimate instruments of policymaking. Furthermore, among these we may recall gender analysis, gender impact assessment, gender training of civil servants, and gender budgeting. As the adoption and promotion of indicator-based tools was preceded and paralleled with the application of gender mainstreaming and the OMC, it is necessary to recall their processes of institutionalisation, as well as the criticisms and already studied shortcomings.

While there are different accounts as to what specifically constitutes the concept of gender mainstreaming, within this thesis, we understand the umbrella term as defined by Verloo in its full complexity: *"Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policymaking"* (in Walby, 2011, p. 87). While the approach itself originated in the field of development, gender mainstreaming has been promoted by the European Commission as a response to call for an intersectional approach to inequalities since the late 1990s (Bacchi, Eveline, 2003). Weiner and MacRae (2014) argue that the advent of gender mainstreaming in the EU policies in 1996 has been to a great degree influenced by the economic nature of the European Union project itself[6]. The concept was developed specifically within the DG Justice – Gender Equality Unit and the Inter-Service Group for Gender Equality (Minto, Mergaert, 2018). Nevertheless, the authors also argue that the paradigm of gender mainstreaming aimed to supplement the previous approaches of tinkering (anti-discrimination legislation) and tailoring (positive action approach) (Rees, 1995), already existing within the EU

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6   The authors argue that it is the economic (and arguably also neoliberal) nature of the former EU policies, which led to the adoption of the seemingly technocratic tool of gender mainstreaming.

policies, thus providing further 'layering' (Minto, Mergaert, 2018). As they Weiner and MacRae conclude: *"[g]ender [m]ainstreaming sought to re-envision EU policy aims, to locate gender equality as a substantive goal and to widely promote a new modus operandi for its realization"* (Weiner, MacRae, 2014, p.5). We understand the modus operandi as based on the constant flow of information and knowledge which was to facilitate the previous lack of evidence on gender (in)equality. As such, gender mainstreaming should be understood as a managerial and technical approach to tackling political goals, as it helped to develop a particular logic of policymaking based on the requirement of simplistic quantifications which can undergo comparisons suitable for monitoring (Minto, Mergaert, 2018).

The so-called gender expertise has become (also thanks to the international structures such as the United Nations) a special form of knowledge recognised in development and monitoring of policies. The promotion of tools such as gender mainstreaming also led to the recognition of a new profession – the gender expert with the disposition of an 'equality worker' (Hoard, 2015; Kunz, Prűgl, 2019). At the same time, the creation of such expertise also founded the framework of organisational legitimacy as according to Hoard (2015), both of the aforementioned UN and EU currently retain considerable power in determining what constitutes gender expertise in intergovernmental cooperation, as they also lend salience and credence to the issue.

According to Benschop and Verloo (2006), gender mainstreaming is a theoretical public policy concept which has been developed to surpass the operational problems that had been plaguing gender equality policies until the 1990s. The tool has been understood as an attempt to de-politicise the process of addressing gender inequality and to give 'transparency' to the steady 'technocratisation' of the policies themselves (Benschop, Verloo, 2006; Neuman, 2013). However, this is by many understood as a false premise of the concept (see e.g. Kunz, Prűgl, 2019). For example, Lombardo, Meier and Verloo (2017) claim that gender mainstreaming is oftentimes applied as a neutral toolkit, detached from feminist premises (such as challenging power hierarchies and radical questioning of policy processes). As such, the authors understand this aspiration to 'de-ideologise' feminist agenda as inherently conflictual. However, Minto

and Mergaert (2018) also argue in relation to the practice of gender mainstreaming, that the newly established desire for the application of this technocratic approach also within the field of gender equality policymaking, led to the clash between the ideological drive of equality and the norm of 'neutrality' established within Western liberal democracies. As such it is thus clear that there has been some considerable debate about 'how ideological' gender mainstreaming as a process is and whether it can be perceived as a 'technical' rather than 'ideological' approach to policymaking.

It is therefore not surprising that since the adoption of the concept of gender mainstreaming into the EU policies, a number of authors have pointed to its many shortcomings. Gregor (2017) summarised the common standpoints of feminist criticism by accentuating that the process of adoption promised more than it was able to achieve: *"In reality, gender mainstreaming works as a bureaucratic, managing and technocratic tool without any real political and transformative power, and leaves the institutional, and other structures that produce, maintain and reinforce gender inequalities, untouched"* (Gregor, 2017, p. 14). In the same vein, criticism of gender mainstreaming as a 'techno-managerial strategy', which has brought the de-politisation of feminist agenda, has been in abundance (see e.g. Eschle and Maigwasha, 2018). Furthermore, Lombardo, Meier and Verloo (2017, p. 7) claim, that the peril of gender mainstreaming rests in becoming *"everybody's and nobody's responsibility"*, and therefore is lacking visible structures of accountability. Another criticism of gender mainstreaming in EU policymaking is also linked to the presupposed processes of knowledge sharing, which is only reserved for some (groups of) actors. It has been for example argued, that the efficient application of gender mainstreaming requires specific competences, as well as a more horizontal application (Lombardo, Mergaert, 2014; Staroňová, Hejzlarová, Hondlíková, 2017; Jacquot, 2017).

Another policymaking tool which also took its shape at the beginning of the millennium was the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). This instrument was adopted by the community of EU Member States during the deliberations of the Lisbon Summit in 2000 (Bruno et al., 2006). While inspired by the Luxembourg process of 1997, and the *European Employment Strategy* already put in place, the adoption of the OMC

is often perceived as a paradigmatic shift in EU policymaking (Dehousse, 2003), or a solution to the niche of the traditional policymaking constrained by the principle of subsidiarity (Paster Florenz, 2005). The OMC gained the label of a system of a 'soft measures' and a specific form of voluntary participation. As such, the OMC has developed with the vision of becoming a tool for transparency and democratic participation based on 'evidence' (Maláč, 2009). While the original adoption of the voluntarist OMC design during the Lisbon Summit of 2000 was assumed only for the area of social protection, the method can be currently traced to the areas of research, company policy, information society, education, social policy, social exclusion, protection, as well as the environment (Dehousse, 2003).

Within the political science perspective of the OMC, some scholars have already pointed to the ability of the mechanism to foster learning. This is due to the content of the mechanism itself, which entails tools such as the establishment of guidelines and directions, qualitative and quantitative indicators, specific goals and periodical monitoring (Dale, 2006). The OMC, along with its features of benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing, are by design presented as a form of non-coercive process. Furthermore, Dehousse (2003) stresses in particular the ability of the mechanism to maintain flexibility, decentralisation and the ability to create procedural routines fit for the objectives of the national administrations. In a similar vein as scholars argue about gender mainstreaming, the core of these mechanisms rests upon the necessity of indicators - simple quantifiers, which are chosen in order to account for a specific measurement of a problem, including setting the basic framework for the policy area[7].

Furthermore, within her study, Bruno (2009) focuses on the inception of the OMC and the motivations which drove political actors to the adoption of this mechanism. She concludes that the major aim of this policy tool was to create harmonisation by comparing and learning as a 'bottom-up' process. While following individual paths, the EU Member States were to reach the same destinations via the process of learning and deliberation (Radaelli, 2008). However, quite contrary to Bruno (2009), Radaelli

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7   Mertl and Krčál (2013) describe this as the perfect marriage of political economy and statistics, which basically creates a new form of arithmetic, allowing policymakers to quantify or measure any kind of a political move.

(2008) points out that the OMC can be perceived as both a bottom-up and a top-down process. While the deliberative processes of knowledge sharing and indicator-setting can be perceived as drawn from the national level, the process of monitoring, ranking and peer reviewing may be viewed as coercive, as it aims to alter the behaviour of EU Member States orchestrated by the EU structures. Furthermore, Verloo and Van Der Vleuten (2009) add to these perspectives as they point to the effect of reputation and performance, claiming that the OMC mechanism can be grasped more effectively within 'less technical and more ideological' areas. Within the same spirit, Bruno (2009) also divided the policymaking areas into the technological and ideological ones while she stressed the ability of the data to provide the answer to a moral demand for impartiality and fairness (Bruno, 2009).

The adoption of the OMC and gender mainstreaming, i.e. their institutionalisation within official EU policymaking (despite their already studied shortcomings) meant that gender equality became 'auditable' (Ahmed, 2012), as well as it became the mechanism of audit for the administrations of the EU MS. Specifically in relation to these recent developments of EU gender equality policies, the drive towards indicators and quantifiable evidence has been established as a practice to promote 'transparent' governance (Bruno, 2009; Verloo, Van der Vleuten, 2009; Forest, Lombardo, 2012). While the abovementioned developments can be traced in different areas of European Union policymaking, this particular study focuses on the institutionalisation of indicator-based tools within and through the European Union policies 'tackling violence against women'. This area has had since early beginning of its development within EU policymaking a very feeble ground whereby EU Member States retained the dominance of their national authority policymaking (Kantola, 2010; Krizsán, Popa, 2010).

1.2 European Union Policies Tackling 'Violence against Women'

Within their work, Krizsán and Popa (2015) accentuate that the policies tackling domestic violence and violence against women at the European Union (EU) level originated in the field of gender equality and women's rights advocacy. As the authors

conclude, while it is clear that the EU structures have been for a very long time lacking in competence with respect to 'domestic violence', there has been empirical evidence of the responsiveness to the 'EU structures' in this area. The topic of 'violence against women' as a form of violence occurring in intimate relationships has been included within the scope of inter-governmental cooperation since the early 1990s – especially because of events such as the 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, or the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, which helped frame the topic as a human rights issue (Engle Merry, 2016). This incentive according to Engle Merry (2016) launched the quest at the international level to devise indicators and guidelines which would be applicable to policymaking all around the world. The policies tackling domestic violence and violence against women have been within the EU structures in the recent years possible thanks to the shift towards the 'soft' policymaking, which include learning and capacity building - whether by a variety of funding programmes or through knowledge-based instruments (Beveridge, 2012). In this sub-section, we will examine these shifts and provide an overview of the present measures which started culminating since 2010, when the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU put the issue into the spotlight. Rather than focusing on the limited hard law measures (such as regulations and directives) which were taken in the area of EU policymaking on violence against women in the past years, this section focuses on the less visible and non-coercive indicator-based tools which provide for knowledge transfer, and which have had so far very little academic attention (most notably within Forest, Lombardo, 2012). However, it is essential to this study to accentuate that the tools which are at its centre cannot be studied as detached from the hard law policies of the EU (Saurugger, Terpan, 2016), as well as the financial tools, which have been crucial for example during the pre-accession process for some EU Member States.

However, as it was argued within the previous section, the development of EU gender equality policies, including the policies on violence against women, need to be understood in their layered form – the tinkering, tailoring and transforming (Rees, 1995). The area of gender-based violence is to a limited extent also one of the non-market-related areas addressed by the EU 'hard law', which has been possible through

the focus of the so-called 'Stockholm Programme'[8] (Jacquot, 2017).The most recent and crucial addition to the segmentation of the policies was established in 2012 with the so-called *Victim's Directive*[9] . The norm has been established as the framework of minimum standards for victims of crime, including victims of violence and stalking in EU Member States[10] . Furthermore, linked to the *Victim's Directive* is also the so-called *European protection order* (Directive 2011/99/EU), which allows the victims to continue to enjoy protection from offenders in another EU Member State. Nevertheless, the legal instrument does not adopt a broader approach to gender-based violence, as it only deals with protection of victims and does not address prevention or prosecution of crimes (European Parliament Think Tank, 2013). While the aforementioned normative documents address gender-based violence as a broad phenomenon, tk.sfehe area of EU policymaking on violence against women has so far addressed the topic of sexual harassment in a separate strand (Collins, 1996; Gregory, 2000). Thus it distinguishes between harassment which happens in employment and other types of harassment happening for example in intimate partner relationship. Furthermore, Beveridge (2012) recalls within her work the non-binging regulations – i.e. *European Commission Recommendation and Code of Practice* (1993), which were adopted in the scope of free market and employment. Later on, the EU also passed a *Directive 2002/72/EC* and the *Directive 2006/54/EC*, which repealed the former. Both of these directives framed sexual harassment as a form of gender-related discrimination at workplace. However the Directive of 2006 also makes clear that harassment should be prohibited not only in workplace, but also in access to employment, training and vocational training (European Parliament Think Tank, 2013).

The EU policymaking on violence against women has been also been character-

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8   The European Union Stockholm Programme (2010-2014) was a 5-year plan adopted in December 2009 within the area of Justice and Home Affairs. It received a subtitle – An open and secure Europe serving and protecting the citizens. It included topics such as migration and development, labour migration, fundamental rights of non-EU nationals, illegal migration, etc.

9   Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and the Council of 25 October 2012 establishes minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, as it replaces the former Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA. The directive acknowledges the vulnerable position of victims of gender-based violence, as it calls for the establishment of specific service-provision system for women, victims of violence.

10   While this directive addresses the victims of violence in general, a number of provisions of the directive are present in particular in relation to the victims of domestic violence gender-based violence.

ised by the promotion of other normative mechanisms developed within structures of intergovernmental cooperation – e.g. Council of Europe (such as the *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence* – the so called *Istanbul Convention*) or the United Nations (e.g. CEDAW[11]), (European Parliament Think Tank, 2013). Through different measures, the EU policymakers encourage EU Member States to comply with these conventions (Krizsán, Popa, 2010). Within this context, it is important to note that on 13 June 2017, the EU has signed the *Council of Europe Istanbul Convention*[12] , which has been on the agenda of the European Parliament since 2014[13] and was followed by a *European Commission Roadmap* on possible EU accession in 2015. The *Istanbul Convention* as a normative document with its focus on the gendered aspects of violence also entails a clear outline of its monitoring, which is embodied in the expert group GREVIO[14] . As such, this instrument is so far the broadest of its kind as it provides an all-encompassing perspective on violence against women and its gendered nature (European Parliament Think Tank, 2013). Krizsán and Roggeband (2017) accentuate that within the context of the aforementioned soft-law normative documents, the EU functions not as a norm setter, but rather as an amplifier of the global and regional norms. In this context, the EU is perceived as, *"[…] an identity with no institutional demands attached, yet which is perceived as reflecting the overall direction of progress"* (Krizsán, Roggeband, 2017, p. 78).

What is also crucial to mention with regards to the study of EU policies tackling violence, is specifically the gradual evolution of the discursive framing of violence from

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11   Engle Merry (2016) argues that while the 1979 *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) did not address violence against women directly, the committee monitoring the convention developed an initial recommendation against violence in 1989 and later addressed violence against women in a broader recommendation in 1992.

12   The Convention was signed by the EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality – Věra Jourová.

13   The European Parliament also commissioned a study for the EP FEMM Committee – *Violence against women and the EU accession to the Istanbul Convention*, which was published in 2017.

14   The GREVIO expert group was established by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in 2014 as an independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the *Istanbul Convention* by the parties to the Convention. It is important to note, that Slovakia is currently not a party to the convention, as it has not been ratified.

the concepts of domestic violence and violence against women which has been aided not only by the 'hard law' measures[15] . The reader may have also so far encountered a number of expressions being simultaneously used – i.e. domestic violence, violence against women, gender-based violence, and intimate partner violence. While Krizsán and Popa (2010) write explicitly of domestic violence, the development of the EU policymaking also witnessed a clearer shift towards the understanding of the gendered nature of this violence, thus adopting the discourse of gender-based violence. This is also visible within the recent framework strategies adopted by the European Commission, including the *Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010, the European Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men 2010 – 2015*, and the *Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016 – 2019*, which all contain provisions on bodily integrity and gender-based violence understood primarily as violence against women. A number of framework documents have been so far adopted by the European Parliament to outline the requirements of the policymaking area - i.e. the European Parliament resolutions on violence against women[16] . However, Jacquot (2017) argues that the European Parliament along with its FEMM (Gender Equality) Committee need to be understood as rather isolated within its institutional setting, which is demonstrated within its own evidence-based reporting. However, these documents function as frameworks for the development of EU policymaking on violence, as they set out the agenda and function as discursive planes establishing 'how these problems represent the issues' (Bacchi, 2009).

Within this study, we identify the current framing of the EU policies according to a report conducted for the European Parliament (European Parliament Think Tank, 2013), as based on the narrative of 'violence against women', whereby this violence is understood as a form of gender-based discrimination. The discursive frames of vi-

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15   The projects MAGEEQ and QUING inspired this work considerably with regards to their focus on the framing of particular issues with regards to gender equality policies of European Union structures and EU Member States (Dombos et al., 2012). Further information on these projects will be provided in chapters devoted to the methodology of this study.

16   This includes the following: *European Parliament Resolution of 26 November 2009 on violence against women, European Parliament Resolution of 5 April 2011 on priorities and outline of a new EU policy framework to fight violence against women, European Parliament Resolution of 25 February 2014 with Recommendations to the Commission in Combating Violence Against Women.*

olence against women can be further broken down to questions of how this violence should be tackled, or what are its consequences (i.e. diagnosis and prognosis). True (2009) contends that the currently dominant frame of EU equality policies is that of the free trade, accentuating economic factors and stemming from the neoliberal[17] principles. For example, Kobová (2016) argues that the current framing of violence against women and domestic violence within the EU policies is based on the neo-liberal principle of responsibilisation, which suggests that domestic violence affects women who further cannot fully participate on the labour market. This aspect has been also accentuated within documents such as the *European Added Value Assessment on Violence against Women*[18] (European Parliament Think Tank, 2013).

However, the process of 'layering' also entailed policymaking approached which were far from appearing as 'hard'. In relation to the EU policies on domestic violence and violence against women, Krizsán and Popa (2010) contend that the accession process and the years 2003 and 2005, had been crucial for the EU gender equality policymaking[19]. While the authors emphasise that the European Commission promoted the issue of domestic violence only in a limited number of CEE countries, the structures were already promoting conditionality related to domestic violence, facilitated collective learning through the funding mechanism of the DAPHNE project, as well as promoted the work of feminist advocates to motivate policy change (Krizsán, Popa, 2010). While without 'hard law' mechanisms (which would be comparable to directives or European Parliament resolutions), the authors identified the processes of 'Europeanisation' through strategic discursive framing and learning of the actors at the national level. However, it is also important to acknowledge that the developments within the CEE region with regards to gender equality policies also raise serious questions about the norm adoption, since the process within these countries stemmed from international pressure (Krizsán, Popa, 2010). The application of indicator-based tools within

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17   This understanding is in line with Walby (1999), who argues that the EU gender equality policies were developed within a policymaking area which is focused primarily upon the goals of free market.

18   The assessment provided to the FEMM Committee of the European Parliament calls for the requirement to establish the cost of violence against women which would evaluate these costs based on the national expenses on health and social care (European Parliament Think Tank, 2013).

19   The authors also accentuate that specific laws addressing domestic violence were previously absent within the area of Central and Eastern Europe until mid-2000.

EU policies tackling violence against women had been extensively witnessed during the pre-accession period of the CEE states (Schimmelfenning, Sedelmeier, 2005). Within this process, the Commission opted for monitoring, questionnaires, timetables and others indicator-based tools with auditing potential in order to gain comparable data. These included the *Regular Reports* issued by the Commission since 1998, which also contained the topic of domestic violence (Krizsán, Popa, 2010). Therefore, it can be argued, that the institutionalisation of knowledge sharing via indicator-based tools as a valuable incentives for policy change has been established within this region long before the recent and broader developments in EU policymaking which constitute the core of this study.

As already mentioned, essential to the EU policymaking within the field of gender equality is the focus on financial incentives, which have been vital for the development of CEE policymaking. These include financial mechanisms such as the STOP programme, DAPHNE programme or PROGRESS, which were aimed at individual national projects[20] . Krizsán and Popa (2010) stress in particular the influence of the DAPHNE programme[21] upon CEE policies tackling the topic of domestic violence. As the authors contend: *"The main features of the program, however, indicate that the larger aim is not to provide a substantive normative direction for policy change, but rather to generate change by facilitating the creation of mechanisms that opened space for exchange of good practices, norm diffusion and norm construction through networking among a variety of partners"* (Krizsán, Popa, 2010, p. 392). Thus, the authors accentuate the nature of these financial tools as essentially promoting network-building and knowledge exchange, thus establishing the EU policies as structures of knowledge transfer.

In order to further study the non-coercive and indicator-based policymaking tools, one has to go back as far as the late 1990s and outside of the European communi-

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20   Krizsán and Popa (2010) argue that the financial programme DAPHNE, which was directly linked to the promotion of projects tackling domestic violence and violence against women can be perceived as a combination of social learning and lesson drawing model.

21   Krizsán and Popa (2010) contend that while the European Commission DAPHNE programme (established in 1997) did not address policy change directly, it had considerable impact on the framing of the issue of domestic violence, capacity building of NGOs.

ty structures in order to look for the roots of the current state of the art. The procedure of identifying indicators set up for benchmarking and ranking within the EU gender equality policy can be traced as far as to the year 1998. At the end of the 1990s, the European Commission along with the Council of the EU established the first indicators based on the *Beijing Platform in Action* (Verloo, Van Der Vleuten, 2009). Based on this initiative, the intergovernmental body Council of the EU has been involved in the process of establishing international standards for gender equality policies in the form of quantifiable indicators. While there have been many initiatives of establishing individual indicators with a clear system of accountability, it is important to note that the initiatives related to the development of indicators for violence against women have been rather non-linear (Ivančíková, 2015). Individual initiatives have been set forth by the Council Conclusions based on the agenda of the Council Presidencies, while the Council for Employment, Social Affairs, Health and Consumers Affairs has been identified as the core reviewer. In 2002, the both the Spanish and Danish Presidency in cooperation suggested the adoption of seven indicators[22] based on the *Beijing Platform in Action* related to domestic violence. The Irish Council Presidency in 2004 stressed the importance of including sexual harassment in workplace as a topic within the indicators, which previously only focused solely on intimate partner violence. While these have been adopted, and have been often referred to within the work of the Presidencies, the indicators have been presented first as a framework, rather than measurements, since there was considerable lack of data at the national level. Later Council Presidencies took up this development as they focused more explicitly on violence against women. The most recent Council Conclusions on the topic of domestic violence and violence against women until 2016 also include those of years 2010 Spanish Presidency of the Council[23] and 2012 Cyprus Presidency of the Council[24] . The

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22   These included aspects such as: 1. Profile of victims 2. Profile of perpetrators 3. Victim support 4. Measures addressing the male perpetrator to end the circle of violence 5. Training of professionals 6. State measures to eliminate violence against women 7. Evaluation (Ivančíkova, 2015).

23   The Council of the European Union conclusions of 2010 were drafted by the Spanish Presidency of the Council. The conclusions among other calls on EU Member States requested the national administrations to *"contribute to the conclusion of the Council of Europe draft Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence"*. The Council of the European Union conclusions of 2010 also include a *European Union Handbook of best police practices on tackling violence against women*. The handbook was officially adopted by the Police Cooperation Working Party, 6-7 April 2010.

24   The Council of the European Union conclusions of 2012 were drafted by the Cyprus presidency of the Coun-

identified set of indicators currently serves as a (discursive) framework for the identification of the crucial factors in relation to violence against women (see Council of the European Union, 2012).

Within the work of the Council Presidencies, a number of topics have been flagged for further reporting and political engagement. In 2009, the Swedish Council Presidency focused on the topic of violence against women within their EU comparative report titled *Beijing +15: The Platform for Action and the European Union.* Furthermore, since only recently, the agency European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has been concerned with the preparation of evidence-based policy inputs (e.g. comparable statistical data, indexes, and good practice databases) on the topic of gender-based violence. For example, in 2012, the agency published a comparative report drafted in cooperation with the Cyprus Council Presidency titled *Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States: Violence against Women – Victim Support.*

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) itself has been established within the EU policymaking structure as an expert agency (Jacquot, 2017). The first reference to the proposal to establish an independent agency focused on gender equality can be traced back to the Swedish Council Presidency in 1999[25] (Hubert, Stratigaki, 2011). Later on, the European Council in Nice of 2000 called for the establishment of an institution, which would help EU Member States share their experience, enable pooling of resources and help raise awareness on gender (in)equality. EIGE was eventually established in 2006 (with operations launched in 2010) with the core objective to: *"[…] collect, analyse and disseminate relevant objective, comparable and reliable information as regards gender equality including results from research and best practice communicated to it"* (European Parliament Regulation No. 1922, 2006, p. 11).

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cil. The conclusions call on EU Member States to sign and ratify the *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence,* as well as to assure the effective implementation of the *Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime*. The Council conclusions also promote the EIGE comparative report, which was drafted in cooperation with the *Cyprus Presidency – Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States: Violence against Women – Victim Support.*

25   The aim of the centre was to aid with the developing gender mainstreaming approaches and methodologies.

With a similar objective on the agenda, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) was established in 2007 as the successor of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). As such, the agenda of the previous centre was curtailed and limited only to the collection of evidence-based data serving as policymaking input (Toggenburg, 2008). The establishment of the agencies needs to be understood in the context of an institutional change which took place at the beginning of the millennium with the aim to decentralise some tasks of the Council and the European Commission (Von Bogdandy, Von Bernstorff, 2009). This period which witnessed the establishment of the so-called information agencies is by Wonka and Rittberger (2010) understood as the second wave of EU 'agencification' leading yet again to the establishment of 'good governance'.

Let us recall, that the requirement to gather reliable and comparable data has been accentuated within the EU policies on violence against women even before the community opted to establish the aforementioned agencies. Before they have launched operations, the European Commission has also engaged in the process of collecting comparative data on the topic of domestic violence. In 2010, it has commissioned a *Eurobarometer survey* on the topic of domestic violence. It has been proposed within the framework of the European Union *Stockholm Programme*, that the Eurostat would be involved in systematic collection of data on national security. The so-called *Safety Survey* would include statistics on the incidents of particular crimes, such as partner and non-partner physical and sexual violence. Nevertheless, this project was later rejected after the 2012 European Parliament report, which called for major revisions of the project. According to the position statement provided by the European Parliament in 2012, the proposed Eurostat project had no added value, as well as it included problematic methodology.

Furthermore, in 2014 the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) published the largest comparative study on the experience of women with violence within the EU so far, thus continuing the efforts which were previously halted in relation to the Safety Survey. The survey collected data from over 42,000 respondents and mapped their experience with various forms of coercive behaviour in their partner relations, at work,

school, etc. Engle Merry (2016) argues that the collection of data on the broad topic of violence against women and its stratification into presentable and quantifiable indicators has to be approached as a discursive practice. According to the author, there are 4 distinct frameworks which can be applied when quantifying the complex issue of violence against women – these include gender equality, human rights, criminal justice, and statistical capacity. Applying this perspective, it is clear that the tools developed within the organisational and institutional setting of the EU are slowly shifting from the criminal justice framework through the human rights approach towards the framework of gender equality. However, the framework of gender equality has not been fully adopted, which can be seen for example within the choice of indicators which is located within the partner and non-partner violence, without a broader recognitions of social inequalities or structures of gender (e.g. the FRA VAW survey).

In relation to the development of indicator-based policymaking tools, the *Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men 2010 – 2015* of the European Commission also requested the creation of the European Institute for Gender Equality *Gender Equality Index*. This tool is a composite indicator that aims to measure the complexities of the concept of gender equality. Within its scope, it aims to assist in monitoring processes of gender equality across the EU over time[26] . While the current index consists of comparable data going back to 2005, the area of violence against women has so far been only systematically included for year 2015. It is thus the work of the EIGE which in line with Engle Merry (2016) aims to establish the 'gender equality' framework for indicator-based policymaking within the EU policies themselves.

As previously quoted, Kriszan and Popa (2010) accentuate the establishment of direct funding schemes, such as DAPHNE and PROGRESS, led to the promotion of good-practice sharing as an instrument of policy learning. Krizsán and Roggeband (2017) also emphasise the project-oriented nature of the EU funding, the objective of which is the primary promotion of networking, awareness-raising, and diffusion of good practices, as opposed to capacity building or structural transformation. The de-

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26   The Gender Equality Index collects data within 8 distinguished areas – work, money, knowledge, time, power, health, violence, and intersecting inequalities.

liverables produced by FRA and EIGE emphasise the use of good practices among EU Member States nonetheless. Furthermore, the European Commission has been particularly eager to foster mutual learning by organising a number of conferences within the European Commission Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality, within which it devoted a number of events to the topic of domestic violence in 2012[27], 2013[28] and 2016[29].

The recent and hereby listed developments within the European Union policies tackling 'violence against women' point to the general direction of a broader evolution of gender equality policies towards 'indicators' as 'soft' tools developing along 'hard' measures, as these processes occur in the area of subsidiarity. Furthermore, these developments also need to be understood within the context of broader EU reforms of 'good governance' and 'evidence-based policymaking'. These developments included the objectives of addressing areas which were originally subsumed under the principle of subsidiarity, as well as they resulted from the need to tackle the criticism of the technocratic nature of EU policymaking. The area of gender equality has been gradually taking its shape since the adoption of the *Treaty of Lisbon*, as the measures of gender mainstreaming and the Open Method of Coordination fostered the 'auditability' of gender equality policies and paved the way for benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing. However, the study of these developments also need to be considered with regards to the extensive scholarship of international governmentality.

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27 The European Commission programme on good practice sharing of 2012 was devoted to awareness raising in the context of violence against women. The programme took part in the United Kingdom (7-8 February 2012). No Slovak representatives were present during this event.

28 The European Commission programme on good practice sharing of 2013 was devoted to the topic of 'fighting violence against women'. The programme took part in Spain (16-17 April 2013) and the Slovak Republic was represented by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family, as well as a non-governmental organisation representative (NGO MyMamy).

29 The European Commission programme on good practice sharing of 2012 was focused on the topic of female genital mutilation and other harmful practices. The event took part in the United Kingdom (28-29 April 2012). No Slovak representatives were present during this event.

1.3 European Union Gender Equality Policies – A New Rationality?

The study of indicator-based policymaking within European Union gender equality policies, including the policies tackling 'violence against women', would not be complete without addressing the recent reforms on European Union governance. We put the developments and the reforms into context with the public policies studies concepts (or one may even argue movements) of 'evidence-based policymaking' (which has also already been mentioned) and the 'New Public Management'. With regards to these concepts/movements, it is in order to refer to the work of authors Van Dooren and colleagues (2015) who highlight the objectives of indicator-based policymaking - these include to learn, to account, and to steer and control[30] . This perspective allows us to look at indicators both as knowledge-based instruments (i.e. inputs into policymaking), as well as tools of change and organisational monitoring (i.e. tools of governing at distance[31]), (Espeland, Sauder, 2007; Fougner, 2008; Manokna, 2013; Sokhi-Bulley, 2014).

Within their work, Broome and Quirk (2015a, 2015b) argue, that it is currently extremely difficult to think of an area of intergovernmental cooperation (from international security to climate change) which has not been influenced by indicator-based policymaking, or as they establish - the 'politics of numbers'. While the advent of the first initiatives of indexing human rights by the Freedom House[32] can be traced back to the 1970s (Manokna, 2013; Homolar, 2015), the last two decades saw the explosion of indicator-based policymaking in intergovernmental cooperation. We believe that the EU policymaking in the area of gender equality is following the framework set by other

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30   It will be clear from the theorisations below, that these abilities are not mutually exclusive, but have to be all taken into account as a structure in order to study the tools and their influence upon the national contexts (i.e. national actors of policymaking, as well as learning as a form of practice).

31   To provide a simple example of this understanding - an index measuring relational concepts of gender equality can serve both as an evidence-based input into policymaking – a tool of policy change, as well as a monitoring instrument of national administrations based on a perspective of quantification, comparison, and hierarchisation (Rosga, Satterthuaite, 2008; Sokhi-Bulley, 2014).

32   The first index published by the non-governmental organisation Freedom House was in 1972 called Freedom in the World. This index was based on the 'relational' measuring of a variety of concepts, thus with a comparative aspect of the assessed states (Rosga, Satterthuaite, 2008).

intergovernmental organisations - the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), or the World Bank, all of which have been developing indicators for the purposes of benchmarking, ranking, and good practice sharing in the area of equality for the past two decades[33] (Liebowitz, Zwingel, 2014). Here again, we can speak of EU policymaking not only as setting trends, but also as amplifying the structures present within the international realm. As we argue within this work, EU gender equality policies on violence have been in the past decades experiencing particular constraints, to which indicator-based policymaking aimed to serve as a wide-spectrum panacea – a new rationality of doing policies.

The first incentives which constituted the substrate for the shift to gender mainstreaming, the OMC and other indicator-based tools, were set out in the European Commission *White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment* during the oversight period by Jacques Delors in 1993. This document was later on followed by another *White Paper of the European Commission* in 2001, which called for new mechanisms of monitoring and controlling (Malíková et al., 2013). This document sets out its 'goal of the decade' – to become the most competitive and knowledge-based economy in the world (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, Halligan., 2015). It further states that: *"[…] scientific and other experts play an increasingly significant role in preparing and monitoring decisions. From human and animal health to social legislation, the institutions rely on specialist expertise to anticipate and identify the nature of problems and uncertainties that the Union faces"* (European Commission, 2001, p. 19). Within the area of policymaking constrained by the principle of subsidiarity, this document speaks specifically of the areas of health and social legislation. Both of these documents need to be understood as strategic discursive texts which led to the establishment of a framework accentuating and legitimating the paradigm of new policymaking rationalities based on the transfer and use of knowledge (Minto, Mergaert, 2018). According to Nilsson and colleagues (2008), the systematic collection and utilisation of evidence has been seen as a major drive for 'better governance' and 'better regulation' aimed to tackle the criticisms of EU policymaking practices.

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33   The indicators in question are for example the Gender Development Index (GDI), or the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), (Liebowitz, Zwingel, 2014).

According to Radaelli (1999), these criticisms and public concern have been already oscillating during the adoption of the *Maastricht Treaty*, while the early stages of the European integration were characterised by the 'technocratic' approach embedded in the Monnet Plan. What is more, Radaelli (1999) argues that this negative legacy has been pervading the EU institutions for many years after the foundations had been laid. In their later work, Dunlop and Radaelli (2015) as well as Arribas and Carrasco (2003) posit that the issue of the democratic deficit has been the core reason why the European Commission has been drawing heavily on expertise, economic efficiency and policy knowledge transfer. This is hardly surprising, as Hardoš (2015) posits that the tension between democratic rule and expert knowledge has been an easily recognisable feature of modern politics, but has also had deep implications for democratic theory. For example, over 15 years ago Walby (2005) argued with regards to gender mainstreaming, that one of its potentials is to dismantle the false dichotomy and rivalry of democratic rule and 'technocratisatic' tendencies in policymaking. However, this thesis has been so far tested by a number of authors who were recalled in the first section of this chapter. The paradigmatic shift within the OMC towards social learning and 'soft' governance also appears to have provided a gateway for coordination and unification of policy frameworks, which is experienced by the EU MS administrations as 'following different paths to the same destination' (Radaelli, 2008; Bruno, 2009).

Within this climate of constraint and uncertainty, the tools of policymaking working with indicators gained their momentum. As Liebowitz and Zwingel (2014) argue in connection to gender mainstreaming, the ability to express gender hierarchies in numbers has added not only the aura of transparency, but also provided visibility and urgency to the goal of gender equality. What also needs to be considered is the 'ideological' nature of gender equality policies which is also addressed by authors Verloo and Van Der Vleuten (2009). The authors claim that tools such as the OMC could be grasped more effectively within such problematic (one may say 'agonistic') fields. We can also recall the words of Brno (2009) who claimed that these tools would be able to deliver the 'impartiality and fairness' so much needed in these 'ideological' environments.

Within this work, we argue that these different constraints of EU (gender equality) policies led to the adoption of indicator-based tools of policymaking, thus following the policymaking paradigms of 'New Public Management' (NPM) and 'evidence-based policymaking', hand in hand with the reforms on EU governance. The NPM paradigm itself tends to be described as the re-contextualisation, or a spill-over, of economic and business discourse into the policymaking processes (Fairclough, 2013; Broome, Quirk, 2015a, 2015b). The movement has been linked to the adoption of the 'concepts of production industries' - i.e. 'competitiveness', 'performance' or 'transparency', as values which need to be embedded into administrative strategizing (Drummond, 2003; Egeberg, Trondal, 2016). This paradigm of policymaking thus gives way to new regulatory instruments of efficient performance and political accountability (Van der Vleuten, Verloo, 2012), which can be perceived as particularly appealing (or even rational) to structures lacking (or struggling to retain) their legitimacy. The paradigm is hereby viewed as establishing the discourse of 'accountability' within policymaking structures, which was by some understood as the 'audit explosion'[34] (Power, 1997), or the 'performance culture' (Ahmed, 2012) in policymaking – thus establishing a new kind of policymaking rationality. The adoption of measurable and comparable performance metrics within the paradigm can be thus viewed as a form of neo-liberal political logic[35].

Furthermore, the link between the NPM paradigm and the concept of evidence-based policymaking[36] (EBP) is explained by Drummond (2003, p. 58) who posits, that: *"[Within NPM] knowledge begins to be treated not simply as something that is used or applied in the making of a product precision of a service, but begins to*

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34   The term 'audit explosion' was coined by Power (1997) who understands this as a pragmatic restructuring of organisational life and a new rationality of governance. Power understood the organisational logic as an all-pervasive pressure to evaluate processes, which is internalised by a variety of actors.

35   Kobová (2016) writes of different understandings of what constitutes neo-liberal discourses of public administrations, specifically in relation to gender equality policies. The author further concludes based on the works of Michel Foucault (1963, 1982, 1998, 2003) that neo-liberalism represents a shift in governance, a particular rationality which promotes competitiveness, responsibilisation and individualisation.

36   A number of authors understand 'evidence-based policymaking' as a recent paradigm established within Western European countries in the 1990s, which was preceded by previous movements of public administration – the social survey movement (1900s – 1940s), scientific management and science of administration (1900s – 1940s) and social indicators (1960s – 1970s) (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, Halligan, 2015). However, Parkhurst (2017) and Mitchell (2017) argue that the philosophical foundations of the EBP paradigm can be even traced to the American political scientist Harold Lasswell, or even further to Plato, Aristotle or Machiavelli.

be treated as a product, a commodity in its own right". Knowledge is hereby understood as a competitive advantage (Pawson, 2006), whereby the 'large numbers' (i.e. statistics) have been established as 'biopolitical'[37] regulatory tools (Mertl, Krčál, 2013; Sokhi-Bully, 2014; Gély, et al., 2016; Mitchell, 2002). The positionality of the indicator-based tools within the EBP concept rests on their assumed anti-ideological (i.e. scientific) substrate, which aims to overcome conflict within policymaking (Solesbury, 2001; Pawson, 2006). However, this perspective needs to be understood as highly contested by the current scholars of public policies (Parkhurst, 2017).

In this sense, indicator-based policymaking tools are instruments stemming from the political rationality established with the blessing of the two aforementioned paradigms. To recall the developments within the EU structures, the shift towards the indicator-based tools as regulatory instruments became institutionalised with the European Commission White Papers, most dominantly with the one published in 2001. Apart from the recent developments such as the establishment of the Scientific Advice Mechanism in 2015[38], the materialisation of this rationality is most visibly present within the political subjectivity and the agenda of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). Both of the agencies' regulations institutionalise their agenda as grounded in the requirement for evidence-based policymaking. It is therefore not surprising, that both of the agencies' regulations also take into consideration the requirement for an 'efficient provision of expertise', which requires monitoring. Both of the agencies are also obliged to undergo an independent external assessment conducted by private auditing companies (as defined within their regulations), (Valkovičová, 2017b). The agencies' regulations apply the lenses of 'managerialism' (Brady, 2014; Sanderson, 2002; Clegg, 2015) and 'auditability' (Power, 1997; Ahmed, 2012) to institutions, which are to provide expertise in the areas of policymaking which are considered to be highly ideological, i.e. gender

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37   Lemke (2001) establishes the transition of economic analytic schemata and criteria for economic design into the political sphere of social policymaking as a new form of liberalism connected to the Foucauldian realm of the 'biopolitical' – i.e. as the equation of economic prosperity with personal well-being.

38   The mechanism was adopted within the structures of the European Commission in 2015 with the objective of creating an independent body of experts within the fields of engineering, humanities, medicine, natural sciences, and even social sciences. The body of the mechanism constitutes of High Level Group of Scientific Advisors aimed at providing expertise to the Commissioners.

equality and human rights (Verloo, Van der Vleuten, 2009).

Despite the fact that the scholarship on indicator-based policymaking within intergovernmental cooperation has been growing within the past decades, its has been linked to gender equality policies only to a limited extent. Despite the existing scholarship which draws extensively onto the works of Michel Foucault (1963, 1982, 1998, 2003) and his concept of governmentality, there has been so far very little interest to put these theoretical frameworks together with EU gender equality policies. Looking at the introduction of the principles of economy into the political practice, Michel Foucault described governmentality as a form of rationality, or the art of government (Shore, 2011; Weidner, 2013). His understanding of governmentality is at the same time linked to his unconventional perception of power, which is different from the classic juridical theory of power (Foucault, 2003). We adopt this particular perspective with regards to the claim of Sending and Neumann (2006, p. 68) who argue that *"[…] studying global governance through the lens of governmentality enables us to study how different governmental rationalities are defined by certain values, practices and techniques, and how such rationalities of rule generate specific action-orientations and types of actors"*. We hereby understand indicator-based tools as methods of governmentality – i.e. (self)governing at distance (Engle Merry, 2016), or as a *"[b]ody of technocratic expertise that places a high value on numerical data as a form of knowledge and as a basis for decision making"* (Engle Merry, 2016, p. 9). The existing perspectives within the studies of 'politics of numbers' and tools of governing at distance can be particularly useful in understanding how this new political rationality functions upon the European Union structures and institutions.

For example Morrissey (2013) points to the ability of the indicators to constitute a 'normalising' process. The author describes this process as the 'transmission of the truth' over distance. However, the central aim of this 'truth' is not to endow the subjects (i.e. the states) and their political actors with aptitudes, but to modify their mode of being (or behaviour)[39] . Furthermore, a number of scholars highlight the specific

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39   While these tools are designed to impose self-reflection upon the governed subjects (Engle Merry, 2011), Fougner (2008) objects to the perception of states as subjects without their own agency. The author conceptualises states as subjects which enter the intergovernmental arena as competitive, calculative, technocratic and

feature of the indicator-based tools - the ability to present information as a form of expertise. Within this context, the tools are perceived as a form of scientific knowledge (while the data tends to stem from the research of social sciences), (Schrefler, 2010). Often used by political actors, the application of developmental indicators is to *"[s]ignal scientific rigour and to convey [the] aura of objectivity"* (Homolar, 2015, p. 855). Haas (1997) also argues that the control over knowledge and information is an important dimension of power and that the diffusion of knowledge can lead to new patterns of behaviour. Within the same vein, Sokhi-Bully (2016) and Gilles (2016) argue that the creation of particular statistical indicators may serve a significant role in presenting the promoter of the tool as a relevant and knowledgeable actor within the environment. In the same vein, we could understand the EU structures as seeking legitimacy for action through the promotion of evidence-based policymaking and the indicator-based tools.

Considerable body of literature points in particular to the ability of the indicator-based tools of intergovernmental cooperation to help transform complex social phenomena into tangible means of quantification, thus providing for extrapolation and simplification (e.g. Broome, Quirk, 2015a, 2015b; Engle Merry, 2011), which may come across as highly desirable in agonistic struggles. Benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing tend to simplify the studied phenomena to the point where concepts such as 'freedom', 'development' and 'democracy', which academics routinely describe as contested, appear as fixed unproblematic and reified categories (Bruno et al., 2006; Golinelli, 2016). The authors elaborate upon this further by claiming that the knowledge-based global governance tools hold two objectives: they systematically quantify political aims and they frame political norms and social representation to give them meanings. Such understanding is similar to Poovey's (1998) elaborations upon the so-called 'modern fact'[40] – i.e. 'numbers' as signifiers of transparency.

In a similar vein, it has been also argued that the tools and their indicators can serve as modes of communication within organisational cultures. Once numbers have

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transformative agencies. As such, they negotiate their positions within the arena, which opens up questions of rationality of actors within the intergovernmental cooperation.

40   Poovey (1998) understands the establishment of numbers as modes of communication, as pre-interpretative or even non-interpretative.

been identified as carriers of 'expertise' or 'transparency', they facilitate the agenda of the organisations and help its members align to the goals of the organisation (Broome, Quirk, 2015b; Eisenstein, 2017). As Engle Merry (2016) argues, recourse to the 'technical game' is unavoidable in epistemologically heterogeneous zones, as such, the language of indicators can become a 'metacode' with multiple objectives – e.g. it can signify who is an expert and who is not. However, this ability to present complex social phenomena in simple quantifiers has not been left without criticism. Socio-economic policies can hardly be defined in terms of 'input and output', as national particularities can be overshadowed within the process of comparison, i.e. for example in the process of ranking, which tends to seek data which is 'comparable' rather than 'relevant'[41] (Plantenga, Hansen, 1999; Homolar, 2015).

Furthermore, Bruno (2009) extends this theoretical framework by bringing forward the framing possibilities of benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing. The author assumes that the procedures applied give the national political elites the means to act legitimately according to a certain kind of rationality and motivation, thus referring again to the 'numbers as a metacode'. This is linked to the ability of the indicators not only to be descriptive, but also prescriptive. The use of knowledge may serve some organisations as a tool for the public justification for the chosen policy. As such, knowledge is used instrumentally in order to help the ideology-planning (Knorr-Cetina, 1976). This leads us to perceive these tools of governance as specific vectors of policymaking, which is also sometimes described as the 'anchoring effect'[42] (Golinelli, 2016; Bruno, 2009). Broome and Quirk (2015a) explain this in a similar vein when they speak of the ability of indicators to stimulate conversation about the particular dimensions of given issues in political arenas – e.g. when the concept of 'violence against women' is simplified into an index which only retains particular indicators (e.g. keeps female genital mutilation, but excludes safety in the public). As

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41   Engle Merry (2016) for example argues in relation to indicators developed on the topic of violence against women that since it is a culturally constituted category which takes many forms with a wide array of cultural meaning, the construction of indicators itself is a daunting project. As the author claims, the requirement of stripping the issue into simple indicators may lead to the situation where the issue is accepted as a 'black box' that no longer needs to be explained or justified.

42   Anchoring effect simply means that the indicators and benchmarks are able to shape how different actors subsequently think about and see specific issues (Golinelli, 2016).

such, Engle Merry (2016) argues that while the tools can stimulate the technocratic discourse about a particular policy issue, they are also prone to provide only a limited perspective of the issues in question. What is more, Engle Merry (2016) also writes of the so-called 'data inertia' - this is the author's assumption that the construction of the tools is to a great degree influenced by the nature of the data that is already available, rather than the desire of the orchestrators of the tools to seek and collect new data. The data available is sought to legitimise action that is already 'in the pipeline'.

Within their work on global governmentality, Héritier (2002) and Verloo and Van Der Vleuten (2009) conclude that the reputation of individual states contributes to the power position of the state with regards to the domestic and international society. The authors claim that the application of benchmarks and ranks within intergovernmental cooperation simultaneously operates with the concept of reputation, which functions as a metaphor for the implementation of particular policies. Through this process, the application of intergovernmental benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing became understood as the process of 'naming and shaming' (Bruno, 2009). Peer comparison among states may be viewed as a normalising process which aims to induce self-reflecting learning cycles (Triantafillou, 2007; Fougner, 2008; Manokna, 2013). The concept is at the same time premised on the perception of 'doing badly' as more useful for streering, than 'doing well' (Ahmed, 2012). Larner and Walters (2006) assume in the same vein that it is the interaction with other states, which regulates the behaviour of the governed subject.

The above-mentioned perspectives of indicator-based tools stemming from the studies of international governmentality approach them as a particular kind of rationality which is embedded in the neo-liberalisation of public policymaking. These tools, along with the EU structures' reforms embedded in the concepts of 'New Public Management' and 'evidence-based policymaking', can be understood as a drive to seek solutions to the constraints and uncertainties faced with regards to the EU gender equality policies. The above non-exhaustive outline of the development of the indicator-based policies, as well as the theoretical perspectives to the functions and objectives of governing at distance, encourage us to study the presence of this rationality at the national level.

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This chapter summarised the recent developments of European Union gender equality policies with regards to specifically the topic of violence against women. The framework of layered policymaking (Minto, Mergaert, 2018) has been above all shifting towards social learning and capacity building (Krizsán, Popa, 2010) within the discursive boundaries of competitiveness and evidence-based policymaking promoted by the European Commission (starting with the two White Papers of 1993 and 2001), (Dunlop, Radaelli, 2016). The drive to indicator-based policymaking, which has so far received very little academic attention, has been promoted through a variety of venues, starting at the grounds of Beijing Platform in Action. The venues included pre-accession steering (Krizsán, Popa, 2010), financial incentives (i.e. STOP, DAPHNE, PROGRESS), Council Presidencies Conclusions, and eventually with the aid of the newly established agencies – EIGE and FRA. The policymaking tools of gender mainstreaming and the Open Method of Coordination aided with the establishment of new governmentality tools (Fougner, 2008; Manokna, 2013) rooted in new discourses of policymaking based on the constant flow of information and knowledge, as a requirement to address the democratic deficit, find a way to manage policies subsumed under the principle of subsidiarity, and aid the need to 'depoliticise' highly ideological areas. As such, a new form of rationality has been established within the area of tackling violence against women, which aim 'to teach, to account, to steer and to control' (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, Halligan, 2015) and preferably to do it at the same time with as little conflict as possible.

2. SETTING THE FRAMEWORK: EUROPEANISATION, ACTOR-CENTRED INSTITUTIONALISMS, AND LEARNING

As the previous chapter established, this thesis sets its framework into the realm of the study of European Union policies and the impact of their structures and institutions at the national EU Member State level. As such, this study is grounded in the post-ontological perspectives to EU institutions, as it aims to be particularly responsive and critical towards the impact of EU institutions at the domestic level, as opposed to the ontological perspective, which would study the development of EU institutions *per se* (Radaelli, 2002). 'Europeanisation', a term which cannot be conflated with convergence or harmonisation, is within this chapter approached as a procedure-oriented conceptual framework aided with discursive-sociological institutionalism. This approach accentuates the study of the role of adoption, processes of learning and (discursive) policy change (Ladrech, 1994). Rather than being perceived as a process of 'downloading' of EU norms and institutional structures (Howell, 2004), this study adopts a more actor-centred perspective, which is more receptive to cognitive and behavioural transformations among the core actors of policymaking, thus acknowledging their agency, or potential resistance to learning or change.

2.1 Europeanisation, Social and Discursive Institutionalism

This work has been inspired by the unique yet broad definition of Europeanisation promoted by Radaelli (2002). The author claims, that Europeanisation is *"[a process] of (a) construction (b) diffusion (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies"* (Radaelli, 2002, p. 108). Inspired by Radaelli's perspective of Europeanisation as a set of procedures and 'ways of doing things', this study adopts this theoretical framework in order to study knowledge transfer with regards to

the presence of indicator-based tools as a particular practice. Looking into this framework of Europeanisation by Radaelli (2002), we observe that the author understands different aspects of national public policies (from basic elements such as actors and resources, to discourses and policy styles) as possibly affected by EU institutions. As he further claims, cognitive and normative structures can be affected by European Union policymaking, which needs to be addressed by new versions of institutionalisms – i.e. sociological and discursive institutionalism[43].

However, Claudio Radaelli (2002, p.110) also raises an important question of the so-called 'degreeism' within the studies of Europeanisation. Rather than being too detailed about 'What is Europeanisation?', he simply asks "What is not Europeanized?". He claims that most political scientists would agree that every national policy is according to his own definition, more or less Europeanized. By asking this question, Radaelli comes to the conclusion that degreeism is itself obsolete. He claims that further political science research needs to: *"[c]ontrol for the relative impact of Europeanisation (for example, in the area of administrative change), Europeanization can be an intervening variable in processes of modernisation and reform"* (Radaelli, 2002, p. 131). Thus Radaelli calls for the shift in our attention from the degree of Europeanisation to the empirical effects of EU institutions and structures. Among these effects, as Radaelli further claims, is the influence of individual and institutional choices upon policies, which can be affected by knowledge.

In order to follow this call, a number of authors have looked into the definition previously provided by Radaelli (2002) or Ladrech (1994) and drifted towards a more nuanced analytical concept of Europeanisation, which would be focused on the instruments and institutions of EU structures as an opportunity structure (Marx Ferree, et al., 2012), thus looking at EU institutions, policies and tools as an 'intervening variable'. For example, Forest (2006) defines Europeanisation as *"[a] set of political and legal resources drawn from the interactions with European Union and used by various actors"* (p.173). According to Saurugger (2005) who also took the EU public

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43 Hereby, we understand institutionalism as a field of policy studies, which recognises political institutional arrangements as influencing factors of policymaking processes. We also adhere to the perspective of March and

policies on gender equality into consideration, the concept of Europeanisation can be also understood as the evolution of new 'layers' of politics, which create new incentives for actors at the EU MS level. As such, European Union can also function as an abstract pool of resources for national actors. Saurugger and Radaelli (2008) for example accentuate the 'creative usage of Europe' as the ideal concept by which we can grasp actors' own agenda and strategizing within the policymaking structures. And not only the conventional actors of policymaking, such as the public sector and the bureaucrats, but also the non-governmental sector, thus providing a multi-level governance perspective. A more discourse-oriented perspective is provided by Ladrech (1994) who understands the concept of Europeanisation as the incorporation of EU political and economic 'dynamics' into the organisational logic of the national policymaking.

The understanding of Europeanisation as a set of resources (Forest, 2006; Saurugger, Radaelli, 2008) has also to a great extent influenced Woll and Jacquot (2010) in the development of a new analytical approach to the study of EU policymaking, which is based on the emphasis of the political and discursive opportunity structures (Marx Ferree, et al., 2012). The authors understand European Union as an abstract pool of resources, which can be grasped and 'used' in order to fit into the agenda of political actors. According to the authors, the EU (e.g. its tools - material and immaterial resources) can be used as a set of opportunities – institutional, ideological, political or organisational, as well as both material (financial incentives) and immaterial (ideas and knowledge). This understanding of Europeanisation thus sees EU institutions and structures as a 'layer' of policymaking (Saurugger, 2005), which is for instance experienced by actors at the level of EU MS. The authors Woll and Jacquot (2010) distinguish between three types of usage:

- Cognitive usage: ideas are used as persuasive mechanisms in the process of argumentation or framing particular political issues. This form of usage is most commonly applied within the agenda of political entrepreneurs, epistemic communities or advocacy coalitions;

Olsen (2006) who understand institutions as relatively stable collection of rules and practices, embedded within the structures of resources, which make the activities of political actors possible.

- Strategic usage: actors are able to create policy tools in order to mobilise resources within particular environments (e.g. to build political coalitions). This form of usage is most commonly identified among decision-makers and bureaucratic actors;

- Legitimising usage: this form of usage is applied when political decisions need to be communicated and justified (to the general public or at a variety of policymaking fora). The most common actors identified with this form of usage are lobbyists and politicians.

The understanding of Europeanisation as a form of resource pool is valuable for its onus upon of the process of knowledge sharing and transfer among policymakers at different levels. It allows us to go beyond the conventional understanding of Europeanisation as top-down or bottom-up process, as it provides us with a procedural view upon the connection between the micro-level and the macro-level of policymaking. The authors also surpass the conventional concept of 'misfit' between the EU and EU MS norms and institutions by claiming that what is a misfit does not have to be perceived only in terms of a formal mismatch between institutionalised norms (e.g. the compliance to the hard law norms) (Woll, Jacquot, 2010).

As already called for by Radaelli, such understanding and study of the complexity of Europeanisation requires a new set of 'institutionalisms' sensitive to the sociological and discursive aspects of policymaking. Therefore, the framework of discursive institutionalism has been developed by Vivien Schmidt (2006, 2010) and Claudio Radaelli (2004). Within her theoretical contributions, Schmidt (2006) has been specifically interested in the discursive functions of different modes of Europeanisation, in particular the rhetorical and framing functions of different institutions embedded within the European Union structures of policymaking[44]. Discursive institutionalism principally focuses on answering the questions of 'how are EU norms framed in the national contexts' and 'how is the EU discourse used by political actors'. The analytical lenses are put on the main actors at the national level, as the scholars ask questions about the

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[44] The concept of discourse within Schmidt's work is dynamic, she perceives it as an interactive process of policy coordination and communication.

actors who make the changes and about the dynamics which produce change at the national level (Lombardo, Forest, 2015). The actual asset of discursive institutionalism rests on its interest in the actual preferences, strategies and normative orientations of actors and the interplay of their preferences with the transfer of EU norms and paradigms. In the same vein, Bacchi (2009) understands discursive institutionalism as the approach which aims to identify how individual subjects negotiate their way through pervasive, yet conflicting discourses. The contribution of this approach to EU gender equality policies and their 'soft' nature is summarised by Forest and Lombardo (2012, p. 20) who conclude that: *"Findings from comparative analyses of gender equality policies that also consider soft measures through discursive methodologies have shed light on the highly differentiated impact of Europe according to policy areas, political cleavages, or mobilized actors. The picture of Europeanization that these studies offer is perhaps more complicated to interpret and less easy to generate models for, but it is also probably closer to empirical reality"*[45].

Furthermore, Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse (2009) come to understand that it is the study of the local actors, which can bear fruits within the framework of learning and policymaking. For these purposes, they emphasise sociological institutionalism, which perceives actors and institutions in a more dynamic way, as it accentuates the processes of interaction and mutual learning. The concept of 'actor agency' is particularly crucial for sociological institutionalism, and for this thesis. Hereby we understand agency as the ability and capacity of an actor to act consciously, which also exhibits a certain level of deliberate choice and autonomy. Within the constructivist perspective of actor agency, structures and agents mutually shape each other (Kantola, Lombardo, 2017), e.g. provide each other legitimacy or subjectivity. The approach of sociological institutionalism played so far a crucial role in advancing the studies of Europeanization, as it shifted the attention to the actors at the national level and to their percep-

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45 A particular contribution of this approach to the study of gender equality policies accentuated the presence of the concept of 'gender equality' in policymaking as an open signifier, which can be filled by both what the authors Lombardo and Meier (2006, 2008) understand as feminist and non-feminist content. They further argue that it is imperative to study the underlying discourse of policies constructed with the label of 'pro-gender equality', as the authors conclude specifically in relation to gender mainstreaming. The concept of gender equality within policies can be stretched and extended as a strategic tool of actors orchestrated by the practice of discursive framing. A similar example of the fleeting concept of gender equality is the process of discursive framing (so-called 'gendering') of the topic of violence, which will be further addressed in this study.

tions and preferences. As has been emphasised with regards to discursive institutionalism, actors need to be also seen as agents deliberately working (and negotiating) the structures (Swan, Fox, 2010).

Furthermore, by combining the approach of sociological and discursive institutionalisms, some scholars came to the conclusion that the joint perspective can be to the benefit of the Europeanization studies. While sociological institutionalism focuses on the forms and procedures of organisational life, discursive institutionalism gives discourses the status of dynamic entities, understood as constitutive structures. Thus, a joint perspective has also been envisioned and already advocated for. For instance, Lombardo and Forest (2015) come to understand discursive-sociological institutionalism as a constructivist approach, which allows scholars to step out of the conventional perception of Europeanisation as a top-down process. As authors Jackson and Sørensen (2013) remind us, the social world consists of thoughts and beliefs, of ideas and concepts, discourses and languages, which need to be taken into account in the study of policymaking processes. Thus, the joint approach draws attention to actors and their interactions in producing change; cultural norms and the process of norm diffusion; soft policy instruments as rules capable of producing policy change (Lombardo, Forest, 2015). We consider the approach to be particularly salient with regards to the study of the institutionalisation of feminist agenda within the state bureaucratic system, along with the study of different advocacy coalitions, role of academics and experts, or the so-called 'femocrats' (Walby, 1999; Van der Vleuten, 2007).

The analytical approach of discursive-sociological institutionalism has been so far constructive in promoting new perspectives into the processes of Europeanisation, especially in the area of 'soft policies', or policies subsumed under the principle of subsidiarity. In this regard, Forest and Lombardo (2012) challenge the view of Europeanisation as convergence, as they argue that EU gender equality policies are for their 'soft' character paramount in order to explore the institutional, discursive, and interactional dimensions of Europeanization processes which affect the national level of policymaking. As they further argue, 'Europe hits home' beyond legislation and institutional politics and affects domestic policies through new paradigms, change of beliefs and 'ways

of doing things', thus referring to Radaelli (2002). The authors accentuate different forms of learning as necessary to the development of gender equality policies at the EU and at the EU MS level.

As such, the approach of discourse-sociological institutionalism allows us to pay attention to the different interplays of the concept of Europeanisation and the 'processes of learning' at the national level. This work is also inspired by the theorisations developed by Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier (2005) who studied the developments within EU policymaking set forth during the pre-accession period of the Central and Eastern European Member States. Their work stems from the conceptualisations of Börzel and Risse (2003) and other rationalist and constructivist scholars within the field of international relations. The authors draw on the work of March and Olsen (2011) to distinguish between the 'logic of consequence' and the 'logic of appropriateness' with regards to learning as a process of norm diffusion. As they explain, the former assumes strategic and instrumentally rational actors who seek to maximize their own power and welfare. While according to the latter logic, actors are motivated by internalized identities, values and norms (Schimmelfenning, Sedelmeier, 2005). Within this conceptualisation of the actors' motivations, the authors identify processes and policy change as orchestrated by either EU institutions or EU Member States' institutions which fall under these two distinct modes of logic:

Table no. 1: Learning according to the logic of consequence and logic of appropriateness

Principal actor	Line of rule adoption	
	Logic of consequence	*Logic of appropriateness*
EU-driven	External incentives model	Social learning model
EU MS-driven	Lesson-drawing model	Lesson-drawing model

Source: (Schimmelfenning, Sedelmeier, 2005, p. 9).

Within this model, the external incentives are perceived as a form of pressure with clear external rewards and sanctions. It is also apparent that lesson-drawing is perceived as an initiative adopted by the national actors - as a process of adopting remedies for national problems according to the domestic needs, rather than draw-

ing on to 'hard law' solutions offered by the EU[46]. Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier (2004) add that lesson-drawing can only happen when three conditions are fulfilled – the actors start searching for rules abroad (a degree of 'national dissatisfaction'), as they direct their search to the EU and they evaluate EU rules as suitable for domestic circumstances. Another model of the logic of appropriateness is the social learning model, which operates with an environment where national actors adhere to the model proposed by the EU based on shared values and norms. It is crucial to emphasise, that within this perspective, what facilitates the process of social learning is the perception of EU policy as legitimate. Through this perspective, it can be argued that the adoption of indicator-based policymaking as of policymaking rationality can be subsumed under both modes of learning: lesson-drawing and social learning, depending on how we conceptualise the different forms of knowledge transfer and learning.

As such, this case study aims to follow the line of the aforementioned theoretical frameworks in order study the presence of European Union indicator-based policymaking as a process of knowledge transfer. The research question which is the foundation of this research stems from the objective to study 'Europeanization' through the tools as an intervening variable: *How have the EU indicator-based tools (i.e. benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing) been influencing Slovak policymaking in the area of violence against women?* We understand the notion of 'influence' in its broad spectrum, as we open up the grounds for different interpretations of the impact of these tools upon the national policymaking structures as constituting of a variety of actors. We understand the indicator-based tools as various 'forms of knowledge', which can have different effects upon the agenda of policymaking actors. Therefore, we adopt an actor-centred approach of the discursive-sociological institutionalism, whereby we understand 'Europeanisation' both an opportunity structure, as well a layered structure, whereby we control for the relative impact of Europeanisation – e.g. within the change of discourses and paradigms on policymaking, construction of particular coalitions and communities, or the change of the actors' conduct. Thus the positionality

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46   Benson and Jordan (2011) accentuate that research has so far managed to prove that lesson-drawing was a process both rational and voluntarist – for this particular reason it can be both explained by the logic of consequence and the logic of appropriateness.

and subjectivity of the actors involved within policymaking cannot be omitted – it is their agenda, modes of resistance, as well as different strategizing, which needs to be taken into the account. The sub-questions of the research look into the perception of these tools among the policymaking actors, thus focusing on the cognitive domain in Europeanisation studies, as the research looks into their perception of the 'knowledge transfer'. Hereby we look for the various 'negotiations' in relation to knowledge within their positionality in the policymaking field, as well as the different forms of resistance which they encounter or experience themselves. The aforementioned authors working with discourse-sociological institutionalism and the understanding of Europeanisation as a process draw our attention to the understanding of learning and policy change. Therefore, the following sub-section will focus upon the conceptualisation of learning within the current theories of Europeanisation as an analytical structure of the study backed by the approach of discursive-sociological institutionalism.

2.2 Learning and Epistemic Communities

The literature overview of the previous section aimed to establish the theoretical connections of learning (i.e. knowledge sharing) among policymaking actors as a vital component of the current proposals of Europeanisation. It is therefore essential to focus now on the theoretical developments in the field of learning and public policymaking. Within this subsection, we understand public policies according to Nutley and Webb (2009), who draw extensively on the work of Dye (1976). As the authors establish, public policies are hereby approached through a broad perspective as, *"[…] public issues defined as problems and the causes of action (or inaction) that arise to address these problems"* (Nutley, Webb, 2009, p. 13).

The study of the European Union policies has been so far influenced by many theorists who look at processes of knowledge transfer and understand the adoption of policies at the national level as a process of knowledge diffusion. The work summarised below focuses on 'learning' as a process which we consider crucial in relation to the establishment of indicator-based policymaking. This work draws extensively upon the

analytical approach of 'learning in policymaking' (Dunlop, Radaelli, 2018), as it does not approach learning and the actors' response to it as a dichotomous process, i.e. 'good/bad', 'sufficient/insufficient', but establishes it as a framework linked to Europeanisation - as a set of cognitive and discursive practices, dare we say even 'negotiations'. The authors accentuate that the concept of learning requires the full spectrum – from learning to zero learning, as this broader perspective is the property which is crucial to the eradication of bias in empirical analysis. 'What is learned, or what is opposed to' by the policymaking actors can be also understood as the relative impact of Europeanisation described by Radaelli (2002). The following section also stems from the work of Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow (2003), who claim that the current research within this area of policy learning has divided scholars into two groups. The first group deems knowledge to be a cognitive stimulus, which results in change of beliefs (and perceptions of institutions), while the second group understands knowledge to be a power resource. Within the next two subsections, we intend to approach learning within policymaking from both perspectives - we believe that taken from the aforementioned understandings of Europeanisation, knowledge in terms of indicator-based policymaking can fulfil both roles.

Learning has been established within Western political science as paramount to the study policymaking especially in the 1970s-1980s (Parkhurst, 2017). Already in 1974[47], Heclo and Wildavsky asserted that policymaking should be viewed more as a process of learning, rather than a process of conflict-resolution. The authors were among the first to point out the inevitable factor of learning as a force of change, as they focused on the structures of organisations and their institutions. Furthermore, Sabatier (1998) also provided his own view on the matter as he suggested a more detailed analysis focused on 'ideas' rather than organisational structures and networks. Hall (1993) asserted the structural perspective of learning when he claimed that learning is a deliberate attempt to adjust goals and techniques towards certain consequences. Furthermore, Zito and Schout (2009) reflected upon individual actors and their agenda within policymaking when they state that: *"[l]earning [as a concept] in policy analysis can be defined as a process of exercising a judgement based on experience*

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47   As Dunlop (2014) posits, the study of the transfer of knowledge and its use within policymaking has been par-

or some other kind of input that leads actors to select a different view of how things happen" (Zito and Schout, 2009, p. 1103). In order to reduce dissatisfaction with the status quo, policymakers either return to their national past, speculate about the future or seek lessons from current experience in other places (Rose, 1991; Dolowitz, Marsh, 1996).

It is clear from the overview of the previous section that many scholars point especially to the understanding of Europeanisation as a process which involves the transfer of information and elucidates learning fostered by EU organisations and institutions. Before we approach the classification of learning and knowledge transfer adopted for this case study, it is important to note that learning of actors can be understood as both intentional (e.g. through policy experimentation) and incidental (or intuitive). Learning can also be 'forced from above' (particularly when it comes to supranational structures) or more open and voluntary (Newig et al., 2015). Many of the existing frameworks applied to the analysis of learning consist of various typologies of learning based on the (hierarchical) nature of the structures within which the process happens, form and type of knowledge, as well as its type of use. This study merges the existing theorisation in order to work with the following framework. Within his study of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), Claudio Radaelli (2008) draws on the works of other authors and highlights the assets of the application of the method within the EU's ambition to foster learning by socialisation, by monitoring, by persuasion and arguing. The nature of Radaelli's learning typology is based on the different forms of use of knowledge, rather than the form of its transfer, or the type of information, which is being shared. Based on the works of other scholars[48], authors Zito and Schout (2009) add two more types of learning and two types of 'non-learning'[49].

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ticularly popular among Western scholars of political science and international relations in the 1970s and 1980s.

48 E.g. Heclo and Wildavsky (1974), Sabatier (1987), Rose (1991).

49 Hereby, 'no learning' as lesson avoidance or even blocked learning have to be understood as legitimate strategies, which do not necessarily have to be understood as actors 'taking uninformed decisions' (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, Halligan, 2015). In terms of blocked learning, authors Zito and Schout (2009) point out the factors of learning in policy analysis, which is that learning should not only be perceived as something that happens individually, but can affect different groups, networks even levels of policymakers in a different way. Therefore, they call for learning to be perceived as a process happening within collectives (or better networks). This is especially salient in relation to the presence of epistemic communities, as well as actor coalitions within policymaking.

Table no. 2: Types of learning based on forms of subsequent knowledge use

Types of learning based on forms of subsequent knowledge use		
Radaelli (2008)	Instrumental policy learning (lesson drawing)	Actors are learning about how to redesign policy instruments in order to carry out specific objectives. Instrumental policy learning is linked to programme and agenda change within policymaking.
	Social learning	Actors learn to look at policy issues via new perspectives, which can manifest itself through value shifts and may be triggered by changes in discourses. Social learning is linked to learning through international networks (and epistemic communities).
	Political learning (symbolic learning)	Actors learn about new and more sophisticated ways to push for their agenda through understanding preferences of other actors.
Zito and Schout (2009)	Organisational learning	Actors learn how to amend their political and political agenda within organisational structures. Organisational learning influences process-related behaviour and strategizing of actors.
	Un-learning	Actors seek to substitute old ideas with new ones, which are perceived as more fitting. Un-learning can be also considered as implicit within the aforementioned types of learning
	'No'learning (lesson avoidance)	Actors have been presented with knowledge, sharing has been identified, however, there has been no cognitive or behavioural change, since the actors prefer the status quo.
	Blocked learning	Actors experience cognitive change, however structures, interests, and current worldviews block behavioural change. Blocked learning happens at an individual or group level, however, it is not embedded within organisational routines and practices, because of the presence of veto players.

Source: (Radaelli, 2008; Zito, Schout, 2009)

While the abovementioned types of learning are foremost distinguished according to the forms of subsequent knowledge use and the nature of knowledge flow, Davies and colleagues (2009) also remind us that there are also specific groups of users of evidence, which need to be taken into consideration. The authors distinguish between policymakers and practitioners, as well as 'the public', and organised and interest groups. Nevertheless, they do not fail to accentuate that while seemingly distinguished, individual groups of users may be conflated, therefore, the use of knowledge needs to be approached as functioning among actors with a variety of identities and interests. Nutley and Webb (2009) argue that the parties to the policymaking process do not have to be understood only as the ministries, senior civil servants and co-opted policy advisors, who are directly involved into the processes of deliberations.

While studying the processes of policymaking, many scholars (often intuitively or on purpose) do not distinguish between different kinds of knowledge that is being shared. However, Radaelli (1999) for example distinguishes between professional knowledge produced by social sciences, and the so-called interactive knowledge – knowledge one actor possesses about other actor's strategies, as it is produced through the policymaking interactions. Bogner and Menz (2009) claim that the knowledge held by experts within a particular field can be divided into three groups – technical knowledge (technical aspects about a particular issue), process knowledge (information about organisational routines or process relations) and interpretative knowledge (experts' attitudes and beliefs). However, it is fair to admit, that the aforementioned scholars of knowledge transfer do not have to make clear distinctions between these categories of knowledge in relation to knowledge transfer, simply because a piece of information can function in many different ways. Thus it is more appropriate to speak of the 'objective' of knowledge rather than the 'type' of knowledge. This work also acknowledges the social embeddedness of the concept. Hereby, knowledge *per se* cannot be understood as certainty, but rather as justified beliefs that are very likely to 'track the truth' (Hardoš, 2018).

With regards to scientific or technical knowledge use within policymaking, a number of authors emphasise the usefulness of the concept of epistemic communities

and their actor coalitions specifically in the context of gender equality policies (Mazur, 2002; Hoard, 2015; McBride, Mazur, 2016). The discursive-sociological institutionalism is also particularly salient with regards to the study of the presence of epistemic communities within EU policymaking. Haas (1997) for example understands epistemic communities as networks of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to the policy-relevant knowledge. While the members of an epistemic community may be present in different positions and on different levels, an epistemic community unites members who share sets of norms, causal beliefs, notions of validity and have a common policy enterprise[50].

Members of epistemic communities, who also hold the titles of 'experts' at the same time need to be recognised as individuals who do not only possess a recognised competence and knowledge, but they can also possess knowledge of the policymaking processes. This is particularly true with regards to the concept of the 'gender expert' (Hoard, 2015). For example, Kunz and Prűgl (2019) remind us that the creation of international epistemic communities of led to the institutionalisation of the so-called 'gender expert'. The expert herself has been already addressed within the political science scholarship and Hoard (2015) in particular creates a strong case for epistemic communities when claiming that such expert is defined not only by thorough knowledge of the 'causes and effects' of gender inequality, but also by extensive network and need of policymaking institutions of such experts. Such definition by this author strongly advocates for a recognition of necessary connection between the policymaking structures, epistemic communities and only then the recognition of expertise which happens discursively: *"Here, gender expertise becomes multiple and results from negotiations and competitions within the network"* (Kunz, Prűgl, 2019, p. 9).

According to Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier (2005), experts themselves depend on the demand for expertise by political elites as a precondition for being included in the process. Policymakers may be prone to activate learning within policymaking precisely through their organisational networks (Radaelli, 2008). The concept

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50   However, Haas (1997) also adds, that the range of impact which may be expected from an epistemic community, depends upon the international and national structural realities. This of course, also depends on the various reasons why policymakers seek expertise in the first place.

of epistemic communities is based on the assumption, that solutions to problems are accessible within the network, i.e. the solutions can be provided within cooperating structures and among members of coalitions. According to Radaelli (1999) and Dunlop and Radaelli (2018), epistemic communities come to the fore when there is 'radical uncertainty' about given issues. These communities can generate definitions of interests and steer public policies, which allows the policymakers to deduce their positionality within an unstable environment[51]. Therefore, epistemic communities may help: *"[...] define the self-interest of a state or functions within it"* (Haas, 1997, p. 15). Nevertheless, some authors also contend that members of epistemic communities are also reliant on favourable domestic condition (Schimmelfenning, Sedelmeier, 2005) and the presence and power of the veto players (Löblová, 2017).

Within the development of European gender equality policies, some authors have pointed to the establishment of the 'velvet triangles' (Mazur, 2002; Woodward, 2004), which consist of members of epistemic communities. The triangle members include bureaucrats, elected officials and academics/NGO representatives, all adhering to particular discourses of gender equality with the agenda to achieve change. The study of the cooperation between women's movement and the state structures has so far drawn extensively on the study of epistemic communities (Hoard, 2015). Within the concept of the so-called state-sponsored feminism (Walby, 2011; Kantola, Outshoorn, 2007), the arrangement between the state structures and non-governmental actors is emphasised. As Kantola and Squires (2012) argue, the more-or-less external actors have been called in to supply policy-relevant knowledge and provide a supposedly objective framing of particular issues within many Western administrations. As such, the new emphasis on evidence-based policymaking has provided these actors with new opportunities which were strategically grasped by many previously 'outsider' actors.

Furthermore, in relation to the velvet triangles, the functioning and unity of an epistemic community may be directly related to the need to exercise bureaucratic power, which is necessary for the community to retain its impact (Haas, 1997). The

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51   This uncertainty may be also created by the actor's inability to identify what is the common 'European' standard within more voluntarist areas of policymaking, such as within the EU gender equality policy.

so-called 'femocrats'[52] (Eisenstein, 1989; Van Der Vleuten, 2007; Kantola, Outshoorn, 2007), as actors of the state-sponsored feminism, have been of particular interest to scholars aiming to understand the existence of epistemic communities. As Eisenstein (1989) concludes, the decision of feminist activists to enter state and governmental institutions must be seen as a conscious political strategy (Eisenstein, 1989), which is to make use of the existing opportunity structure. However, Hoard (2015) reminds us that the gradual specialisation of policies and the change in discourse on 'legitimate knowledge' also lead to the situation where gender experts within policymaking have to compete with experts from other fields in order to have their knowledge recognised. As the author states: *"They also face a number of actors that seem to be having relevant information"* (Hoard, 2015, p. 6).

In relation to EU-level epistemic communities, Héritier (2002) asserts that actors have to create coalitions in order to acquire necessary resources to push for change. Similar understanding has been present earlier in the works of Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) who argue that policy dialogue happens in interactions for the purpose of gaining political resources. The objective to gain such resources may draw actors to seek coalitions within policymaking fields. Hereby we turn to the concept of Actor Coalition Framework which argues that it is necessary to analyse the normative and causal beliefs of the members of the coalition, which can also include researchers, journalists and non-governmental organisations' employees[53] (Ingold, 2011). As opposed to the existing conceptualisations of epistemic communities, the scholars of the ACF also assume ties among the members of the coalition, including common political agenda. This is by Ingold (2011) understood as the interplay of beliefs (core beliefs, policy beliefs, and secondary aspect beliefs), as well as the ties of cooperation, which can be examined. What also needs to be accentuated in connection to the Actor Coalition Framework is the desire of the members of the coalition to transform their beliefs into policy objectives (Sabatier, 1998). For these objectives, the members of a coalition have

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52 The term originated in the Australian public policy where it was used to distinguish the different types of intersection between states and feminist advocacy which come into play through the work of individual actors and organizations (Eisenstein, 1989).

53 Sabatier (1998) argues that the coalitions hold three types of hierarchical beliefs – deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs and secondary aspect beliefs.

a number of resources at their disposal, which also include knowledge and relevant information (Weible, Sabatier, 2007).

The concept of Actor Coalition Framework (ACF) has been designed in order to incorporate 'technical information' into the theories of policy processes (Sabatier, 1998), therefore we consider it crucial to the study of indicator-based tools. This framework is paramount with regards to the so-called 'wicked' problems, which include goal conflicts, knowledge disputes, and multiple actors (Hoard, 2015). Learning, according to Paul Sabatier, is important as members of a particular coalition seek to better understand the (conflicting) world in order to advance their policy objectives. According to the concept of ACF, policy participants hold strong beliefs which can be put into a three-tier hierarchical taxonomy[54]. The actors are also strongly motivated to translate those beliefs into actual policies (Weible, Sabatier, 2005). Within the framework of ACF, authors Weible and Sabatier (2007) also explain what they understand as 'policy-oriented leaning'. According to the authors, it can be understood as a set of *"[...] relatively enduring alternatives of thought or behavioural intentions that result from experience and new information and that are concerned with the attainment or revision of policy objectives"* (Weible, Sabatier, 2007, p. 198). However, policy-oriented learning only directly affects the lowest level of actors' beliefs (secondary aspect beliefs), which constitute a large set of narrower beliefs about causal factors and their importance (Smith, 2000). Weible and Sabatier (2011) further identify six coalition resources among which are the formal legal authority, public opinion, 'mobilisable' troops, information, financial resources and skilled leadership.

With the objective to understand the actor coalitions, Weible (2008) identifies different policymaking subsystems with regards to the relations among the coalitions: unitary subsystems (one strong coalition), collaborative subsystems (cooperating multiple coalitions), and adversarial subsystems (competitive multiple coalitions). Within the latter, political use of knowledge is most likely to occur (Hoard, 2015). Authors Knill and Lehmkuhl (2002) also point out that the position of the strongest advoca-

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54   The three-tier model of beliefs consist of deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs and secondary aspects beliefs (Weible, Sabatier, 2005).

cy coalitions within the system is very important and may play a crucial role within the policy change induced by European institutions and structures[55]. The study of the concept of ACF is thus also relevant via the approach of discursive-sociological institutionalism. According to Sabatier (1998), the ACF does not assume that the actors of a coalition are driven solely by simple economic goals and a political self-interest. The focus of the concept is put on the beliefs and perceptions of the actors which may change over time and which are negotiated through formal and informal networks.

As emphasised by Rich (1997), the objective of the 'used' and transferred knowledge needs to be considered by any analytical apparatus. However, the interest in the topic of knowledge transfer is oftentimes hampered by the methodological problem of measuring the extent of the transfer, which has been puzzling scholars since authors like Heclo and Wildavsky, Hall, and Sabatier started theorising policymaking as a process of learning. Rich (1997) attempted to disperse the debates by simply positing, that *"[u]tilisation may not be necessary an outcome, but a process"* (Rich, 1997, p. 13). Or as we posit within this work – rather than process, it is a practice. The methodological problem linked to learning as a process is quite simple – how can we find the empirical evidence, which would demonstrate that something happened if learning had not taken place (Bennett, Howlett, 1992). For this particular reason, we believe the approach to learning (and non-learning for that matter) is better conceptualised as a practice, which draws our attention immediately to the actors of policymaking and their subjectivity. Schrefler (2010) for example argues that decades of research upon the topic of scientific knowledge use have brought two conclusions: knowledge seldom has a direct effect upon a given policy and there is not one single way of using knowledge in policymaking. There is a consensus among researchers that scientific/technical knowledge is rarely used directly, it rather affects the development of policymaking in various diffuse ways (Rich, 1997). Therefore, we can posit that there is a certain consensus among scholars of public policies, that there are particular settings whereby non-learning is understandably not happening. Questions of non-learning have been

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55   Authors Knill and Lehmkuhl (2002) also claim that the European influence also contributes to the empowerment of an advocacy coalition whose core beliefs are in line with the ideas behind the model proposed by the EU institutions.

so far addressed by a variety of political science and public policy scholars who aim to understand actors' rationality in policymaking processes. The following theorisations are also put into context with the existing literature on indicator-based tools of international cooperation, as we follow the advice of Dunlop and Radaelli (2018) to discard the academic bias of perceiving learning as worth of our attention only when we are certain that it is occurring.

2.3 Non-learning, Bias, and Bounded Rationality

The study of 'soft' modes of policymaking within the European Union structures has pointed to considerable criticism of the inability of this policymaking to produce what is often denounced as 'tangible results' (Lombardo, Forest, 2015). Saurugger and Terpan (2015) for example argue that a number of existing case studies prove that non-compliance with soft measures seems as widespread as that with hard law (e.g. EU directives). While it is not quite clear what the authors mean by 'non-compliance' in terms of soft tools, the authors' work implicitly refers to two cases: the refusal to act, and the launch of an action that is contrary to the EU norms. These questions, however, are related to a wider discussion on the use of knowledge within policymaking and the scholarly criticism of the paradigm of evidence-based policymaking. This section looks into the various theoretical perspectives to non-learning, some of which also stems from the study of (gender) equality policymaking within the EU, such as the OMC and gender mainstreaming.

As Radaelli (2008) accentuates, scholars are often faced with the empirical obstacle of measuring learning within policymaking and tracing the causal link between learning and policy change. Radaelli (2008) openly asks the question - How can one measure success of knowledge sharing within policymaking? While Saurugger and Terpan (2016) provide us with a typology of obstacles which may hinder knowledge sharing in relation to EU policymaking, their work lacks clarity on what they apprehend by compliance to knowledge sharing induced by the EU-level policymaking. Despite flaws in their conceptualisation, they conclude that while the tools in question

may be voluntarist, non-binding tools (which lack clear accountability), may be even more costly to the national administrations.

Parkhurst (2017) reminds us that the scholars of policy-related sciences have long recognised that policymaking is not the same as technical decision-making. Despite the best interest of the academic promoters of the evidence-based policymaking paradigm, Parkhurst reminds us, that policymaking involves trade-offs between multiple competing social values, individual and collective goals and positions. The author further argues, that *"[r]ather than being apolitical, the appeal to evidence, or to particular forms of evidence, can be decidedly political by promoting a de facto choice amongst competing values"* (Parkhurst, 2017, p. 6). This is also upheld by Ford and colleagues (2008), and Dunlop and Radaelli (2018) who claim that policy change is a product of actors' judgement of their contextual realities and their cognitive biases. Policymakers seek information that is relevant enough to them in a particular context, thus knowledge use is tentative and contextually relative (Hardoš, 2018). Nevertheless, it is important to note that this perspective has been to an extent already put forward by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) within their Actor Coalition Framework, as they argue that policymakers' core beliefs are unaffected by policy information and that major policy change results from external factors such as negotiations or elections. With regards to the aforementioned, we understand policymaking as a conflictual process filled with rival opinions, different agendas, competing needs and opposing interests, as inspired by Weber (1968).

One way to analyse the application of knowledge from the perspective of discursive-sociological institutionalism within EU policymaking is to look upon the various factors which may be perceived as blocking the transfer of knowledge within policymaking. It is important to emphasize, that the so-called non-use of knowledge can in no way be understood as un-instrumental, or it may be perceived as a particular form of resistance. Hereby, resistance can be understood as an everyday practice, which is motivated by the attempt of the actors to find their own positioning through the 'strategies of survival' (Eschle, Maigwashca, 2018). Rich (1997) for example studied the use of knowledge within the US Federal government and suggested three necessary premises

when it comes to the analysis of knowledge use:

- Within policymaking, information is collected for a variety of reasons, which may not necessarily include the aim to use the knowledge;
- We may expect that the use of information may have negative or unintended consequences;
- It may be fully rational on the part of the political actors to ignore the provided information/knowledge.

Van Dooren and colleagues (2015, p. 155) also accentuate, that the use of 'technical information' within the policymaking process needs to be understood as a political process, despite the perspective the evidence-based policy paradigm aims to promote. The authors highlight 4 crucial factors, which need to be taken into consideration when scrutinising the processes of use and non-use:

- Quality of the promoted product;
- Psychological limitation of the policymakers and other crucial actors;
- Cultural aspects of the organisational structure;
- Institutional variation within the organisational structure.

In a similar vein and within literature on the topic of knowledge transfer and global benchmarking and ranking tools, James and Jorgensen (2009, p. 148) identify three groups of variables, which can explain the variation in knowledge utilization in terms of indicator-based policymaking:

- Organisational – these variables are connected to capacities of organisations, norms, culture or even the position of specific decision makers within the organisational structure[56];
- Related to the decision makers – this group includes variables related to the

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56   Organisational variables are also described by the proponents of the Actor Coalition Framework as the coalition opportunity structures. According to Weible and Sabatier (2011) in order for a coalition to push through their agenda with the use of the aforementioned resources, the organisational variables must include: a certain degree of consensus for major policy change (relevant to the number and resources of the veto players) and a certain level of openness of a political system (relevant to the accessibility of various policy venues).

individuality of a particular decision maker such as agenda, perceptions, values and opinions;

- Informational - this group of variables is related to the way information is communicated, as well as the sources, type and format of the information[57].

While the individual factors relate to mistrust among actors, lack of experience or lack of interest in change, the organisational factors account for unsupportive organisational culture, competing interests and constant staff turn-overs (Mitton et al., 2007).

Within a focused look upon the European Union policymaking tools of soft nature (especially in relation to the OMC), Saurugger and Terpan (2016) also identify a number of variables which may be applied when explaining what they term as the 'non-compliance'. However, within this case study, we perceive the four models of Saurugger and Terpan as factors which may block the application of knowledge usage within policymaking. The variables include:

1. Actor-centred variables – the blockage is caused by a lack of political support of the transferred measures, as well as the presence of strong veto players[58]. The authors also add, that the nature of the actor involved and their structure is crucial[59];

2. Structural and actor-centred variables – the blockage depends upon the (political institutional and paradigmatic) structures within the national policymaking environment. This is often referred to as the 'misfit' between the EU

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57 Weiss (1979) was also among the first political scientists who highlighted that the mode of communication among policymakers is one of the core features which can foster the use of scientific knowledge within policymaking. Mitton et al. (2007) highlight the necessity that provided knowledge within policymaking is timely and also based on viable relationships among the experts and the decision makers. The authors' study also suggests that dissemination strategies are a necessity in order to effectively communicate a particular information in a conflict-ridden environment. Within this context, both formal and informal relations among the actors are a condition sine qua non.

58 We hereby understand veto players as actors whose agreement is necessary for a change in the status quo (Schimmelfenning, Sedelmeier, 2005). Schrefler (2010) also argues that the number of stakeholders present within a particular policy area is directly related to the degree of conflict occurring within the process of policymaking.

59 Weiss (1979) argues that implicit within the conceptualisation of scientific knowledge use within policymaking is the assumption that there is a consensus on the goals. This of course is a false assumption and researchers have to expect different actors to have different expectations of the policymaking process.

and EU Member States policies[60];

3. The absence of the 'shadow of hierarchy' – the blockage caused by the shadow of hierarchy can be described as the inability to introduce a credible threat or a structure of accountability. While the authors mention the absence of shadow of hierarchy, they do not mention the contrary option, which is present in Radaelli's (2008) work - the excess of monitoring, which may also hinder policy change;

4. Absence of policy linkages – this blockage may be caused by the absence of possibilities for national actors to link soft measures to another, already implemented measure within the policy. This can be perceived as a form of institutional or organisational misfit – a number of scholars have also flagged this variable as a weak issue salience[61] or lack of administrative resources (Saurugger, Terpan, 2016, p. 4).

It is clear from the authors' typology, that within their own conceptualisation of knowledge use, they focus primarily on the limits of structures and actor's negotiated rationality and agenda. This particular approach is embedded within rationalist and constructivist perspectives to learning and knowledge transfer.

As such, the study of resistance to learning needs to be considered. One way to approach learning and non-learning as a form of practice is the perspective of 'bias'. Parkhurst (2017) suggests to refrain from omitting 'bias' in knowledge use within policymaking, as this happens to be a highly relevant factor. As he further claims, bias within the academic literature on knowledge use refers to a broad range of errors in information processing. As he further explains, technical and issue bias can provide explanations on the various ways in which knowledge plays (or fails to play) crucial role in policymaking. Technical bias, is according to the author the utilisation of evidence, which does not follow the principles of scientific practice. This may include cases of in-

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60 Furthermore, it has been already established that the so-called misfit may be grounded not only in formal, but also in informal rules and national discourses, legal culture or institutional legacies (Havlík, 2010; Radaelli, 2006, Schimmelfenning, Sedelmeier, 2005).

61 Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier argue, that it is the issue salience, which was the dominant feature of negotiations during the accession of CEE countries.

valid use of individual piece of evidence. Furthermore, what the author terms as 'issue bias' is linked to what may be understood as the de-politicisation of politics – cases where social values can be obscured or marginalised through the promotion of certain evidence, or bodies of evidence.

The concept of technical bias (Parkhurst, 2017) may be recalled to account for various forms of 'unscientific practices' within policymaking. These include the instances, where *"[…] policy-relevant research is undertaken in ways that are structured to provide a particular answer or are strategically manipulated to produce desired outputs"* (Parkhurst, 2017, p. 45). This may be in simplistic terms also denounced as 'cream skimming' or 'cherry picking'[62] (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, Halligan., 2015). The choice of indicators set up for a particular indicator-based tool may be hereby provided as an example, since this can be understood as both conscious and unconscious process on the side of the instigators (Parkhurst, 2017). Especially in relation to the agenda of 'quantifying gender equality', Verloo and Van Der Vleuten (2009) add that some indicators can be biased towards a specific understanding of gender equality. As they conclude, *"[w]hat is not measured, does not exist"*[63] (Verloo, Van Der Vleuten, 2009, p. 181). These authors for example posit that the measured indicators of international cooperation rarely include indicators of sexuality, reproductive rights and relationships[64]. When it comes specifically to the recognition of benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing by the member states of an intergovernmental entity, James and Jorgensen (2009) point out that in case of political actor's hostility towards these measures, it is usually the actors themselves, who are blamed for not recognising their validity or relevance. However, resistance towards indicators can also be recognised as a conscious critique of the transmitted knowledge (Ford et al., 2008; Bruno, 2009; Bleijenbergh, 2018).

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62   This is by Tong and Glantz (2007) also understood as 'design bias'.

63   As authors Mertl and Krčál (2013) also add, similar criticism can be applied to the rankings provided by the OECD or the IMF, which tend to cast out the indicators of wellbeing.

64   According to Parkhurst (2015), technical bias may influence the choice of indicators to the extent, that some particular voices or groups may be excluded from the 'evidence-gathering', as their needs get simply avoided. The author recalls especially issues such as abortion or gay marriage, where the political debate is usually divided into a binary vision. Therefore, within such environment, highly polarised policy issues such as these could involve greater incentives for evidence manipulation.

It can be also argued that the fairness of epistemic practices (which identify the 'valid' indicators), can never be taken for granted (Hardoš, 2018). Or as Broome and colleagues (2018) simply put it, to take into consideration the construct and content validity problems of the indicators. The authors also argue, that some international organisations which promote benchmarking and ranking, take undeserved scientific credit for their endeavours. The authors posit that limitations in methodology, sample and discursive framing of international organisations' benchmarking cause them to be rather conserving the existing policy paradigms, than challenging them. The authors go as far as to denounce the limitations of international benchmarking as 'bad science'.

Linked to the individual and actor-centred barriers is the perspective of political actors and the motivations and rationality which drive their actions. The questions of motivation and rationality may also be perceived through the framework of issue bias: *"[…] when a policy can have multiple social impacts and outcomes, then groups on both sides of a political debate can make claims that their preferred solution is 'evidence-based' simply by choosing different outcomes of interest"* (Parkhurst, 2017, p. 56). In line with the aforementioned, the concept of bounded rationality may be re-called, which is also highly critical towards the premises of the 'optimistic' conceptualisations of evidence-based policymaking (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, Halligan, 2015). As it was established in the previous section, the paradigm of New Public Management and evidence-based policymaking dictate that political actors are at all costs rational beings who do not take uninformed decisions. This, according to Van Dooren and colleagues (2015), is a fallacy. Giannone (2017) for example posits, that the application of indicator-based policymaking within national administrations serves the neoliberal logic of economic evaluation[65], which expects individuals to be rational entities who seek impartial, updated and comparable data to make informed choices. However, the presence and manifestations of bounded rationality within policymaking cannot be understood as simply 'deviations from the normative behaviour', but as conscious strategies which point us to the questions of how policy actors navigate their environment.

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[65] Hereby, we understand the neoliberal principles as governance reforms, which tend to adopt the practices of management sector into the public policymaking (Elomäki, Kantola, 2018).

Another perspective of studying non-learning is to look at the conceptualisations of resistance to change within policymaking. We may recall the work of Ford and colleagues (2008) or Saurugger and Terpan (2016) who denounce scholarship which approaches resistance to change as 'unproductive' or inherently negative (which they also understand as 'change agent-centric' approaches). The aforementioned authors of organisation studies rather emphasise the understanding of resistance as a potential contribution to/or resource of effective change. As they put forward: *"Threating resistance [to change] as 'irrational' presumes that it violates the normative standards of decision making"* (Ford, et al., 2008, p. 369).

When we approach indicator-based tools of governmentality as modes of steering and control, we need to take into consideration that the indicators may also serve as frameworks of compliance. With regards to this, the concept of bounded rationality also led the theorisation of 'compliance' as opposed to their material application – i.e. the Potemkin harmonisation. This may lead the actors of national administration to focus on complying with the quantitative indicators, rather than focusing on the essence of the benchmarked issue (i.e. resistance as an administrative strategy), (Saurugger, Terpan, 2016), or the 'daily practices of resistance' (Parsons, Priola, 2013). An even more elaborate concern is that states will begin to deliberately create reality to suit their own needs (Rosga, Satterthuaite, 2008). As Ahmed put in her study of the academic environment in the USA in relation to strategic indicator-based planning, *"[y]ou end up doing the document rather than doing the doing"* (Ahmed, 2007, p. 590). This practice is also often referred to as window dressing[66] (Kantola, 2010). Sanderson (2002) also talks about an extensive preoccupation with measurement, which may lead to the 'emptying' of the tools.

Nonetheless, the understanding of bounded rationality within policymaking has been so far theorised in a variety of directions, including with the onus on the beliefs and attitudes of the actors. Weiss (1979) for example suggests that decision makers

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[66] This simply leads to the situation where instead of assessing the real implementations, actors predominantly focus on the scorecards (Verloo, Van Der Vleuten 2009: 179). The practice is sometimes also referred to as gaming (Espeland, Sauder 2007: 76), whereby the prepared document becomes what Ahmed calls a 'fetish object' (Ahmed, 2007, p. 598).

tend to view social science research through their previous beliefs and act accordingly. Paster Florenz (2005) argues that tools such as the OMC cannot be viewed as modes of fundamental policy paradigm, but solely as a framework which allows political actors to achieve their preferred outcomes, while staying firmly within their own preferences (and attitudes). Tools such as the OMC are according to the author successful, when they avoid the questions of bounded rationality by not attempting to change the value structures of particular policymakers. In the same vein, Radaelli concludes that: *"Governments do not activate voluntary procedures to advance common goals, but to secure their own interests"* (Radaelli, 2006, p. 250). Nevertheless, the presence of bounded rationality as a closet monster in the study of policymaking does not have to be understood as inherently antagonistic to the principles of democratic governance. For example, Van Dooren and colleagues (2015) argue that information and knowledge sharing within policymaking process may be less problematic when decision-makers accept bounded rationality as a potential mode of operation, and do not take it for granted.

Some authors also raise the question of actor subjectivity and agency, which is especially salient with regards to indicator-based policymaking and its ability to 'govern at distance' (Dale, 2006). A closer look upon the actors participating within the policymaking processes of the OMC shows, that these processes are rather limited to the government and national administration, as they are indeed highly politicised on the level of the policymakers who take part in the deliberations. Claudio Radaelli (2006) also emphasises that the domestic policy makers involved in the OMC processes are few and not pivotal in the development of domestic policy - i.e. they are experts on the topic, but lack social authority. This is based on the seemingly natural division of labour inside government departments. Furthermore, the position of 'experts' and individuals with 'epistemic authority'[67] within the policymaking structures is also put into question. Since knowledge can function as a social power, the question of the social construction of a 'relevant and legitimate expert' is in order (Hardoš, 2018). Therefore, any study looking into the practice of knowledge transfer needs to take epistemic

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67   Epistemic authority, as opposed to the social authority is not positioned within institutional hierarchy. Rather it is the desire to acknowledge the relevance of a particular person-expert' (Hardoš, 2018).

legitimacy of different actors into consideration.

Furthermore, the different forms of authority of the policymakers (as agents of change) have to be hereby taken into consideration. While we have already noted that a number of authors point to the lack of shadow of hierarchy of the benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing tools within intergovernmental cooperation, Kuzemko (2015) posits that voluntary (knowledge-based) tools require a certain level of legitimacy linked to their authors (i.e. organisations which design and diffuse them). Dunlop and Radaelli (2018, p. 5) do not talk specifically of legitimacy, but use the concept of the 'social certification of a teacher', which they understand as: *"[...] the extent to which a socially endorsed group or organization exists and has a seat at the policymaking table"*. Furthermore, the questions of legitimacy of indicator-based policymaking tools and the transfer of knowledge relevant to it also needs to be take into account with regards to the practices of democratic institutions. As Greenhalgh and Russel (2006) argue, the transfer of political decisions to 'technical' agencies without legitimacy devalues the democratic debate. The question of the 'technocratic model', whereby the rationality of the expert dominates political decision-making, has been also questioned within political theory by Habermas[68] (1970) or Chantal Mouffe (2000). In order to tackle this issue, authors Cash et al. (2003) suggest that the effectiveness of scientific knowledge feeding policymaking should rest on three key attributes – credibility, salience, and legitimacy. We come back again to the question of the positionality of 'experts' within policymaking, as Parkhurst (2017, p. 138) concludes: *"Democratic societies may have a right to ignore evidence, but legitimate evidence advisory systems could make this harder to do or at least more evident when it does happen"*. For this particular reason, Parkhurst considers fidelity to science and democratic representation within the policymaking structures to be crucial for the development of the concept of evidence-based policymaking. Eventually, it is the final decision on a particular policy issue, which needs to be taken from the position of a democratically elected representative and publicly accountable official.

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68 Habermas (1970) critiqued the role of scientific experts within bureaucracies due to their impact on citizen participation. He argued that reducing technical issues to technical ones causes a decline in democratic participation.

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This study adopts the analytical framework of discursive-sociological institutionalism which is bound to the theorisations of Europeanisation stemming from the work of Radaelli (2002), who appealed to the scholarship to focus on its relative impact. Hereby we understand the perspective of Europeanisation which speaks of EU institutions and structures as layers or pools of resources, thus putting the onus on the national actors as they navigate the policymaking environment. In order to study indicator-based tools as sources/carriers of different kinds of knowledge (i.e. knowledge with different objectives), this study adopts the analytical framework which understands knowledge transfer as a crucial practice of policymaking. Within this chapter, different classifications of learning and resistance to it were presented (James, Jorgensen, 2009; Saurugger, Terpan, 2016). The chapter also paid a particular attention to epistemic communities and actor coalitions (Weible, Sabatier, 2007; Ingold, 2011), as has been previously suggested by gender studies scholars in relation to 'velvet triangles' (Mazur, 2002; Woodward, 2004). We believe that as scholars focusing on learning within the studies of European Union structures, we need to acknowledge resistance to learning – no learning and blocked learning (Radaelli, 2008; Zito, Schout, 2009) as constitutive forces of democratic structures. As such, this perspective would allow us to focus on different agendas, negotiations, and subjectivities of actors at the national level. Therefore, the lenses of bounded rationality need to be acknowledged with regards to a variety of biases, i.e. technical and issue bias (Parkhurst, 2017) which occur in national policymaking.

3. SETTING A SCENE: EUROPEAN IMPACT AND SLOVAK POLICIES ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

This chapter is divided into three sections, as it focuses on the more-or-less recent developments in Slovak policies on 'violence against women', especially in the context of liberalisation and democratisation. The perspective of discursive-sociological institutionalism leads us further to look at the development of these national policies from the perspective of both public/governmental structures, as well as the agenda of the non-governmental/civil sector. The following sections also aim to look at the developments with respect to two crucial factors – firstly, that of European/international layer of policymaking after the fall of the former regime, and secondly, the recent establishment of the so-called 'gender ideology' discourse among a variety of actors at different levels.

3.1 Slovak Policies on Gender Equality – the Democratic Transition

Einhorn (1993) and Sedelmeier (2009) conclude with regards to the former regimes of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and their policies tackling gender inequalities focused primarily on inequalities embedded within the class structure. This, according to the authors, resulted in a specific focus of these policies upon the area of employment. The desire of the former regimes to constantly appeal to equality aimed to the *de facto* eradication of the category of gender within public policies, as well as the category of ethnicity (Černohorská, 2016). While certain 'women's issues' were addressed within the regimes' policies, it is important to emphasise that these issues were not tackled specifically because of their gendered nature or because they resulted from the gendered social structures (Einhorn, 1993).

Furthermore, the authoritarian nature of the regime led to serious limitations of women's rights, as well as the limitation of the organisation of women's activists. This political culture, which lacked considerable involvement of external actors in the

bureaucratic structures, influenced the discourse of 'women's issues' in the newly democratic establishment. Slovak scholars Cviková and Juráňová (2009), for example, argue that within the minds of the feminist activists in the 1990s, socialist and feminist thinking could not have been linked together. While 'feminism' presented the plurality, openness and ability of the society to self-reflect, 'socialism' represented only the confines of one-sidedness. The authors also argue in line with Einhorn (1993) since they claim that after the fall of the former regimes within the CEE region, what seemed to cause friction and individual anxiety within the Slovak context was the discourse of Western feminism and the motto 'personal is political'. This was due to the confusion of the activists who tried to avoid bringing the political (sphere) into the personal one. It used to be the private sphere which had to be actively protected from political intervention (Cviková, Juráňová, 2009). The inclusion of the topics of 'domestic violence' or 'gender-based violence' on the newly democratic political agenda as issues confined to the private sphere thus had to be viewed with regards to this predominant dichotomic discourse among activists. What also needs to be taken into consideration is the extensive backlash experienced by many of the non-governmental organisations as they became 'outed' as feminist[69]. Being vocal about these topics (such as violence against women and domestic violence), then-perceived as highly controversial, caused considerable strain on their further activities (Cviková, Juráňová, 2009).

As such, the adoption of the 'feminist' agenda into the political agenda and the bureaucratic structures happened only after the separation of the former Czecho-Slovak co-habitation. While the first initiatives aimed at establishing a governmental co-ordination of issues related to gender equality presented themselves already in 1996 (with the establishment of the Coordination Committee for Women[70]), there was only a limited political interest in the broader and intersectional scope of tackling gender inequalities within the Slovak society[71] (Očenášová, 2011). For instance, the institution-

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69 We hereby understand feminist organisations as broadly defined by Marx Ferree and McClurg Mueller (2004). The authors understand a wide definition of feminist organisations as women's' movements as mobilizations based on appeals to women as a constituency.

70 This committee can also be understood as the first expert body within the national policies solely focusing on 'women's' issues (Očenášová, 2011).

71 This was partly caused by the authoritarian regime of Vladimír Mečiar until 1998, which to a significant degree curtailed the influence of the non-governmental sector over the minorities and human rights policies

alisation of the feminist agenda[72] within national policymaking with regards to topics such as 'body integrity' after the fall of the regime progressed rather slowly. This was also due to the policymaking environment, which lacked a consistent pool of non-governmental organisations, which would feed into the policymaking environment and lobbied for structural changes. When Wöhrer (2003) published her research, conducted in 2001 among Slovak feminist scholars and activists, many proclaimed that 'there was no movement', only separate and scarce projects and a couple of individuals. The few individuals and activists were, at this point, also linked to the 'state structures' in a limited extent. Feminist activism within the Slovak political system and the consequent creation of state-sponsored feminism started prospering significantly thanks to the interest of external actors, as it developed in the 1990s with the help of two forces - foreign financial aid and national grass-root interest groups (Očenášová, 2013). For example, in 1997, Slovakia established its National Centre for Equality between Women and Men which was with major support from the United Nation Development Programme (Očenášová, 2011). Roth termed this the 'politics of sandwiching' (Roth, 2007) - as a two-way pressure structure (from the top and from the bottom). Much of the feminist and women's organisations agenda benefitted from international support (discursive, financial and organisational). However, the intervention of the financial aid and its structures also led to the co-optation of the majority of concepts and agendas from abroad, which limited the reflection of national issues (Očenášová, 2011). Cviková and Juráňová (2009) reflect upon the 1990s and the national feminist activism of this period as they claim that there were four most dominant topics within the activist agenda: violence against women, reproductive rights, rights of sexual minorities, and women's participation in the public space. The first initiatives of national campaigns (2001 - 2003) focused on violence against women were organised without state-based financial support[73] (Cviková, Juráňová, 2009). Apart from the financial incentives provided by the international organisations, these structures also functioned

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(Očenášová, 2011).

72 Hereby we understand institutionalisation as a degree of presence of individuals and organisations with links to the women's movement in state structures, including political parties, administration, or even in academia (Krizsán, Roggeband, 2017).

73 This includes the national campaign *Každá piata žena* (Eng. Every Fifth Woman) organised with the objective to raise awareness of the extent of violence against women (Cviková, Juráňová, 2009).

as an umbrella (or, more precisely, as a layer) - a legitimising voice which was the support - a source of legitimacy to the growing community of non-governmental actors (Bohony et al., 2015).

Within the Slovak context, the development of gender equality and human rights policies after the fall of the former regime has been, to a great extent, influenced by the transformations and political turbulences of the immediate reforms of the 1990s. As previously established, the non-governmental sector has been extensively subsidized from abroad since the 1990s, as at this particular time, many non-governmental organisations were mobilised around the cause to overthrow the authoritative regime of Vladimír Mečiar. During this period, a number of feminist groups and organisations were accused of causing frictions within the opposition to the Mečiar regime (Cviková, Juráňová, 2009). However, the area of violence against women has been also considered one of the most developed within the past 15 years of Slovak gender equality policies. To some considerable extent, this has been the result of the early political agenda. In this regard, the role of the non-governmental sector and its campaigns[74], which managed to reach out to the public has to be emphasized, as it created numerous advocacy coalitions based on the distinguished topic (Očenášová, 2011). Nevertheless, Barna and colleagues (2017) also provide a different argument as to why the aforementioned topics of 'body integrity' and violence gained priority at the end of the century. According to the authors, the influx of western feminists to Central and Eastern Europe in 1980s and 1990s caused the materialisation of the East-West divide within feminist activism. As differences between the East and the West appeared and in an effort to avoid the many culturally different interpretations of women's rights, activists began to focus on one common platform – the sanctity of body integrity (Barna et al., 2017). As Ghodsee (2004) also posits with regards to this period, there was already a tendency of the Eastern European NGOs and their donors to focus on issues that were framed in a way that avoided addressing structural inequalities, thus resulting in the exclusion of broader issues of economic injustice and social inequality.

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74   One of the frontrunners in defining the national discourse on violence against women was the newly established feminist magazine ASPEKT, which was published between 1993 and 2004 (Cviková, Juráňová, 2009).

According to Machovcová (2009), the non-governmental organisations raising the issues after the year 1989 also drew extensively from the experience of other European countries which were willing to share their experience (i.e. Austria, Germany or the Netherlands). The author also claims that international conventions which were adopted as soft law norms by the newly democratic Czechoslovak Republic were an important resource (understood as immaterial pool of international resources) of the non-governmental sector. The actors at the national level appealed to these norms in order to push for their agenda and pressurize the political elites to foster changes in public policies. The first changes within the region promoted by the international context were fuelled by the *Beijing Platform in Action*, as well as through the umbrella organisation Women against Violence Europe (WAVE)[75], , (Krizsán, Roggeband, 2017). The 1990s also witnessed the adoption of the international soft law norms addressing gender equality by Slovakia's newly established government. This, alongside the foreign aid factor, can be considered a significant contribution to the development of the policies at the national level. For example, the country became a signatory of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*[76] (CEDAW, 1978).

However, the questions of international funding and dependence of the non-governmental sector also loomed large at this point. Within the past three decades, a number of Slovak feminist and women's organisations became crucial service providers in the area of violence against women and domestic violence. During the period of the 1990s, the first specific services for victims of violence were established by non-governmental initiatives, including the first crisis centre for women in 1996 (Cviková, Juráňová, 2009). The trend of the non-governmental sector being the centre of advocacy as well as service-provision with problematic funding also continues to this day. The link to this issue with regards to EU structures will be also addressed in the following section.

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75   The initiative was created as an aftermath of the Beijing Conference. The network is based on the horizontal model of knowledge transfer, as it fosters learning among its member organisations, including in the CEE region (Krizsán, Roggeband, 2017).

76   Authors Krizsán and Roggeband (2017) emphasize, that violence against women was previously not a rec-

Writing on the post-Socialist states' gender equality policies, Sedelmeier (2009) reflects upon the considerable body of literature which tends to portray the policies of the pre-democratic regime as much more advanced than the equality policies promoted within the Western countries. The author understands this as a false premise, which also provided for the belief, that the EU-accession harmonisation of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries would cause no significant problems in this regard. As the author contends, while the CEE states advanced in terms of women's employment, other aspects of the equality policies (e.g. domestic violence policy, sexual harassment within workplace) were not directly addressed and lacked significance in the national discourses. While the early 90s saw the first initiatives from the non-governmental sector, the process of Slovak accession to the European Union structures brought new incentives for the agenda.

3.2 Slovak Gender Equality Policies and the European Union as an Opportunity Structure

The process of institutionalisation of the feminist agenda within the national policymaking of the newly democratic Slovak state could not have been commenced without significant reforms of the public administration system. While the non-governmental activist sector developed with the support of the international 'support system', its inclusion into the policymaking processes and the adoption of its agenda took some time. While the administrative reforms were initially considered a low priority on the agenda of the newly established democratic governments (run by Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar), the influence of the European Union accession process altered this approach (Beblavý, 2002; Randma-Liiv, 2008; Staroňová, 2016). Within the Slovak context, the EU accession negotiations resulted in the creation of the so-called Strategic Partnership developed in 1998, which also focused on public administration reforms. International corruption scandals played a significant role as the supranational

ognised issue during the drafting of this document in late 1970s. However, it has been gradually co-opted into the agenda and currently constitutes a core element of its monitoring mechanism. Recommendations of the Committee addressed to Slovakia, which were related to violence against women were delivered through the periodic review processes in 2007 and 2014. Since the first periodic reviews, CEDAW has been emphasised by all strategic documents developed within the national gender equality policymaking.

policymaking structures such as the European Union and the OECD exerted considerable pressure upon the national administration (Sedlačko, Staroňová, 2018). Despite the changes, it has been acknowledged that many of the reforms brought formal changes rather than substantial transformations which would alter the rigid structures of the bureaucratic system (Beblavý, 2002). Further reforms of the public administration occurred during the second government of Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda (2003 - 2006) and later in 2006 and 2012 with the Róbert Fico government of the SMER-SD (Social-Democratic Party) (Nemec, 2010; Staroňová 2016). Since early 1990s, a particular discourse has been developed within the public administration which called for a shift from 'the Communist' to the 'Western', 'modern', and 'the good governance'. This shift even led to the discursive externalisation of 'policy advice', which would be became hybrid and abandoning the former reliance upon internal civil servants (Sedlačko, Staroňová, 2018). Such transformation of the political and administrative structures of the democratisation process allowed significant changes with regards to the institutionalisation of the feminist agenda within the state-bureaucratic system.

Authors Cviková and Juráňova (2009) contend that at the end of the 1990s, the need to monopolise the national gender equality agenda by the bureaucratic apparatus was becoming evident. The agenda of gender equality has been a part of the ministerial sector of family and social affairs since the late 1990s (European Parliament – FEMM Committee, 2018). In 2006, within the wave of administration reform under the Róbert Fico government (SMER-SD), the Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities (previously the Department on Family and Gender Policies) has been reorganised and established with new competences under the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. In 2011, under the new government of Iveta Radičová (SD-KÚ-DS) the Governmental Council on Human Rights, Ethnic and National Minorities and Gender Equality has been established with the sub-section - Committee on Gender Equality. So far, these institutions have cooperated within the process of establishing the *National Strategies for Gender Equality* (2009-2013, 2014-2019), *National Action Plans for Gender Equality* (2010-2013), as well as the *National Action Plans for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women* (2009-2012, 2014-2019).

To a considerable extent, these transformations need to be linked to the process of EU accession. For example, Krizsán and Popa (2010) contend: *"Between 2003 and 2005 amid the EU accession process, Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) witnessed major reforms in domestic violence policies […]. While these changes were the outcome of a complex process of interaction between state and non-state national, international, and transnational actors, the timing of these reforms indicates that the influence of the EU cannot be disregarded"* (Krizsán, Popa, 2012, p. 50). Recalling again the work of Očenášová (2013), who assesses the current development of Slovak gender equality policies, including the institutional and organisational setting of the state-sponsored feminist agenda, it is crucial to focus on the two complementary forces of change – the pressure of international organisations and the influence of the non-governmental sector present at the national level. Therefore, the 'politics of sandwiching' (Roth, 2007) further continued. The approach of sandwiching influenced the development of the agenda of this policy subsystem as well as its institutional and organisational development (Očenášová, 2011). The cooperation of these two structures is paramount - specifically during the pre-accession period, EU's decentralised monitoring mechanisms have been heavily relying on private actors at the domestic level (Sedelmeier, 2009). The presence of international actors at the national level created a considerable opportunity structure for the non-governmental sector in the CEECs, including Slovakia (Buzogány, 2012). As Roth (2007, p. 474) further claims in this vein: *"[…]NGOs from the new member states learned to use the mechanisms of the EU and felt empowered and legitimated through EU membership"*. Furthermore, the opportunity structure also involved discursive opportunities, which resulted in the domination of particular topics within the realm of gender equality. However, the role of the non-governmental sector was also established with the new requirements for services for victims of violence. The creation of new policies also requested a set-up of services. The so-called Women's Safe Network was created, which consists of non-governmental organisations, involved not only in service-provision, but also political lobbying and advocacy (Bohony et al., 2015).

Roth (2007) further accentuates the impact of the foreign aid. According to her, the policy change was oftentimes motivated by the financial incentives provided to

the national actors (e.g. the EU DAPHNE programme). As such, the foreign aid which subsidized the non-governmental sector since 1989 cannot be omitted from any future analysis of the current policies (Roth, 2007). This resource pool, also present in the Slovak context, included the grant programmes of the Open Society Foundation and other Western organisations, which tackled primarily violence against women and human trafficking with the argument that the previous regimes were deliberately oblivious of these issues (Roth, 2007). However, as Krizsán and Popa (2012) conclude, while the external conditionality helped with the setup of the policies, the contestation of the value and embeddedness of these reforms can be rightfully expected. Considerable criticism of the choice of the topics for national activism (influenced by the EU accession process and the international funding) has not been lacking.

Očenášová (2013) contends that within the past two decades, Slovak gender equality policies have been implemented mainly as an initiative linked to the accession process or as a necessity invoked by the process of harmonisation. Specifically with regards to the topic of violence against women, the European Union structures have had legal impact starting with the pre-accession process. The Slovak legal framework addressing violence against women underwent a number of transformations as of 2003 (Bohony et al., 2015). The first changes were initiated by the non-governmental organisation Aliancia žien Slovenska (Women's Alliance of Slovakia) in cooperation with the Slovak Ministry of Justice. The changes involved the amendments of the Penal Code, which now includes § 215 on the abuse of a close and fostered persons and §241a which penalises sexual violence (Bútorová, Filadelfiová, 2005). Sexual harassment was included in the Slovak Anti-Discrimination Act[77] as of 2008 under the influence of the EU directives and their framework, but with considerable backlash of conservative and faith-based political elites which struggled primarily with the inclusion of 'sexual orientation' as a protected ground. Legal changes were also accompanied with national campaigns on the topic of violence against women which aimed to raise awareness among the wider public. The EU anti-discrimination policies focused on equality in employ-

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[77] The Slovak Anti-Discrimination act was adopted in 2004 and later underwent amendments in 2007 and 2008. The anti-discrimination framework has been to a great extent influenced by the EU legal framework and the obligations of the EU Member States.

ment and services influenced the development within CEE to a considerable extent. Nevertheless, as referred to before, there has also been some criticism of the pre-accession period development of CEE gender equality policies (Krizsán, Popa, 2010). For example, we can recall the concept of 'costless room-service feminism' (Miroiu, 2006), which can be explained as a formal adoption of norms with very little impact upon the change of discourse, or the public opinion towards the policies[78].

In relation to the development of policies tackling violence against women in CEEs, authors Krizsán and Roggeband (2017, p. 10) argue: *"While women's movements are the key agents in developing gender equality policies, policy responses can only be understood in the interaction between movements and domestic and international contexts is taken into account"*. Thus, what interests us is not only the subjectivity of the NGO actors themselves, but the broad interactions between the variety of actors present within the policymaking regime, as well as their interaction within the opportunity structures. Očenášová (2013) further writes that the EU conditionality, which was the primary force behind the adoption of anti-discrimination and gender equality policies, may have temporarily silenced the domestic voices, which contested the European policies or their design. The study of the resistance and negotiations of the international layer of policymaking thus presents itself as necessary. While the influence of the non-governmental sector is flagged by the author as the second most important factor in developing the Slovak gender equality policy to this point, it is important to highlight that the development of the non-governmental sector and the EU influence are factors both crucial and interlinked.

As already mentioned specifically with regards to the Slovak anti-discrimination law which resulted from the necessity to transpose European directives into the Slovak context, the influence of the conservative and faith-based elites with regards to the gender equality policies and their development needs to be considered. At the end of the first decade of the millennium, the presence of the so-called 'gender ideology' rhetoric has been starting to take shape. The promotion of the discourse has been ex-

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78 Currently there are provisions recognising women as a vulnerable group – i.e. within its provisions of rape in the Criminal Code (Legal Act no. 300/2005), or within the newly transposed Victim's Directive into the national Legal Act on Victims of Crimes (Legal Act no. 274/2017).

tensively fostered by the activities of the Roman-Catholic Church, especially the Slovak Council of Bishops, which has been promoting the notions of 'culture of death' and 'gender ideology' within its pastoral letters (Maďarová, 2015, Valkovičová, 2017a). This has been for example described by Lukšík and Marková (2010) in the context of the adoption of a sexual education textbook for high-schools in 2007, which has been lobbied against by the Slovak Conference of Bishops with the argument that sex education promotes 'the culture of death'. The environment has been previously dominated by oppositional actors in the conventional sense of political parties (i.e. the Christian Democrats – KDH, or the nationalist party – Slovak National Party), or the religious elites (i.e. the Conference of Bishops) (Kobová, 2011). However, the composition of the actors who can be defined as 'reactively oppositional' within the environment of gender equality policies has been changing over the past years, specifically with reference to the so-called 'anti-gender' rhetoric and actors.

Within the recent decade, the literature on the influence of the so-called 'gender ideology' discourse in European policymaking has been on the increase (e.g. Kuhar and Paternotte, 2017; Petö, 2015; Korolczuk 2016; Korolczuk, Graff, 2018; Grzebalska et al., 2017). As Grzebalska and colleagues (2017, p. 1) claim in relation to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) politics: *"Gender ideology has come to signify the failure of democratic representation, and opposition to this ideology has become a means of rejecting different facets of current socioeconomic order, from the prioritization of identity politics, over material issues."* References to 'backsliding' with regards to reversal in transitioning to liberal democracies have been recalled by various scholars studying the 'anti-gender' discourse (European Parliament - FEMM Committee, 2018). Authors of the monograph *Gender as Symbolic Glue* (ed. by Kováts, Põim 2015) understand the appeal to the opposition towards 'gender ideology' as an umbrella term, which signifies oppositions towards a variety of (gender) equality measures. The following section will be thus devoted to the presence of the 'anti-gender' rhetoric and actors as they have been influencing the development of Slovak gender equality policies considerably in the recent years. Hereby we argue that their appearance has to be studied as an epistemic community forming a 'reactively oppositional' coalition.

3.3 Current Institutional Setting of Slovak Policies on 'Violence against Women' and the Gender Ideology

With regards to the aforementioned lines of institutionalisation of the feminist agenda within the state-political structures, and with regards to the perspective of discourse-sociological institutionalism, it is also important to pay attention to the frequently overlooked framing of the topic of violence against women within national policies. It is clear from the previously mentioned developments that the policies have been so far genuinely framed in 'women-centered' terms, as they focus primarily on the effects of gender-based violence upon the lives and well-being of women. This is particularly crucial in the perspective of the study of Krizsán, Paantjens and van Lamoen (2005) who looked at the framing of policies tackling violence in the Netherlands, Hungary and the European Union. The authors conclude that within all three of the aforementioned public policy frameworks, a slow disappearance of gender equality perspective (the so-called de-gendering) is happening with regards to the area of violence.

The current policies addressing violence against women in Slovakia need to be understood as separate from other policies framed as 'domestic violence', since these focus predominantly upon the rights of children and are also subsumed under different governmental sections and result into different policy measures. While domestic violence is, among many CEE countries, understood as an integral part of 'family policies', it needs to be acknowledged that domestic violence against children may be addressed by Slovak policies separately and may also be targeted against the gender-equality framing of gender-based violence. As Krizsán and Roggeband (2017, p. 48) posit in their study focused on discursive framing of CEE policies: *"[...], a child protection frame can be seen as a form of opposition to gender equality, since it argues that the real victims of domestic violence are children, and even if women are to be protected from violence, this is part of their roles as mothers"*. This is also the case within the Slovak context, whereby violence against children constitutes policies and institutions separated from those related to violence against women.

In view of these developments, it has been possible to define the Slovak legal framework, until this point, as 'a piecemeal legislation with the explicit recognition of the gender dimension of violence' (European Parliament Think Tank, 2013). There is currently no single framework act which would broadly address violence against women or gender-based violence. While there had been an initiative launched at the ministerial level to draft a proposal for such a legal act in 2015, the preparations were stopped in view of the primary requirement to transpose the aforementioned *Victim's Directive* into the national legal framework[79], as well as the then-upcoming parliamentary elections (European Parliament – FEMM Committee, 2018).

Furthermore, while a certain need for an intra-governmental coordination of gender equality policies has been present since early 2000s, the actual existence of co-operation among the departments has been problematic until this day. The organisation fostering efforts in the area of gender equality (i.e. Department for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities) is subsumed under one of the ministries - Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family, which hardly institutionalises it as an inter-sectorial platform. In 2011, Očenášová (2011) wrote about the then-current situation of the Slovak gender equality policies as she critically addressed the inability to coordinate the activities of the non-governmental sector, the governmental sector and the authorities of prosecution. Recent attempts to create an organisation with an inter-sectorial agenda for the policies on violence against women also saw the re-establishment of the Expert Group on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2013[80]. The creation of the Committee and the Expert Group within the Slovak context also signified the political will to include the non-governmental sector (and through them also academics and practitioners) into policymaking. While both of the platforms are considered rather weak due to their mandates established by the founding regulations (which establish their predominantly advisory nature), the attempt at inclusion needs to be recognised. Both of the platforms and their members are of interest to this case study, since they include governmental and non-governmental actors actively involved within the poli-

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79   Information provided by Branislav Ondruš – Committee on Gender Equality, meeting minutes – 13/6/2018.

80   The Expert Group has been established on a number of occasion, while its agenda and positioning has been changing within the past two decades. After the Slovak accession to the EU, the Expert Group has been established in 2005, but was later dissolved.

cymaking area. The agenda and mandate of both of the platforms will be focused upon in the chapters to come, however, it is crucial to note that the agenda of the Expert Group was terminated in 2016. However, in 2015, the Coordinating Methodical Centre for Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CMC), (inspired by the provisions of the *Istanbul Convention*), was established. The CMC was established with the help of EEA Grants in 2015 under the governmental agency - Institute for Family and Labour Research. Its aim so far has been to coordinate the national policies within the domain, as well as to launch national campaigns and raise awareness on violence against women and domestic violence.

As it is visible from the example of the CMC, the continuity of many state-based projects within the national administration is linked to international funding. The state-sponsored feminist agenda linked to violence against women has also been addressed in the past decade by two national development programmes. These were funded by the European Social Fund and relied extensively on the concept of indicator-based policymaking and knowledge sharing. The national Project Institute for Gender Equality (2009-2015) and the Project Support for Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women (2014-2015) both stemmed from the need to create unified standards, monitoring and auditable measures for the national equality policies, including the policy on violence against women. Such objective has been also clearly declared within the *National Strategy for Gender Equality* (2009-2013). On the basis of the Project Support for Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women (2014-2015), research was launched with the objective to map the existing systems of indicators measuring gender equality (predominantly focusing on the EIGE Gender Equality Index), and the objective to construct a national measurement scheme. The publication which was its outcome states the following: *"The creation of networks of simple or synthetic indicator is in line with the current measures taken by national and European (i.e. international) organisations"* (Ivančíková, 2015, p. 12). Furthermore, apart from the mutual understanding of providing statistical data to feed into the policymaking at the national and international level, the publication also highlights the need to gather and analyse data for the purposes of EU-wide comparisons. The need to provide specifically segregated statistical data has also been translated to the

work of the national Statistics Office, which has been publishing yearly reports on gender equality since 2010. The documents support the argument that capacity-building via state-based programmes with the objective of constructing indicator-based policymaking have been, to a certain extent, promoted through European Union funding and its objectives. The objective of constructing common indicators within the national administration has been accentuated with regards to European Union policies to such an extent that the National Action Plan for the Elimination and Prevention of Violence against Women for 2014-2019 makes reference to this objective: *"[a]dopting common EU indicators within the Slovak context, [including] setting up a system for collection and analysis of statistical data on violence against women"* (Ivančíková, 2015 p.74).

However, the issues of funding do not only permeate the environment of the public sector. Many Slovak women's and feminist non-governmental organisations currently depend upon the state or international funding in order to continue their operations (Očenášová, 2013). Consequently, such system also promotes the notion of 'transactional activism', whereby the state is one of the crucial partners (Petrova, Tarrow, 2007). As such, this may be detrimental to their future abilities to continue advocacy or to establish criticism towards the structures by which they are funded. The recent developments not only within the Slovak environment led the non-governmental sector to considerable professionalization due to their funding requirements (state-based or international). Nevertheless, it has also been argued within the CEE context that professionalization can constitute another barrier, as it tends to lead to the loss of transformative elements of the women's rights agenda: *"An irreversible process of professionalization takes place, in which women's groups enjoy an expert standing in domestic violence policy processes. Critical and disruptive strategies are minimal. Criticism of the state is articulated exclusively in the international arena"* (Krizsán, Roggeband, 2017, p. 142). While this funding is provided mostly through project/tender-based governmental grant schemes, it is also paramount that women's organisations compete for funding, oftentimes against each other, to be able to keep up with their agenda and operations (Kobová, 2016). The organisations also adjust their agenda and priorities considerably with regards to the grant schemes. According to Bohony and colleagues (2015), the situation of the non-governmental service providers

changed after the withdrawal of the pre-accession funding in 2004. The authors claim that the current state of Slovak policies on violence against women is ridden with the lack of financial opportunities, as well as the lack of stable state-based funding, which would allow many projects and programmes to have a continuity and assure tangible results.

However, such drives for institutionalism would also be expected to produce some opposition and counter-pressures. Different forms of the so-called sidelining and backsliding of gender equality projects have been recently studied in a broader European perspective (Verloo, Paternotte, ed., 2018), as was also touched upon in the previous section. These oppositions have been most extensively studied with regards to the different processes of 'normalisation' of the 'anti-gender rhetoric', the Slovak environment being no exception. The presence of the 'anti-gender actors' (i.e. actors reactively oppositional towards different forms of equality policies) also has to be recognised in the Slovak context via the lenses of actor coalitions and epistemic communities, since, as we will explain in the following lines, this rhetoric permeates a variety of policymaking levels. For example, the adoption of the more recent strategic documents has not been without considerable opposition from reactively oppositional political actors. While conservative actors (i.e. political elites and the Roman Catholic Church) have been active in opposing many of the developments (e.g. Kobová, 2011), the years 2012-2013 saw the establishment of the aforementioned 'anti-gender' rhetoric which constitutes a new spectrum of (mostly conservative and faith-based) actors. The influence of the so-called 'gender ideology' political discourse has been, for example, present extensively during the adoption of the latest *National Strategy for Gender Equality*. This case was one of many recent political developments which signal the presence of an 'anti-gender' discourse and a strong lobbying potential of reactively oppositional actors, as will be explained.

Furthermore, the academic literature reflecting the growing influence of the 'anti-gender' discourse within the CEE region is on the increase, including literature focusing on the Slovak context (see e.g. Ďurinová in Kováts and Põim 2015; Maďarová 2015; Sekerák 2015; Rybár, Šovčíková 2016; Valkovičová 2017a). As John A. Gould

(2015) writes, in the Slovak context, the rhetorical demonization of 'gender ideology' steadily became the cornerstone of conservative and religious groups after the presentation of Gabriele Kuby's publication titled *Sexual Revolution* in 2012 and then 2013. Hereby, the conservative and faith-based activist circles were introduced to a so-called scientific celebrity of the 'anti-gender movement'.

Studying the presence of 'gender ideology' rhetoric in Central and Eastern Europe, Petö (2015) claims that science became the main battleground of the so-called gender ideology, which caused a crucial paradigm in science as we know it. A recent study conducted by Kuhar (2015) analysed the creation of secular organisations in Western Balkans, which were founded with a religious background in order to campaign against marriage equality. Kuhar further claims that the opposition towards the equality policies of these organisations was grounded on a discursive strategy of a populist scientific discourse[81]. As the author claims in his study: *"By presenting distorted data, they are promoting conspiracy theories (sic!) and pseudo-scientific data"* (Kuhar, 2015, p. 90). Furthermore, within the Slovenian and Croatian context, the author claims this discursive strategy to be ideologically effective. As Petö (2016, p. 299) concludes based on the aforementioned study, any scientific or scholarly data can now become contested based on normative moral positions. In the same vein, Kuhar (2015) and Korolczuk (2016) focus on the 'scientific' legitimisation of 'anti-genderism'. As the authors claim, the discursive representation of anti-gender equality groups as alternative producers of knowledge is crucial: *"Profoundly suspicious of existing academic institutions, anti-genderism has built up its own sources of legitimacy, a body of knowledge and its own pantheon of intellectual celebrities with academic titles, many of them women [...] Anti-genderism is spread through various channels, both religious and secular: it became a vast project of education which has led to the development of an alternative public sphere, perhaps even an alternative civil society"* (Korolczuk, 2016, p. 245). As she further accentuates, though the proclaimed objectives tend to be moral, the claims of 'anti-genderism' tend to be scientific[82]. An example of the pro-

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81   Kuhar (2015) claims that while these seemingly secular organisations cannot campaign with their conventional religious and violent discourse (e.g. a claim that homosexuality is a sin) as they have to adhere to the ethics of political correctness.

82   As Korolczuk (2016) puts forward, anti-gender equality groups have established an intellectual environment

cess of secularisation of the discourse, the work of Gabriele Kuby has been extensively exploited, within the Slovak environment (among others), as well as the publication Gender and gender ideology (2013, orig. *Gender alebo rodová ideológia*) written by a non-governmental activist Mária Raučínová, who is currently a second-term member of the Committee on Gender Equality (Governmental Council of Human Rights, Ethnic and National Minorities, and Gender Equality). This brief publication provides a basic overview of the 'anti-gender' standpoint within the Slovak context. Hereby, 'gender ideology' is understood as a dangerous ideological threat to the 'nature of the traditional family'. The process of normalisation of the 'anti-gender' discourse as a 'scientific' and a secular one has been commenced with the adoption of the 'scientific' literature already before the referendum in 2015. However, previous research of the author of this monograph pointed to the adoption of a number of scientific discourse strategies during the 2015 Alliance for Family campaign for the referendum. These included strategies of denouncing previous research of social sciences, as well as the argumentative strategies of using methodologically problematic studies, oftentimes discredited in the academic community (Valkovičová, Hardoš, 2018).

While the influence of the Roman-Catholic Church upon the Slovak gender equality policies has been witnessed (yet not sufficiently mapped) in the previous decade (Kobová, 2011), these religious elites also need to be considered for their ability to exert considerable influence upon the process of norm adoption. Such example was witnessed during the preparation of the national strategic documents – the *National Strategy of Gender Equality 2014 – 2019* and the *National Strategy for Human Rights Protection and Promotion of 2014* (Grzebalska, Soós, 2016). Both of the strategies have been extensively criticised by the Council of Bishops of Slovakia, nevertheless, the criticism also came from the political party KDH (Christian-Democratic Movement). The opposition was also present during the deliberations of the advisory body,

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in form of an alternative not only to gender studies and feminism, but also to the contemporary social sciences and cultural studies. The positionality of the religious (i.e. faith-based) groups within the spread of the 'anti-gender' discourse needs to be recognised. According to Garbagnoli (2016) who studied the influence of the Vatican discourse on sex and gender in the past decades, the core of the social doctrine of the Vatican has shifted from the economy to anthropology. The late 1990s saw the creation of the doctrine which positions women and men into the binary and complementary sexes, radically opposing the social constructivism of the term and concept of 'gender' (Dorlin, 2016; Case, 2016). Grzebalska and Petö (2017) see the adoption of complementarity by the groups especially within the concept of 'familialism.

the national Committee on Gender Equality, where members of the non-governmental sector criticised the content of both documents as it included sections on LGBTI rights and education towards the acceptance of sexual minorities. In 2013, an anti-campaign broke out with regards to the *National Strategy for Human Rights*, which called for the abolition of 'gender ideology' (European Parliament – FEMM Committee, 2018). However, already in 2013, many governmental representatives, including members of feminist and women's organisations within the Committee for Gender Equality issued a united Opinion on the Undermining of the Principle of Gender Equality. The committee declared that it does not promote sameness of genders, nor does it deny biological differences among men and women. In order to clarify these terms, a press conference and roundtables were organised with experts from the Slovak Academy of Sciences (European Parliament – FEMM Committee, 2018). However, the struggles over strategic documents on equality policies continued. In 2014, during the reviewing process of drafting the *National Strategy for Human Rights*, the Ministry of Education also issued a statement opposing provisions on 'gender-sensitive' education with the argument that it is ideological and leads to the 'forced sexualisation of children', 'experimentation with the emotional development of children, which is unethical and immoral' (Hospodárska a sociálna rada Slovenskej republiky, 2014). While the defining presence of conventional conservative actors (i.e. conservative political parties or religious elites) still exists, these individual cases also point to a different trend, or characteristic of the Slovak policymaking environment. That of the visible presence of an 'anti-gender' discourse within the bureaucratic structures, even within the Committee on Gender Equality as an expert advisory body.

As the notions of 'gender ideology' and 'culture of death' appear within the discursive framing opposing equality policies among a variety of European political elites, it is clear that the framing has been also used as a campaigning tool during the 2015 Slovak 'Referendum on Family' (Maďarová, 2015; Valkovičová, 2017a). The recent developments within the Slovak context linked to the referendum have also testified to the growing influence of faith-based non-governmental actors extensively lobbying for referendums as a form of direct democracy (Korolczuk, Graff, 2018). As Garbagnioli (2016) claims, 'gender ideology' became a discursive device, an empty signifier capable

of adjusting to different national contexts and different issues, one of them being the question of 'democratic deficits'. As Korolczuk and Graff (2018) argue, 'anti-gender' discourse tends to be deeply critical of existing civil society structures and constantly points to a perceived lack of democratic decision-making. In the Slovak context, the case of the 2015 'Referendum on Family' initiated by an umbrella civil society organisation Alliance for Family (Orig. *Aliancia za Rodinu*) can be understood as such seemingly grass-root initiative, widely supported by a variety of political elites. Maďarová (2015) posits that the referendum reinforced the model of a heteronormative family and halted the option of adoption for same-sex couples. The 2015 Slovak 'Referendum on Family', as it was presented by the Alliance for Family, was the first referendum in Slovakia initiated not by political parties, but by a non-party activist group (Rybár, Šovčíková, 2016). While eventually unsuccessful because of a low voter turnout, the referendum targeted sexual education, LGBTI rights and other critical questions. It was initiated through a petition, which was also promoted through municipalities and in local church parishes (Sekerák, 2017).

The results of the referendum emphasised its failure to mobilise the citizens against particular minority groups. However, the Alliance managed to establish itself not as an isolated actor, but rather to become a part of a dense network of non-governmental organisations and individual political actors working within the policy-making structures (Rybár, Ševčíková, 2017). By 2015, the network had grown into a social movement that has a strong political potential. Furthermore, the initiation of the referendum and the discourse of its promoters also entered the discursive pool of mainstream Slovak political elites, as it was previously only the domain of radical right and conservative actors understood as outsiders (Maďarová, 2015). One strand of the rhetoric of the 'anti-gender' actors during the Slovak referendum of 2015 focused on the rejection of international organisations and norms they promote with what Slootmaeckers and Sircar (2017) elsewhere denounced as 'value-based Euroscepticism', a political position which was also researched by Korolczuk and Graff (2018) in the Polish context. The Euroscepticism can be explained in the Slovak context as rejection of the EU 'fundamental rights policy' since it interferes with the domestic value system, oftentimes linked to 'familialism' (Korolczuk, Graff, 2018), and the requirement of in-

dependence. However, scepticism towards international organisations (including the United Nations and the Council of Europe) can be understood as a symptom to a wider opposition towards perceived 'undemocratic political elites' (Korolczuk, Graff, 2018). Hereby, 'Brussels' is oftentimes positioned as a colonizer and as a source of contagion (Korolczuk, Graff, 2018; Valkovičová, 2017a).

In order to also address the 'mainstreamisation' of 'anti-gender' rhetoric among the political elites, including 'value-based Euroscepticism', the most recent example of such process can be linked to these actors denouncing the *Istanbul Convention*, of which Slovakia is, yet again, no exception (Gehrerová, 2017). So far, it has been rejected by a number of political parties on the account that it is indeed a document promoting the detriment of 'traditional sex roles'. In 2018, the leader of the ruling party SMER-SD (Social-Democrats), which has been in power since 2012 - Robert Fico, also publicly denounced the *Istanbul Convention* and expressed his desire to put the ratification on hold for the dubious nature of the document, as it questions the natural differences between men and women. During the same period, representatives of all 13 Christian churches called on the government to withdraw the ratification (European Parliament – FEMM Committee, 2018). This widespread and open opposition of dominant political parties towards the *Istanbul Convention* can be also understood as the development of continuous inclusion of anti-gender discourse within the mainstream politics. The convention has been halted and is currently at a stalemate (Rybár, Šovčíková, 2016). While previously 'gender ideology' constituted the domain of churches and faith-based non-governmental actors, the political outsiders such as the radical right (i.e. People's Party – Our Slovakia), and also mainstream mainstream political elites are becoming more vocal in this regard – i.e. the Slovak National Party or the currently dominant party, SMER-SD (Gehrerová, 2017). Thus, it can be argued that the influence of the AGI discourse has been gradually present both at the level of mainstream politics and the bureaucratic policymaking structures.

As such, the presence of the 'anti-gender' rhetoric and its actors can be now witnessed at different levels of Slovak policymaking. The Slovak experience leads us to propose the approach to the study of 'anti-gender' discourse actors within the policy-

making structures of CEE states as epistemic communities and actor coalitions (sharing resources – incl. discourse pools and beliefs). Support and more clarity to such framework is provided by Engeli and Mazur (2018). The authors call for the study of different advocacy and epistemic groups within the framework of (gender) equality policymaking, as the authors argue that some professional and institutionalised (i.e. feminist) actors have become members of policy networks with particular epistemic privileges, thus enjoying a position of quasi-monopoly over issues of gender equality. As such, actors making use of the 'anti-gender' discourse can be viewed as reactively oppositional actors within the policymaking environment. Such actors strive to establish a particular discourse, gain legitimacy for it and then push for their political agenda via reframing the discourse on gender equality. This is happening through epistemic networking and actor coalitions, by forging alliances and positions against other coalitions. As such, members of these communities and coalitions may be able to exert opposition via resistance to 'particular value-based knowledge' (Sabatier, Weilbe, 2007; Weible, 2008; Ingold, 2011). The actors using 'anti-gender' discourse within (gender) equality policymaking can also be understood not only as 'reactively oppositional' conservative forces, but also as positioned counter-elites (Moyser, Wagstaffe, 1987), or counter-movement members (Roggeband, 2018) seeking legitimacy, which is also gradually happening through the normalisation of the discourse within mainstream politics.

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This chapter summarised the developments of the Slovak gender equality policymaking starting with the liberalisation of the yearly 1990s and particularly within the context of policies addressing 'violence against women'. Initially established through the politics of sandwiching (Roth, 2007) as a two-way pressure structure of the international layer of policymaking and the non-governmental agenda (Očenášová, 2013), the current policymaking environment benefited from the establishment of structures of evidence-based policymaking (with regards to the two established advisory bodies). The legacy of 'foreign' funding still permeates the non-governmental and even the public sector with issues related to financing and inter-sectoriality. The institutionalisation of the feminist agenda has been considerably facilitated by the acceptance of

Slovakia into the European Union and the pre-accession reforms. While ridden with the competition for tender-based funding of the NGOs (from EU structures and other international organisations), which are constantly forced to 'professionalise', there has been considerable institutionalisation of the so-called state-based feminism (Walby, 2011; Kantola, Outshoorn, 2007). Nevertheless, such initiatives have been extensively opposed over the recent years with the use of the so-called anti-gender rhetoric, which has been occurring at different levels of policymaking, causing significant side-lining and backsliding (Verloo, 2018a, Verloo, Paternotte, 2018).

4. SETTING THE RESEARCH TOOLS: PROCESS / PRACTICE TRACING, KNOWLEDGE AND ITS USE

With regards to the aforementioned theoretical conceptualisations, the established framework and the scope, this chapter introduces the research tools of this empirical enquiry. The choice of the framework of process/practice tracing is hereby explained with regards to the core research question and its partial questions, as the chapter further evolves to explain the different approaches to the examined data – i.e. critical frame analysis, narrative reading, and narrative and cognitive interviewing. Each section devoted to these methods also summarises the nature and the sample of the data feeding into the analytical framework (i.e. meeting minutes, strategic documents, as well as the communication partners).

4.1 Research Questions and Process/Practice Tracing

With regards to the different approaches to Europeanisation set forward in the previous chapters, this empirical enquiry studies institutions and structures of European Union policymaking with a particular focus on their 'relative impact' (Radaelli, 2002). Rather than focusing on the 'degreeism' already denounced within Europeanisation studies, this empirical enquiry approaches EU policies as layers (Minto, Mergaert, 2018) or as pools and opportunity structures (Marx Ferree, et al., 2012). Studying indicator-based policymaking not only as a resource, but also as a 'layer' allows us to look at indicators as tools with a variety of dispositions. Such perspective essentially lead us to the adoption of discursive-sociological institutionalism which is by default an actor-centred perspective to studying the practices of policymaking (e.g. Lombardo, Forest, 2015). In order to study the 'relative impact' of EU indicator-based policymaking within the Slovak case, this study aims to answer the following question: *How have the EU indicator-based tools (i.e. benchmarking, ranking, and good-practice sharing) been influencing the Slovak policymaking area of violence against women?.*

With regards to the established framework, we also enquire the following:

- Which are the dominant frames within the strategic policymaking documents wherein these tools figure?
- How do public-sector and non-governmental actors perceive the indicator-based tools in the context of international and national policymaking?
- What types of learning and knowledge transfer are present within the environment specifically in relation to these tools and the data they provide?
- What types of resistances, barriers and blockages are present with regards to these tools?
- What purpose to the tools serve in relation to actor coalitions and knowledge transfer within the coalitions?

The conceptualisations of learning and knowledge transfer which have been adopted for the purpose of this enquiry and its research questions beg for an approach embedded in process/practice tracing. The abovestated partial research questions aim to capture the diversity of practices which surround indicator-based tools and such diversity instinctively requires a variety of approaches.

With the development of political sciences, the study of the transfer of knowledge has been addressed as gradually more multi-faceted, layered and complex. As scholars have been more interested in the different actors' agendas and networks, the study of learning (and its potential causality) has also become on one hand more challenging (Desmarais, Hird, 2013), but also more process-oriented (James, Jorgensen, 2009). Among these new venues, process tracing as a methodological umbrella term has been developed as a set of analytical tools which aim to draw descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence (Collier, 2011). As such, it can also be understood as a methodological framework which is connected to interpretative policy analysis[83] (Yanow, 2007a; Yanow, 2007b). Therefore, a promising stepping stone for the analytical enquiry of this case study.

Developed within the field of psychology with the objective to study the cognitive processes of decision making, process tracing techniques have also been established as

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83   Interpretative policy analysis is hereby understood as a set of studies of public policies, which are informed by ontological and epistemological presuppositions deriving from interpretative philosophies (Yanow, 2007b).

a methodological framework over the past decades within the field of political science (Checkel, 2015). What is more, over this period, there has been a persistent call upon the international relations scholars to divert their attention to domestic politics and their connection to 'the international' (Checkel, 2015). This requirement also looms large particularly within the scope of this study. It is also clear from the theoretical framework hereby established for the studies of Europeanisation, that international and supranational institutions matter at the national level. As Bennett and Checkel (2015, p.3) posit: *"Contemporary political science has converged on the view that [complex political issues] demand answers that combine social and institutional structure and context with individual agency and decision-making"*. Thus, process tracing is centred at the activities of individual actors and the actor-structure relationships (Waldner, 2015), which draws the scholarly attention from the 'macro' (the international) to the 'micro' (the local).

Nevertheless, process tracing scholars have been also intrigued by the potentiality of studying practices in a similar manner. For example, Adler-Nissen (2015, p. 91) calls for a practice-centred approach towards studying the processes of European integration, assuming that, *"[e]veryday actions are consequential in producing social life"*. According to the author, the building blocks of social life within the studied organisations and institutions are the social interactions, i.e. the practices of everyday interactions and negotiations. Knowledge transfer itself can be understood as a practice which can be recorded and remembered.

This case study understands practices as established activities, understood within their own context as 'general' – i.e. practices are actions which organise 'how individuals do things' in particular contexts (Pouliot, 2015). The preconditions of practice tracing are the assumptions that meaningful contexts give practices their effectiveness. Social practices are not unique and therefore can be generalised to a certain level. As such, practices are both particular and general, they are performances which unfold systematically and repeatedly (Pouliot, 2015). An example of such understanding can be seen within organisations – i.e. with regards to the structure of work and cooperation within. In organisations, individuals engage in practices with meanings – i.e.

performances which are social, yet individualised. Practices as activities are not only behavioural and meaningful, but specifically within organisations, they can also be perceived as organized and patterned (Dean, 2007; Pouliot, 2015). Social and political scientists are interested in practices embedded in particular organisational and structural settings, as they believe that they represent more complex social structures (Ruggie, 1998). Therefore, practices are, according to the aforementioned authors, bound to shared skills and their common understandings. Moreover, language (i.e. what and how is spoken) also needs to be understood as a form of discursive activity and thus also as a practice in its essence (Schatzki, 2001).

Analysing practices requires a shift in focus to the way activities are performed (Poggio, 2006). With regards to the study of indicator-based policymaking tools, the study of organised practices and their regimes accentuates the deconstruction of the taken-for-granted 'ways of doing things', or even 'ways of learning things'. This also means that practice tracing and the analysis of practices (in organisations) has to reach to the level of a worker, a job, and an employee (Yanow, 2006). Such approach may be particularly salient with regards to the Actor Coalition Framework (ACF) which draws us yet again to the level of the individual actors. What is more, it also calls for the study of policy processes, as well as particular subsystems or the policy area. Within this concept, the set of actors active in a particular policy domain becomes the basic unit of the analysis (Sabatier, 1998).

Drawing upon the aforementioned scholars of practice tracing, this enquiry aims to study two organisations at the governmental level with their 'particular organisational and structural settings'. The first one is the Committee on Gender Equality, which has been renewed as a separate expert organ of the Governmental Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality in 2011. The Committee was set up as a consultancy expert organ in the area of gender equality, including the area of 'violence against women'. Its founding regulation which had been in place since 2011 was amended in 2017. While the collective has no normative competences, its main aim is to provide incentives and consultations for the development of gender equality policies. This objective is aimed to function, *"[…] in accordance with the Constitution*

of the Slovak Republic, international commitment and the commitment stemming from the membership in the European Union" (Rada vlády SR…, 2011). The Committee is also able to establish its own working groups if required for the fulfillment of its agenda.

The second studied organisation is the Expert Group on the Elimination of Violence against Women which was re-established in 2013 as an expert organ of the Governmental Council on the Prevention of Criminality, despite the fact that its organisational foundations were laid already in the late 1990s. According to the Article 2 of its founding regulation, the Expert Group is primarily focused on the agenda of prevention of violence against women and in families, in line with the obligations stemming from the European Union membership, the legal acts, and other generally binding norms. The purpose of the Expert Group consisted of being an advisory body, suggesting legal changes and public policy measures, monitoring the fulfillment of different obligations, as well as foreseeing the ratification of the *Istanbul Convention*. One of the objectives of the group was also to exchange information necessary for the policymaking process. However, the Expert Group ceased its operations in 2016. Therefore, this time frame constitutes the external framework of the studied sample of meeting minutes.

Both of these organisations can be considered advisory as well as expert platforms, established within the past 10 years with the objective of institutionalising activist (feminist) agenda within the bureaucratic structures (Krizsán, Roggeband, 2017). Within such disposition, the members of these organs can be viewed as experts. Therefore, rather than merely looking at how knowledge transfer with regards to indicator-based policymaking occurs within the organisational structures of the two advisory bodies, this enquiry also studies how the members of these two groups interact with the indicator-based tools within their dispositions as 'experts' in the general sense, or 'diversity workers' in the sense that they engage in continuous work of educating their organisations and networks on the topics of equality and oppression (Ahmed, 2012, 2018). The membership of these organisations consists of 'public-sector representatives' (i.e. employees of governmental organisations and adjacent offices or agencies) and the 'non-governmental-sector representatives' (i.e. employees of civil society or-

ganisations or non-governmental organisations providing services).

The study of the processes and practices themselves requires both a cognitive and a narrative approach to the data. For instance, Pouliot (2015) suggests participant ethnographic observation, as well as qualitative and cognitive interviewing. While practices may not always be observed and consequently described, they can be talked about by the actors themselves. This presupposes a phenomenological perspective within practice tracing (Poggio, 2006). However, drawing on the previous scholarship, one has to assume that the approach of practice tracing also requires extensive knowledge of the context within which the practices take place. In our case, that would be extensive knowledge of the institutional and procedural setting of policymaking in the area of 'violence against women'. The requirement for methodological triangulation in case studies built upon a practice tracing enquiry has also been addressed by James and Jorgensen (2009), who suggest content analysis of relevant and strategic policy documents providing contextual data which would allow both for triangulation and for more context-based information.

Therefore, this empirical enquiry combines a number of approaches to data collection and data analysis (subsumed under the umbrella term 'practice tracing'), which allow us to address the research questions spelled out at the beginning of this chapter. Content analysis in forms of frame analysis (strategic documents and national reports) and narrative reading/research (meeting minutes) allows us to study the core 'issue frames' and narratives of policymaking (and its practices of knowledge sharing). However, it also helps us to understand the policymaking environment where this learning occurs (or is resisted). Narrative reading of the meeting minutes, as well as cognitive and narrative interviewing of the members of the Expert Group and the Committee provides us with the phenomenological cue to the study of the practices themselves.

A simple, yet crucial question raised within the context of this study is when to start the practice tracing. Bennett and Checkel (2015) suggest that there is no universal answer to this question as within each defined research question, the starting point is a debatable factor. As the authors continue: *"A reasonable place may be a critical junc-*

ture at which an institution or practice was contingent or open to alternative paths" (Bennett, Checkel, 2015, p. 26). For this particular reason, the practice tracing study focuses upon the period starting in 2004 with regards to the framework of the studied documents after the Slovak accession to the EU). While many of the documents hereby studied set out the framework for the policies starting in 2004, these documents were drafted prior to the year. This period is, of course, crucial for institutional and organisational changes within the gender equality policy. The outer limit of the studied timeframe is year 2016, since this is the year when the studied organisations changed their operations/organisational structure. Thus, this case study acknowledges its limits with regards to its time frame, as it is essentially a time and space capsule. Within this period starting at the EU-accession process, lasting until the point of '12 years after the EU-accession', this case-study essentially follows two expert advisory bodies and their actors in order to capture the potentially multi-faceted role of EU indicator-based policymaking. In order to delve much further into the partial approaches subsumed under the practice tracing, the following sections address their contributions.

4.2 Studying Discourses – Policy Frame Analysis of Strategic and Framework Documents

Content analysis of strategic documents is oftentimes described as a pre-requirement for process tracing research projects to provide a clear outline of the studied environment (Collier, 2011; Bennett, Checkel, 2015; Pouliot, 2015). This study applies the approach of critical frame analysis as a constructivist perspective of policy analysis. Such perspective is, for instance, indicated by the interest in the production and reproduction of discourses. As explained by Schatzki (2001) and drawing upon the constructivist works of Austin (1962), practice theory understands language as a form of discursive (and therefore also constitutive) practice.

Furthermore, we hereby approach discourses as structures which create individual and mass consciousness, as well as constitute individual and collective subjects (Jäger, Maier, 2009). In the same vein, this case study stems from the works on the

so-called 'discursive politics', which accentuate the relevance of discourses for policy change (Kantola, Lombardo, 2017). Hereby, the policymaking arenas are approached as environments with contesting views and contesting discourses promoted by actors with different relations and agendas. Discourses as language-bases structures thus construct social reality - this is particularly visible during the production of a variety of policymaking outcomes (Verloo, Lombardo, 2007). Strategic and framework documents can be understood as discursive planes, which carry the policy discourses and can be the foundations of the policy outcomes.

With a particular focus on policymaking actors, frame analysis is adopted with reference to the concept of 'frames' provided by Goffman (1986) who calls for the study of 'how we choose to talk about specific issues'. According to Goffman, individuals ascribe meanings to issues only through processes of interaction, interpretation and contextualisation. As such, frame analysis explores how meanings of objects, subjects, and structures are produced through the use of language (Ackerley, True, 2010). While the study of policy frames may not necessarily be well-equipped to analyse the processes of change in policymaking in real time, the scrutiny of the various discursive frames present within the policymaking environment is essential to understating the, *"[d]ifferent representations that socio-political actors offer about policy problems and solutions"* (Van Der Haar, Verloo, 2016, p. 1). This perspective draws extensively upon the work of Bacchi (1999), who stresses the requirement to study the representations of problems and the representations of their solutions within policymaking discourses.

We believe that each of the studied documents needs to be understood not merely as a bureaucratic procedure, but as a place of conflict and compromise. A strategic document can be even approaches as a 'living entity', which is (re)constructed throughout time (Ahmed, 2012; Ahmed 2018). Each document is the product of deliberations among a number of different actors within the state-bureaucratic structure, eventually leading to be institutionalised as formal framework. We understand the framing of particular issues within the documents to be conscious strategies – i.e. seized discursive opportunities with objectives materialised at the level of the written text. As Bustelo and Verloo (2009) argue, the study of document frames is grounded in the idea

that policy documents need to be understood as 'assemblages' - internal struggles of the documents, whereby the subjectivity of their orchestrators needs to be questioned and their arguments need to be studied within their discursive forms.

The frame analysis of this particular case study of strategic documents looks at the policies tackling 'violence against women' as it scrutinises the positionality of indicator-based tools within the policy frames of the documents. Or, put differently, we are asking which roles are fulfilled by benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing with regards to the diagnosis and the prognosis of established problems – i.e are the tools positioned in relation to the diagnosis of the problem, are they positioned in relation to the prognosis, what is the role of the actors as promoters of the tools with regards to the diagnosis and the prognosis? (Lombardo, Meier, 2008). The frame analysis approach examines how the documents 'talk' about the tools of benchmarking, ranking and good practice sharing, particularly in relation to the structures of international governance[84].

This study approaches frames of critical frame analysis as interpretative schemes, which structure the different meanings of reality. Frames can also be contradictory or oppositional, or issue-specific (Verloo, Lombardo, 2007; Vliegenthart, Van Zoonen, 1996). Within this study, we can also distinguish between rhetorical or action frames. While the rhetorical ones can be extracted from policy-relevant texts, which play an important role in persuasion and justification within policymaking, the action frames are visible through observations of patterns of action embedded within political practices, such as policymaking (Rein, Schön, 1996). The methodological structure adopted for this study was also inspired by the critical frame analysis developed for the research projects QUING (Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies) and MAGEEQ (Policy Frames and Implementation Problems: The Case of Gender Mainstreaming)[85]. Authors working within these research projects devised the structure of policy frames as they define

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84   As Forest and Lombardo (2012) contend, any Europeanisation analysis must also take other external factors (in our case, the influence of other structures of inter-governmental cooperation) into consideration and differentiate the role of the EU and the non-EU actors.

85   Both of the projects QUING and MAGEEQ were developed under the European Commission Framework Programmes FP6 and FP7.

3 types of frames – master frames, issue frames, and document frames (Dombos et al., 2012). While the master frames disclose the hegemonic structures which shape the meaning of the text, issue frames tend to have normative nature, as they focus specifically on legitimation and reasoning. Document frames, on the other hand, describe how particular documents define a particular issue at hand.

Specifically with regards to the technical side of frame analysis, it is important to emphasise that each frame is constituted by frame elements. What has been established as crucial for frame analysis is the study of different ideas and their elements: *"Frame analysis, then, is a technique for approaching a text by attending to its diverse idea elements with the following question: What holds these elements together? The goal of frame analysis is understanding how certain idea elements are linked together into packages of meaning, potentially encoded into soundbite-like signifiers that stand for those packages of meaning, and deployed in situated discursive activity"* (Creed et al., 2012, p. 37). Each frame is constituted by different aspects/angles, which can be grouped into categories of voice, diagnosis, attribution of roles in diagnosis, prognosis, attribution of roles in prognosis, normativity, and balance (Lombardo, Meier, 2008). In order to fill these categories for the purpose of studying the frames, the structure of a frame analysis follows different idea elements, such as metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, visual images, roots, consequences, and appeals to principle (Gamson, Lasch, 1983). These elements are further sorted and given provisional labels as we progress to find connections between different elements.

The strategic documents approached via frame analysis set out the framework for the determined periods of policymaking, they establish responsibilities, as well as provide legitimation for particular actions. The studied documents within this case study constitute both the conceptual framework for Slovak national policymaking in the area of gender equality (4 documents), as well as the more specialised area of policies tackling violence against women (11 documents). These include *National Strategies for Gender Equality* (2009-2013, 2014-2019) and the *National Action Plans for Gender Equality* (2010-2013, 2014-2019). Others include the *National Action Plans for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women* (2004, 2005-2008,

2009-2012, 2014-2019), as well as the *National Reports on the fulfillment of the National Action Plans for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women* (2005-2008, 2009-2012, 2014-2019). The final four strategic documents are the *National Reports on Violence against Women in Slovakia* (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012-2013)[86].

These written policy frameworks such as the national strategies and action plans are submitted by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family – Department for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities. Drafted in cooperation with the Committee on Gender Equality (section of the Governmental Council on Human Rights, Ethnic and National Minorities, and Gender Equality), each of the documents is further submitted for the approval of the Governmental collegium. The national reports on 'violence against women' are also prepared under the auspices of the Department as they are further submitted to the National Council of the Slovak Republic where they are debated and voted upon. These documents are all publicly available at governmental sites dedicated to policies on gender equality and 'violence against women' from which they were also retrieved for the purpose of this study[87]. The two studied expert bodies – the Expert Group and the Committee also hold the mandate to actively engage with these documents – among other objectives, these organs can actively participate at some of the preparations, as well as they oftentimes put the debate over the documents on their agendas.

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86   These reports were commissioned by the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women 2009-2012. All of these reports summarise existing research and administrative data on violence against women (i.e. data provided by the police and judicial authorities, as well as the healthcare and social services).

87   The studied documents can be retrieved at
https://www.zastavmenasilie.gov.sk/strategie-a-spravy#entry:855 and
https://www.gender.gov.sk/dokumenty/legislativa/dokumenty/.

4.3 Studying Narratives – Narrative Reading, Cognitive and Narrative Interviewing

Stemming from the approach of phenomenology and hermeneutics[88], Yanow (2007a) argues that meanings and interpretations are the centre of human action, which is the precondition of any policy analysis: *"Phenomenology, with its focus on lived experience, directs researchers towards conversational (or in-depth) interviews, in order to understand how individuals frame policy issues and where these frames come from"* (Yanow, 2007a, p. 112). Qualitative enquires of narrative reading, cognitive and narrative interviewing are phenomenological tools in essence. As the above sections dedicated to process/practice tracing indicate, a potential approach to studying practices is through observing the actors and let them 'speak for themselves'. As such, phenomenological perspective of practice tracing is driven by the desire to understand social phenomena through actors' own perspectives. Hereby, actors are understood as experts on the situations (and the structures within which they operate), i.e. the reality is what the actors perceive it to be, and what the actors experience (Brinkmann, Kvale, 2014).

Narrative reading as a method of content analysis has been adopted in political sciences from literary studies and later psychology as a contribution to other more 'sterile' post-positivist approaches such as surveys. While narrative research can be anything that simply studies narrative materials, it is essentially centred upon the concept of a narrative, which can be understood as a 'connected successions of happenings' (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiachy, Zilber, 1998, p. 2). As such, it draws upon the assumption of necessary pluralism, relativism and subjectivity. A narrative is not a simple story - it cannot be a simple 'telling', it requires a coherent plot (Boje, 2001, p. 1). Furthermore, narrative reading by default assumes that 'storytelling' is a widely spread cultural practice, or even a culturally significant psychological strategy which allows individuals to make sense of the world – the time, the processes, and the change

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88 As Brinkmann and Kvale (2014) explain, phenomenology in qualitative enquiry is a term that points to an interest in understanding social phenomena from the actor's perspective and describing the world as experienced by the subjects of the study. The authors claim, that phenomenological approach assumes that the important reality is what people perceive it to be.

(Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiachy, Zilber, 1998 ; Heinen, 2009). Creating stories or narratives also helps individuals to construct identity and personality within specific contexts – narratives help individuals to understand their own subjectivities (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiachy, Zilber, 1998). For this particular reason, narrative reading has also been applied within the field of organisational studies because it allows us to study the 'stories within the organisations' which are constantly flowing, they are procedural and point to the dynamics of the organisation. Such approach also allows us to look at the processes of organisational behaviour and organisational change, such as learning (Heinen, 2009). Furthermore, narrative reading also allows us to give voice to actors who are not dominating the organisational discourses or structures and may be (on some accounts) 'othered' within their own organisation (Boje, 2001).

But such nature of narrative reading also has downsides also known within other phenomenological approaches – i.e. those of sample choice and its actual analysis, which risks ambiguity (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiachy, Zilber, 1998). In this case study, such 'stories', i.e. narratives are first looked upon via the narrative reading of the organisational meeting minutes and afterwards, we proceed to narrative and cognitive interviewing of the members of these platforms. Altogether, the narrative reading takes into consideration 15 sessions and their meeting minutes of the Committee[89], and 5 sessions of the Expert Group[90], which are available at the governmental webpages and were also retrieved from them for the purpose of this study[91]. Those transcripts which were not available online (due to technical issues) were gained from the Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities for the purpose of this study.

Furthermore, qualitative cognitive interviewing as a phenomenological perspective has been also chosen in order to uncover the different meanings which underpin

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89   These include sessions since 2011 to 2016. These includes the dates: 23/9/2011, 10/11/2011, 1/12/2011, 17/2/2012, 25/9/2012, 28/1/2013, 21/10/2013, 30/1/2014, 20/5/2014, 2/10/2014, 24/2/2015, 3/6/2015, 13/10/2015, 13/6/2016, 28/11/2016. Last accessed 14/7/2017.

90   The Expert Group was functional only between the years 2013 to 2014. The analysis includes the sessions of the following days: 26/4/2013, 8/10/2013, 3/7/2014, 4/2/2016, 25/10/2016. Last accessed 14/7/2017

91   The meeting minutes are available at: https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/vybor-pre-rodovu-rovnost/ and https://www.minv.sk/?zlozenie-expertnej-skupiny-pre-eliminaciu-nasilia-pachaneho-na-zenach. The missing transcripts were provided by the Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities on 10/5/2018

the lives, routines and behaviours of the communication partners, as well as their understanding of their own practices. Narrative and cognitive interviewing which follows our narrative reading of the meeting minutes further 'records human experience through the construction of personal stories' (Clandinin, Connelly, 2000). The value of this approach to interviewing rests on the assumption that experience happens 'narratively': *"Narratives [...] represent the way in which we have chosen to order and interpret our experience"* (Webster, Mertova, 2007, p. 9). Therefore, while the immediate objective may be to capture the temporal experience (Webster, Mertova, 2007), narrative analysis may also engage with long-term perspectives of actors through stories (Carr, 1986).

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews applies both open and axial coding (Brinkmann, Kvale, 2014). Within such approach, researchers are free to follow up ideas, probe responses and ask for clarifications in relation to problematic statements (Arksey, Knight, 1999). These interviews were also carefully conducted in view of various issues linked to memory (Arksey, Knight, 1999) and the dilemma of choosing the right stories for further analysis. This case study aims to empower the communication partners by recognising their experience. Therefore, as it is oftentimes emphasised, the experience recalled by the communication partners needs to be understood as the most important one and the defining one (Webster, Mertova, 2009). This enquiry has a considerable potential in order to study the professional experience of the actors and to bridge the distance between scholars and practitioners of public policies (Webster, Mertova, 2007). Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that these approaches do not strive to produce conclusions of certainty, as they do not simply claim to represent 'the truth'. Instead, both narrative and cognitive interviewing, should be understood from the perspective of discursive-sociological institutionalism, which puts the emphasis on the actors' own experiences of practices and structures, as well as their positionality and subjectivity within the studied environment.

As it was already mentioned, this research enquiry looks at its interview participants as experts within the field of policies tackling 'violence against women'. In essence, the decision to present a group of agents as experts can be contested. We

hereby adhere to the understanding of experts presented by Abels and Behrens (2009), who understand them as agents bearing specific functions within organisational settings – these actors also present solutions to problems within decision-making process. However, they can also be perceived as elites, which opens up a different set of perspectives and questions of research ethics for this enquiry (Arksey, Knight, 1999). Moyser and Wagstaffe (1987), for example, define elites within organisational studies as actors with individual power who exercise it regularly and intentionally in order to affect the decision-making process. However, a different issue is raised when the elites possess a specific status within the studied communities, e.g. they can be considered 'counter-elites': *"A counter-elite, almost by definition, does not have a shared conceptual framework with what may be perceived as the representative of a state agency"* (Moyser, Wagstaffe, 1987, p. 186). This poses a new set of challenges. According to the aforementioned authors, counter-elites tend to be defensive towards scientific enquiries – i.e. they tend to be reluctant to co-operate with researchers since they doubt the value of academic research. A build-up of trust among the elites and the researchers is therefore required.

The sample of the cognitive and narrative interviews works with non-probability purposive sampling. This type of sampling allows the researcher to keep the control over the sample by identifying the respondents *ex ante* based on their knowledge of the studied field or their positionality within the policymaking environment (as experts and elites). It is crucial to also address the question of membership within the Committee and the Expert Groups which cannot definitely be labelled as simply 'feminist' despite what the pre-assumption may be. Specifically with regards to the members of the non-governmental sector, some of the communication partners have been identified first through the narrative reading of the meeting minutes and then through the process of interviewing as members of the 'feminist/women's coalition' (some public-sector representatives, but mostly feminist and civil society organisations aimed at gender equality) or the 'reactively oppositional coalition' (members of father's rights organisations, catholic civil society organisation). This identification was done based on the discourse on 'violence against women' (i.e. the rhetoric), the political demands and the agenda of their organisation. The most common practice was the self-identifi-

cation as belonging to one of these groups through 'othering'. In this case, the communication partners would speak about their opposition and reservations to the members of the other community. Another practice was the discursive opposition to the term 'gender' and 'gender equality' applied by the 'reactively oppositional actors', or a direct opposition or adherence to 'feminist agenda' which is defined in the Slovak context by the focus and the discursive dominance of women's issues (as we have described in Chapter 3).

In order to contact the participants and create the sample, different communication channels were accessed in order to seek contacts and reach the potential interview participants (a list of all approached communication partners can be seen in Appendix no. 1). Some refused to participate instantly, referring to their lack of knowledge or institutionalised agenda within the particular field of 'violence against women'. Other contacted respondents chose not to respond at all, despite the various demands for an interview through a variety of channels. Many of these 'no response' members of the platforms came from the identified group of 'reactively oppositional' actors. In general, gaining access was also complicated among the representatives of the non-governmental sector. We now ascribe this to the nature of the environment, which has the tendency to protect itself from the external (including those with lacking knowledge of gender equality policies in Slovakia), which we now believe to be a conscious strategy in a very politicised and precarious environment. Some of the contacts were gained through the persona of the authors' supervisor - Professor Oľga Gyárfášova, who has been known as a political scientist and gender studies scholar both within the public and the non-governmental sector.

What also needs to be considered with regards not only to sampling, but also to the way cognitive and narrative interviews were conducted, was the awareness of some of the communication partners that the author of this study, i. e. the interviewer, is not only conducting her PhD at the Comenius University in Bratislava, but that she is also involved with the 'human rights' civil sector (through an LGBTI organisation) and that she sometimes cooperates with the Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities. While we believe this was particularly appealing to some of the communica-

tion partners who were aware of the fact, it may have been detrimental to establishing productive queues of communication with others.

Furthermore, despite the effort to reach out to the members who were officially mandated to take part in these platforms, some of the public-sector and non-governmental organisations took the decision to suggest other persons to represent them within the research despite the official nominations. Many of these communication partners argued that the mandate was not bound to a particular person, but rather to their organisations, which resulted in rotation in participation in the platforms. Therefore, many of the officially nominated communication partners preferred to suggest other persons from their organisation who took part at the deliberations more often.

Within the period of 14 months starting in February 2017, 22 respondents answered to the request for an interview, which resulted in 18 individual interviews and 2 group interviews[92] (respondents of 2). Each interview took between 30 minutes and 2 hours. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim by the interviewer into Slovak. The transcripts can be provided upon request, while the interview structure can be found as appendix no. 2. Some of the respondents refused to take part in the interviewing process, which may be linked to the aforementioned issues related to interviewing 'counter elites' (Moyser and Wagstaffe, 1987). Prior to introducing the data from the interviewing process, it needs to be disclosed that 3 of the 22 respondents were identified as members of the 'reactively oppositional' group.

When contacting the communication partners, each of the participants received an information sheet (see Appendix no. 3) containing basic information about the author of the research, as well as the nature of the research project. The second page of the information sheet contained informed consent. The communication partners were aware of the need to sign this consent form before the meeting and were also asked to sign it at the premises of the meeting. Two copies of the information sheet were co-

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92   Before the two group interviews took part, the interviewer was not aware that two respondents will be coming to the scheduled meeting. While this was initially seen as problematic, the nature of the interviews, (which thus took on the mode of a focus group) provided for some valuable insights and allowed the respondents to feel more secure about their shared perspectives and beliefs.

signed by the author of the research (i.e. interviewer), one of which was later given to the respondent.

The communication partners were informed about the anonymization of the sample, which required all of them to be represented by a numeric code and an occupational category. While some of them explained that they did not mind any disclosure, others enquired extensively about the limitations of the anonymization, as they feared some of the gathered data may be linked directly to them. In order to treat them equally, a uniform approach of maximum anonymization was chosen. Within the perspective of the feminist research ethics which calls for the recognition of the 'voice' of actors within engaged research (Ackerley, True, 2010), the process of complete anonymization may be considered rather problematic and 'invisibilising'. Nevertheless, within this context and with regards to some of the critical statements provided by the communication partners about other actors and organisations, the interviewer opted for complete anonymization, which protects them within their working conditions.

Before the interview, the communication partners were asked to self-categorise themselves based on the segment/sphere of their work within the past decade. Based on this self-identification, interviewees were further assigned a code (which they are not aware of), thus providing the sample with maximum anonymization. According to image no. 1 below, the communication partners were able to self-identify themselves into three basic sectors which overlapped – public sector, non-governmental sector and the academia. It is clear that the majority of the communication partners (total of 17) have had experience with working within the non-governmental sector. While 11 of them have had experience of working within the public, only 5 have previously worked in academia. The employment history of the participants may be conditioned by the founding regulations of the Committee and the Expert Group and the nature of the policymaking environment. For example, the Committee consists of stable public-sector representatives from a number of ministerial organisations and agencies. The second group of mandated actors within this platform consists of non-governmental organisations. Therefore, e.g. in order for an individual solely working within academia to be nominated into the Committee, they have to be nominated by a non-governmental

organisation[93] or come from the Academy of Sciences (which has only one member reserved). The pool of the non-governmental representatives within the sample consists of persons who have been involved with campaigning and advocacy, as well as representatives of NGOs who predominantly work as practitioners with clients who have had experience with intimate partner and non-partner violence. Furthermore, the extensive work experience of the communication partners points to an interesting phenomenon - that of the connections and networks of actors within the area of 'violence against women', who often change occupations and move from one sector to another for various reasons (including the interconnectedness between the governmental and non-governmental agenda, and the precariousness of work within the area). This, however, can be understood as a contributing factor to the processes of institutionalisation of the feminist agenda within the governmental structures.
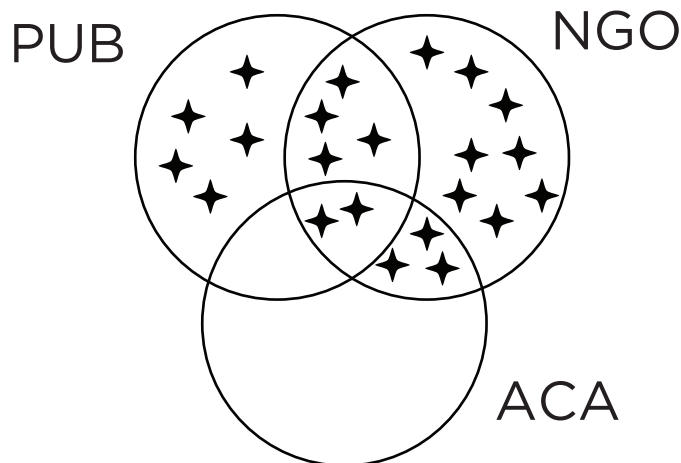

Image no 1.: Occupational history of communication partners

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In this chapter, we introduced the research questions of the case study as we further explained the umbrella methodological structure of process/practice tracing chosen within the scope of the discursive-sociological institutionalism as an approach to studying public policies and their actors. This chapter then explained the approach

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93   Thus, the positionality of such actors is immediately linked to the activist agenda of the NGO, which may cause the other members to perceive the actor as primarily an activist, rather than a scholar. This, however, was not any of the 22 cases, as NGOs prefer to nominate their own representatives rather than academics who would represent them at the platforms.

of frame analysis to the study of strategic documents as 'living entities' – places of contest and conflict (Ahmed 2012; Ahmed, 2018). These documents happened to contain policy 'issue frames', which can be studied through the lenses of their diagnosis, prognosis and the normativity of a given issue. Narrative reading, cognitive and narrative interviewing were later described as other phenomenological approaches to studying actors in their dispositions of experts, elites and counter-elites via the reading of meeting minutes and interviewing. Besides introducing the different approaches to collecting and analysing data, this chapter also discussed the shortcomings of the methods.

The structure of the case study and its research questions is the following:

Table no. 3: Research questions and the methodological approaches of enquiry

Partial research question	**Methodological approach of enquiry**
• Which are the dominant frames within the strategic policymaking documents wherein these tools figure?	• Critical frame analysis of strategic documents
• How do public-sector and non-governmental actors perceive the indicator-based tools in the context of international and national policymaking?	• Cognitive and narrative interviewing among members of advisory bodies
• What types of learning and knowledge transfer are present within the environment specifically in relation to these tools and the data they provide?	• Cognitive and narrative interviewing among members of advisory bodies
• What types of resistances, barriers and blockages are present with regards to these tools?	• Cognitive and narrative interviewing among members of advisory bodies
• What purpose to the tools serve in relation to actor coalitions and knowledge transfer within the coalitions?	• Cognitive and narrative interviewing among members of advisory bodies • Narrative reading of meeting minutes

This chapter at the end took a look at the studied expert organisations, their mandates, as well as the members of these groups (as a population) who took part in the interviewing process. The process of sample construction was also addressed with regards to its own limitations.

5. ACTOR-CENTRED PERSPECTIVES: PERCEPTIONS OF INDICATOR-BASED TOOLS

The previous chapter established the research questions by putting them into context with the chosen methodological approaches to data collection and analysis. In consequence, this chapter and the following one report on the findings with regards to the established research questions. Within this chapter, which aims to provide an actor-centred perspective of the indicator-based tools, different positionalities of indicator-based tools are described. First, the chapter reports on the presence of the indicator-based tools within the issue frames of strategic and framework documents, as well as proceeding to the narrations of the communication partners. Herein, the chapter addresses the following questions: 'Which are the dominant frames within the strategic policymaking documents wherein these tools figure?', and 'How do the public-sector and non-governmental actors perceive the indicator-based tools in the context of international and national policymaking?'. However, since this chapter also addresses the presence of indicator-based tools within the document issue frames, it is of significance to include an enquiry of what the communication partners themselves identify as the currently pressing issues of policies tackling 'violence against women'.

5.1 European Union as a Solution, or as a Problem?: Issue Frames and Indicator-Based Tools

The critical frame analysis (Verloo 2007; Meier 2008; Verloo, Lombardo, 2007; Dombos et al., 2012) applied to the strategic and framework documents established for the area of gender equality and 'violence against women' consists of 15 documents with a time frame of 15 years (2004 - 2019). The objective of the critical frame analysis within this section was to disclose the so-called issue frames (Dombos et al., 2012) and within these to detect the presence of the indicator-based tools of international policymaking. However, before we embark on explaining the conception of issue frames within the studied documents, some general findings and remarks are in order.

It is important to note that two particular kinds of logic were followed when the documents addressed 'violence against women' and gender equality policies in general. The texts all contained two specific types of appeals at their beginnings – an appeal to the 'international norms and compliance', and an appeal to 'research and knowledge as evidence'. Both of these discursive framings aimed to provide a legitimation and a strategic appeal in order to give ground to the documents themselves and to uphold the necessity to forward the policies. The strategy of invoking 'international norms and compliance' was oftentimes quite exhaustingly present in form of all the international conventions signed by the Slovak Republic at the beginning of the documents. But this logic was also upheld by a more subtle framing of the legitimacy and necessity of the policies which was bound to the concept of a 'European club' as a union of states which disposes of rarely specified standards which need to be fulfilled. On the other hand, 'research and knowledge as evidence' provided a different type of appeal. Most of the documents include an extensive section at the beginning which summarises the current and most targeted knowledge gathered to that date in the area of 'violence against women'. The type of data provided in these documents focuses on a number of specific issues with regards to violence, predominantnly including the following: the extensive nature of violence against women, the significant downplaying of the seriousness or extent of violence against women, the prevalence of intimate-partner violence upon women rather than men, the latency of violence against women, the increasing incidence of violence over time, and the consequences of violence upon the lives of women. As early as in the introduction to the *2009 - 2012 National Action Plan on Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women*, the document states that statistical evidence is a crucial component of policymaking. In order to provide the relevant data, these documents also refer to some international organisations and their research - starting in 2009 with the Council of Europe and continuing to the last *Report on Violence against Women 2012 - 2013* extensively drawing onto the findings of the *FRA Violence against Women Survey*. Both of these two types of appeals to 'international norms and compliance' and 'research and knowledge as evidence' come together in the *2010 Report on Violence against Women* which claims that the evidence in form of research should help to advance the ratification of the *Istanbul Convention* as a crucial international norm.

Within the 15 studied documents, 5 particular issue frames were recognised, which included indicator-based tools of benchmarking, ranking, and good-practice sharing at the level of European intergovernmental cooperation. These issue frames which appeared in either diagnosis, prognosis or both included: demand for reliable data, insufficient standards of services, requirement of standardised policymaking, requirement of legal changes, as well as a problematic culture and discourses of violence.

The issue frame defined as 'requirement of legal changes' was present only in the *National Action Plans for the Elimination and Prevention of Violence* (2005-2008, 2009-2012, 2014-2019) and their subsequent reports. This issue frame did not lack clear framing of its diagnosis and prognosis. Furthermore, it also contained a clearly established normativity throughout all the documents - the requirement to reform the Slovak legal framework in order to include the concept of 'gender-based violence' into the legal framework. The aspects of diagnosis contained references to an insufficient or lacking legal framework at the national level, while the solution provided to the problem, i.e. the prognosis, referred directly to the objective of sharing good practice from neighbouring European countries or countries of the EU. Nevertheless, such concept of good-practice sharing lacked direct references to precise tools of good-practice sharing and only contained this concept as a fragment.

The issue frame 'problematic culture and discourses of violence' was found within two documents and contained direct references to international ranking. However, this issue frame did not establish any prognosis or clear lines of normativity - only references to an Eurostat report (*Report on Violence against Women 2009*) and the *FRA Violence against Women Survey* (*Report on Violence against Women 2012-2013*) as a diagnosis of the prevalence of violence and rape myths within the Slovak society.

The issue frame 'insufficient standards of services' to victims of violence and on some occasions also to perpetrators (i.e. restitutive programmes) constituted another issue frame where benchmarking appeared, albeit oftentimes only as an unspecified fragment. An interesting development of this issue frame can be witnessed over time in relation to its diagnosis and prognosis. The quality and quantity of service provision

to victims seems to be a particular topic within this issue frame starting as early as in 2005. Within this issue frame, two references seem to be appearing interchangeably – the concept of unspecified 'European Union standards' and the Council of Europe Minimum Standards for Services. The early documents (2005-2012 period) establish these two international structures and their standards only within the prognosis – the documents denounce the quality and the quantity of the national services, as they provide these two frameworks as the solutions. However, the later documents (2014-2019) refer to the 'European Union standards' and the Council of Europe Minimum Standards already within the diagnosis of the problem – i.e. the service provision is directly understood as problematic, as it does not adhere to these international frameworks. Furthermore, while no normativity is present in the early documents - only a constant appeal to achieve an improvement of services, the later documents (2014-2019) define the normative power of the Council of Europe or the European Union policymaking as a set standard.

The issue frame 'requirement of standardised policymaking' is one that appears in the *National Action Plans for Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women* within the time frame 2005 - 2019. Throughout the documents, this issue frame contains references to the need for better monitoring and controlling of policymaking processes as the expected norm, however, the diagnosis of the problem is never clearly defined. However, within all the documents, the prognosis contains direct references to either 'European Union indicators' or 'EIGE indicators' (in the scope of Council Presidencies) developed for policies tackling violence against women as a solution to lacking standardisation. As such, the EU indicators clearly appear in relation to steering, controlling and monitoring.

The issue frame 'demand for reliable data' seems to be the most dominant, represented with the presence of European Union indicator-based tools. Starting with the *2004 National Action Plan for Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and in Families*, the normativity within the issue frame points to the requirement of data as a precondition for efficient policymaking. This issue frame is as an open signifier filled with two particular problems which reappear in the documents – a lack of

national data on violence and its nature, as well as a lack of data collection coherence at the level of the public sector (caused by different definitions of violence and lacking cooperation). Thus, the diagnosis in these early documents is set clearly, while the prognosis rests in intergovernmental cooperation. The *National Action Plan on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women 2005 – 2008* even claims that the collection of statistical data had been, until that point, promoted primarily by international organisations. This document also claims that the EU DAPHNE programme may serve for the purpose of collecting national data in the future. Hereby, gender mainstreaming also appears as a fragment in the *National Action Plans for Gender Equality* within its prognosis as a tool which would provide for policy monitoring and analysis (2009-2012) or as gender segregated statistics (2014-2019). With regards to the lacking data at the national level and the lacking consistency of its collection, the European Union appears as an actor providing the solutions by two means within the prognosis – as a provider of relevant data and as a provider of reliable methodology for data collection (referring to *FRA Violence against Women Survey* and Eurostat surveys). However, starting with the *2012-2013 Report on Violence against Women*, and continuing throughout the 2014-2019 documents, the European Union appears in the realm of diagnosis, as well. Hereby, the FRA survey and EIGE Gender Equality Index signify again the prognosis (as data providers), while at this point, the European Union is present, in general and as a fragment, in the diagnosis as an actor who requires reliable data. The following excerpts point to such definitions of diagnosis: *"The set-up and the harmonisation of indicators of violence against women is the objective of a number of policies and institutions at the Europe-wide level for over 20 years. For example the European Commission pays attention to this topic within its gender equality policies as part of its European security and justice agenda, while EIGE follows the problematic in its agenda-setting role within the Council Presidencies"* (Report on National Action Plan 2012-2013, p. 17), *"The Council of the European Union and the European Parliament, as well as other international organisations, [along with the Council of Europe] accentuate the need for comparative data on violence against women, as the basis for the development of policies stemming from facts and evidence"* (Report on National Action Plan 2014-2019, p. 3).

While the European Union indicator-based tools of policymaking appear primarily only within a few issue frames of the studied documents, it is paramount to put these findings into the perspective of the communication partners' perspectives of policies tackling violence against women. Thus, the following section addresses the studied actors with a similar enquiry before it moves on to their perceptions of the role of the indicator-based tools within intergovernmental cooperation.

5.2 The Development and the Current Challenges of Slovak Policies on 'Violence against Women'

The process of cognitive and narrative interviewing of the members of the Committee and the Expert Group included questions on the communication partners' perspectives on the current dominant challenges within the Slovak policies addressing 'violence against women', as well as their perspectives on the crucial and long-term changes that have happened within this area of policymaking. When asked about the recent developments of the national policies, three of the communication partners spoke of the current situation by first recalling the period of policymaking before the process of democratisation, i.e. in the former Czecho-Slovak Republic (CP 2 - PUB, CP 6 – NGO/ACA, CP 7 - NGO). The communication partners recalled the former authoritarian state structures as being inattentive to the issue of violence against women, as the topic was predominantly 'hidden from view': *"I think [the change] did happen. Because when we go back to the era of Slovak socialism, there was the objective of hiding the numbers. Nothing was reported, nothing could have been done. Violence had to stay in the framework of the partner relationship."* (CP 2 - PUB). All three respondents accentuated the requirement to collect data on the extent and nature of the issue, as they also linked this to the objective of putting the issue into public view and onto the political agenda. Three of the communication partners also subsequently emphasised the agenda of collecting gender-segregated data as a recent development fuelled by the demand of intergovernmental cooperation, which has been crucial for policymaking actors at the national level (CP 2 – PUB, CP 3 – PUB/NGO, CP 12 – NGO/ACA).

When reflecting upon the changes within the national policies tackling 'violence against women', some of the communication partners directly referred to the changes as fueled by European Union policies and institutions. A few communication partners spoke directly of the EU pressure as they claimed that the institutionalisation of the agenda within the national environment occurred particularly during the pre-accession period (CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA, CP 12 – NGO/ACA). One communication partner referred to this as the result of two particular push-pull factors: the presence of clear criteria for the government to be fulfilled during the pre-accession period, and accessible funding for national initiatives (including the non-governmental sector). According to the respondent's narrative, the EU structures were approached by both governmental and non-governmental actors as a pool of mostly discursive and financial resources in order to lobby for change within the public policies.

While none of the respondents were directly asked to speak of international funding, some of them did so on two accounts – when asked about the most pressing issues which needed to be tackled by national policies, and in relation to international good-practice sharing. On these accounts, EU-related funding (i.e. European Social Fund, DAPHNE and PROGRESS programmes) was recalled more commonly than other sources (e.g. EEA grant schemes). However, within their accounts, the communication partners tended to emphasise the importance of the European Union funding schemes for the national policymaking to the initial development of the policies during the EU pre-accession period and briefly after it.

However, when asked about the recent role of the European Union structures rather than their pre-accession impact, one communication partner also reflected upon the recent developments in the national policymaking dynamics and discourses as she identified the recent *"ironisation of the EU"* within the broad national discourses (CP 22 - PUB). She described this process as the loss of the former lobbying potential of some actors within the national policymaking arenas, whereby they can no longer 'argue with the aid of the EU' (CP 22 - PUB). This process was mentioned in the same vein by another communication partner who described it as the 'loss of the former pride' in being a member of the EU, which according to her, changed the dynamics in national

policymaking (CP 13 – PUB/NGO).

The communication partners were also asked to 'think out loud' about what they considered to be the current challenges with regards to the policies. The table below summarises the main challenges. Two dominant topics appear within the narratives of the actors – the different aspects of the improvement of services for victims of violence (including the work of related practitioners and authorities), and the change in discourses on violence:

Table no. 4: Communication partners' perspective on the most 'challenging issues'

Change in discourses on violence	CP 3 – PUB/NGO CP 4 - NGO CP 5 – PUB/NGO CP 9 - NGO CP 10 – PUB/NGO CP 16 – NGO CP 17 – NGO/ACA CP 20 – NGO CP 21 – NGO
Improvement of services for victims	CP 2 – PUB CP 5 – PUB/NGO CP 6 – NGO/ACA CP 7 – NGO CP 11 – NGO/PUB/ACA CP 12 – NGO/ACA CP 13 – PUB/NGO CP 19 – NGO CP 22 – PUB
Improvement of the inter-organisational cooperation	CP 3 – PUB/NGO CP 4 – NGO CP 9 - NGO CP 10 – PUB/NGO CP 11 – NGO/PUB/ACA CP 13 – PUB/NGO
Training and better cooperation of judicial practitioners	CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA CP 7 – NGO CP 9 - NGO CP 10 – PUB/NGO CP 13 – PUB/NGO CP 19 – NGO

Training and better cooperation of the police forces	CP 2 – PUB CP 6 – NGO/ACA CP 7 – NGO CP 9 – NGO CP 13 – PUB/NGO
Improvement and standardisation of processes for practitioners working with victims	CP 10 – PUB/NGO CP 13 – PUB/NGO CP 18 – PUB
Improvement of access to justice for victims	CP 2 – PUB CP 19 – NGO
Improvement of (qualitative and quantitative) data collection	CP 13 – PUB/NGO CP 19 – NGO

The improvement of services for victims of violence, including a strong emphasis on the financial continuity and stability of these services, came out as the most urgent issue, since it was stressed by almost half of the respondents. Such demand for the improvement of a variety of services was also significantly linked to the spectrum of practitioners/service-providers. It needs to be emphasised that, to a considerable extent, the provision of services within the Slovak context is delegated to the non-governmental organisations through tendering and project-based funding. With regards to services, stable and long-term financing (as opposed to project or tender-based funding) was perceived as a requirement for the long-term support of a victim/client. Some of the communication partners also referred to the improvement of services provided by the authorities - i.e. judicial and police authorities. Statements related to their work mostly problematized the nature and the level of awareness on the topic of violence against women (i.e. their sensitivity to approaching victims of gender-based violence).

The topic of 'change in discourses' on violence was equally dominant within the narrations of the communication partners, oftentimes specifically mentioning violence against women. When communication partners referred to these issues, they mostly spoke of the way 'violence is thought of' or 'spoken of' in different communities. The communication partners mostly spoke of the necessity 'to gender' the discourses on violence experienced by women – i.e. they spoke of the gender roles and gender equality

which need to be included into discourses on violence. These respondents spoke of the change in discourses among the practitioners, the general public, but also within the media discourse. However, two of the communication partners who were identified as 'reactively oppositional actors' (CP 20 – NGO, CP 21 – NGO) called for a shift within the discourses which would, according to them, be a more 'equal perspective' and would be more inclusive to men[94].

However, only two of the communication partners emphasised the demand for a better collection of quantitative and qualitative data on violence. The respondents who expressed this requirement claimed that the data collection at the national level (i.e. by responsible authorities – social services, the police and the judiciary) is not sufficient or systematic enough, which they understood as detrimental to the development of national policies. This lacking data collection was linked to the insufficient cooperation among collecting organisations by one of the interviewees (CP 13 – PUB/NGO). This demand fed directly to the requirement of better cooperation among organisations and institutions which also came up within the interviews. Both communication partners also referred to this requirement as a precondition for evidence-based policymaking.

## 5.3 On Being Governed: Indicator-based Tools as Techniques of Power

This section summarises the accounts provided by the interviewees which aim to answer the question: 'How do the actors perceive indicator-based tools in the context of international and national policymaking?'. We wish to address the resonance of the tools, i.e. the actors' familiarity with the tools, as well as their perceived objectives as tools of international policymaking. As such, this section looks into the different modes and concepts of governing, which were present within the narrations of the communication partners.

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94   These respondents spoke of the necessity to change the discourses of public policymaking to include a perspective of men as victims of violence within the process of separation/divorce.

## 5.3.1 Resonance and familiarity with the indicator-based tools

The initial questions of the semi-structured interviews on the indicator-based tools were aimed at disclosing the resonance of benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing among the representatives of the non-governmental and the public sectors. For the objective of mapping the highest possible level of resonance within the speech of the respondents, each of the indicator-based tools was coded only once (1- present, 0- not present). The following table only takes into consideration the indicator-based tools of the European Union context, as we were able to identify altogether 7 tools within the speech of the respondents:

- EIGE Gender Equality Index and other statistical tools
- FRA EU-wide Violence against Women Survey
- European Commission Eurobarometers on violence
- EIGE reports (including Council Conclusions reports)
- EIGE projects on good-practice sharing
- European Commission Mutual Learning Programme
- Eurostat surveys on violence
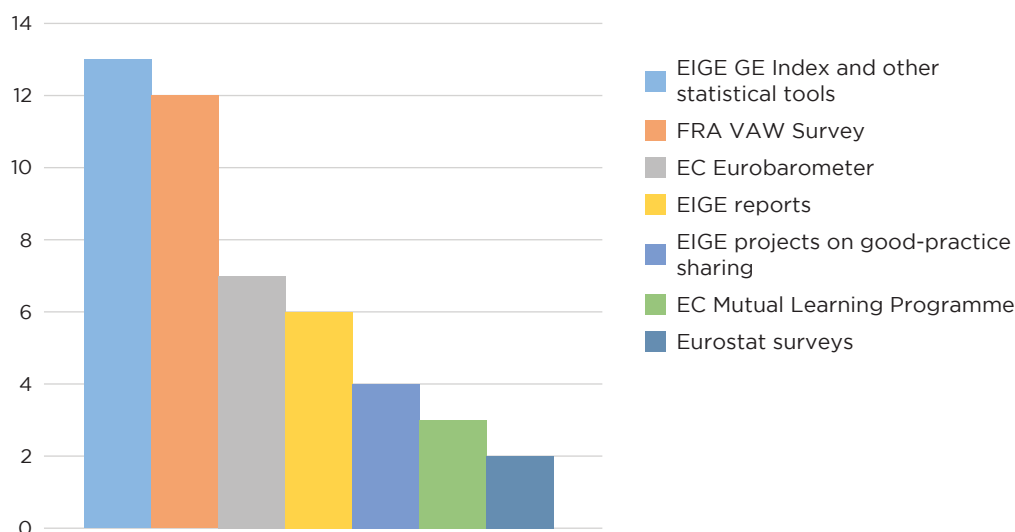
Graph no. 1: Resonance of tools in communication partners' speech

The majority of the communication partners who were able to recall EIGE's statistical tools were also familiar with the EU Agency's for Fundamental Rights report on violence against women. While most of them did recall the comparative work of FRA and EIGE, good-practice sharing resonated rather less. This may be explained by the agenda of the actors, as many of them accentuated that they were not familiar with good-practice sharing at the international level, as it was not relevant to their own work. The graph below also shows that the highest resonance of the tools was among actors with experience within both the public and the non-governmental sector (avg. number of referenced tools - 2,75), with the highest level of resonance among actors with experience in all three clusters (PUB/NGO/ACA – avg. 5,5). This may indicate the nature of their career path within the area of 'violence against women' (or more broadly 'gender equality policies'), which would allow them to become more familiar with the tools. Furthermore, the communication partners solely from the public sector oscillate between considerable knowledge to none when it comes to familiarity with the tools (avg. number of referenced tools - 2). As it was indicated throughout the interviews, this is due to the fact that while the public sector representatives are members of the Committee and the Expert Group, the agenda of many of them (or the agenda of their organisations) is not directly related to violence.
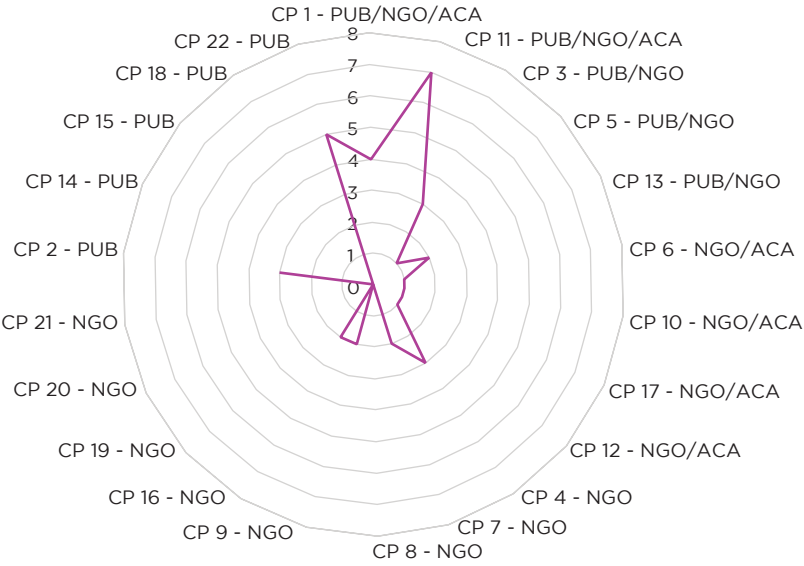
Graph no. 2: Resonance of EU tools based on clusters of respondents by their sector

5.3.2 Governmentality and the objectives of the indicator-based tools

As the communication partners were first requested to recall indicator-based tools of international policymaking, they were further requested to 'think out loud' about how they perceive the objectives of the structures promoting the indicator-based tools. With regards to these objectives, the respondents were also encouraged to speak of the blockages and barriers to these objectives coming from the international level which they perceive to be present at the national level. Some of the respondents did not hesitate to acknowledge immediately that they had never thought of the international policymaking agenda before, or stated openly that they were not able to contemplate on such task.

The tools referred to most commonly were related to either EIGE or FRA with the objectives to 'present information as a particular form of expertise', 'attain unification of particular processes', and 'attain modification of state behaviour in the area of violence against women'.

First, the objective to 'present information as a particular form of expertise' was recalled. On a few accounts, this information was understood as specific 'gender competence'. For example: *"It seems to me that EIGE is absolutely crucial... their role... and currently, I perceive them as the last institution in Europe, in its formal nature within Europe, they hold the feminist agenda, which tends to be disregarded. Because I fear that currently, under the pressure of some Member States, well, most importantly Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary, a more careful argumentation is being applied and therefore, the questions of gender equality are fading away."* (CP 12 – NGO/ACA). The objective to 'present information as a specific form of expertise' was linked to the requirement to gather data for evidence-based policymaking by some communication partners. On one hand, this objective provides policymakers with the knowledge of the issue and its scope. On the other hand, the knowledge transferred from the international level conveys the aura of expert legitimacy, objectivity and relevance, thus defining what is to be considered 'relevant knowledge'. Two communication partners accentuated the accountability and responsibility of the state structures

to collect and present 'objective' data on violence against women which is promoted through the tools fostered by FRA and EIGE (CP 2 - PUB, CP 13 – PUB/NGO). In relation to the same tools, another communication partner spoke of their aim to promote the 'de-ideologisation' of the political struggle linked to the topic through expert knowledge (CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA).

In the same vein, EIGE was recognised as an 'expert organisation' (CP 12 – NGO/ACA) which could benefit from a broader mandate (CP 13 – PUB/NGO). The organisation was often recalled as an expert organisation with 'specific perspectives' upon given issues, which accentuated gender-sensitive approaches to social issues. For example, one of the communication partners expressed the usefulness of framing 'violence against women' within EIGE's reports as a market-related issue affecting the expenses of individuals and the states' as a crucial strategic move with lobbying potential at the national level (CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA).

However, while there was considerable recognition of the objective of 'presenting particular information as a form of expertise', this does not mean that significant criticism of this objective was absent among the communication partners. While a number of them understood good-practice sharing as a process of transferring knowledge, which has been so far lacking at the national level (e.g. CP 6 – NGO/ACA), generally, there was very little recognition for this objective among the respondents. Many of them accentuated the flaws of the good-practice sharing concept in general - therefore demonstrating scepticism towards the efficiency of knowledge transfer *per se*. Communication partners were highly sceptical of this objective, as they claimed that the knowledge pool at the national level is already available, and the programmes tend to emphasise epistemic hegemony of the Western states. For example: *"We were in contact with the Germans and the Austrians before. We know what we must do, but how? You need money for that. Our experts knew what to do 15 years ago, but they have never had the money."* (CP 5 – PUB/NGO).

The second most common perceived objective of the tools was to 'attain unification of particular processes': *"... most likely, it is to show where the countries are*

in this moment... in order to create some minimum standards and frameworks for doing things." (CP 9 - NGO). The objective of 'reaching a certain level of unification of procedures, or creating a common framework' was present specifically in relation to the well-being of the victims of violence and the processes/practices of authorities and other service providers. One respondent understood the process of unification as a crucial gateway to the improvement of services provided to victims of violence (CP 19 - NGO). Some respondents understood the indicator-based tools as instruments of harmonisation of practices among EU Member States practitioners (CP 19 - NGO). While one of the communication partners viewed this objective as highly relevant, she was further critical to the nature of the tools promoted by EIGE, FRA and the European Commission Barometer as lacking in regional and national specificity in order to fulfill this objective (CP 4 - NGO).

The third most common objective was to 'attain modification of state behaviour in the area of violence against women: *"well, one knows what they can bring to their own country, what we can do. Maybe it is something like a stepping stone, I can move, I can change things if I want something to happen in my own country"* (CP 2 - PUB). Such objective portrays indicator-based tools as useful incentives devised at the international level, constructed within a generally weak mandate of the international organisations. The respondents understood the tools as regulatory, yet 'soft' instruments, which aimed to put particular issues on the agenda (CP 9 - NGO), thus changing the priority structure of the national governments and appeal to their accountability. As such, this objective retains a certain discursive element as well, since it is the agenda of 'putting the topic on the international table', which is recognised as crucial for the national level of policymaking. Two respondents understood the concept of indicator-based tools as linked to the club-membership which is to pressure Member States despite the low levels of direct accountability (CP 3 – PUB/NGO, CP 22 - PUB).

While a considerable body of literature links the Foucauldian governmentality to the practice of 'naming and shaming' (e.g. Larner, Walters, 2006; Bruno, 2009), only two respondents (CP 6 – NGO/ACA, CP 12 – NGO/ACA) referred to indicator-based policymaking in this regard, specifically in the context of good-practice sharing : *"Back*

in the days during socialism, what we had were walls of shame… and I think that it is a good idea maybe to praise now. What it signifies to me is that this is the objective – to put successful projects on the wall and say – this is what we've got!" (CP 12 – NGO/ACA). Generally, there was only little recognition of comparison and hierarchisation of states' performance within intergovernmental cooperation. One communication partner viewed international good-practice sharing as a harmonious practice embedded in the values of networking and cooperation (CP 12 – NGO/ACA).

High-level conclusions within the field of violence against women were most commonly understood by the communication partners as being constructed with the objective of 'simulating that a particular issue is being dealt with' and the 'legitimation to act according to a certain logic'. Communication partners understood the agenda of high-level political arenas as a declaratory and strategic move to put the issue on the agenda, thus signalling its importance and appealing to the states to make progress in their policies (CP 22 - PUB). Or, as one respondent put it: *"…it is a regular process, for example the Council Conclusions related to the Beijing Platform… the country which is presiding every second half of the year, they pick an area from the Beijing Platform. And I think this is good, as the area receives significance, despite the fact that these can only be advisory"* (CP 10 – NGO/PUB). Other, less commonly mentioned objectives of indicator-based tools were those of 'providing specific views upon issues' and the 'creation of international expert communities with shared knowledge' (CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA).

Alongside the objectives of the indicator-based tools, the communication partners were also requested to reflect upon the (in)ability of the tools to fulfil these tools and other potential criticisms. Some of them recalled what may be understood as a form of 'informational blockage' to knowledge transfer, whereby the tools of intergovernmental cooperation themselves lack the potential for knowledge transferability (CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA, CP 4 - NGO, CP 22 - PUB). According to one interviewee, this was a crucial problem embedded in these knowledge-based tools, one which could have been tackled by better cooperation of the international organisations (or their contractors) with the national experts (incl. NGO actors), (CP 4 - NGO). A targeted focus on

'better comparability' of countries engaging in good-practice sharing was also accentuated by a communication partner who advocated for sharing knowledge only among countries with similar policymaking structures, or with similar cultural contexts (CP 6 – NGO/ACA). As it was posited by another with regards to good-practice sharing: *"What they aim to create is a framework, and that I think is the problematic aspect of the tools themselves. Because that is not possible! Since the context is so different within these countries, and specifically within these post-communist countries, the framework cannot be made since each country requires different approaches for different issue. What, for example, happens is that we use a particular term and then find out that it does not have the same [national] connotation"* (CP 4 - NGO). However, another respondent, who was aware of the problematic nature of knowledge transferability, claimed that the objective of good-practice sharing is not the direct transfer of practices, but rather the 'transfer of inspiration for policies' (CP 22 - PUB).

Apart from the aforementioned 'informational blockage', some of the communication partners also provided their views on other blocking factors at the national level to indicator-based tools. As it is clear from the aforementioned, the many of them identified the objectives of the tools as a form of 'soft' pressure upon the political elites and the national administrations to unify procedures, or change the objectives of the national policymaking. However, according to others, at the national level, 'structural barriers (and organisational ones, which are linked to them ' block potential change. The most common blockage to the international governmentality was the lack of prioritisation of the topic of violence against women by the national political elites and thus also the bureaucracies. Despite being put on the agenda of the intergovernmental cooperation, the topic of violence against women was understood by many communication partners as neglected at the national level. According to some, the international community does not exert enough pressure to directly trigger change at the national level (CP 5 – PUB/NGO, CP 6 – NGO/ACA, CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA, CP 22 - PUB). However, with regards to other international organisations, the 'EU club' was flagged as the only structure with a potential to hold its Member States accountable by one respondent (CP 7 - NGO). An organisational blockage directly linked to structural barriers was commonly flagged in relation to financing. According to one respondent, the

desire of political elites to conserve the status quo at different levels and resist demands for change (at the international, as well as the national level) was linked to the unwillingness to allocate finances to the policymaking area (CP 22 - PUB).

While this section let the actors speak of the roles of the indicator-based tools with regards to the intergovernmental cooperation, the following section looks at the positionality of the indicator-based tools embedded within the strategic national documents outlining the policymaking area of 'violence against women'.

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This chapter aimed to look at the various forms of presence of the European Union indicator-based tools within the Slovak policies tackling 'violence against women'. The chapter first looked at the so-called issue frames present within the strategic and framework policymaking documents. Hereby, the specific indicator-based tools appear increasingly over time first within the prognosis of recognised issues at the national level (mostly lacking data and standardised policymaking processes). However, in later document, the European Union is described within the diagnosis - as an international actor who requires specific standards within policymaking (i.e. referring to the concept of 'evidence-based policymaking').

The reporting of the frame analysis was followed by the accounts of cognitive and narrative interviewing, which first aimed to disclose the perspectives of the actors on the long-term developments of policies, the issues defined by the actors as currently the most pressing, and lastly, their perception of the indicator-based tools as techniques of intergovernmental cooperation. The study of the perceived objectives of the indicator-based tools pointed towards the spread understanding of the tools as techniques, most commonly deployed as an epistemic framework. They were also seen as a discursive nudge aimed at forwarding the harmonisation of discourses on violence, and as a technique aimed to unify different procedures of service provision.

6. EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES: LEARNING, KNOWLEDGE-TRANSFER AND RESISTANCE

This chapter reports on the presence of indicator-based tools within the Slovak policymaking environment as described with a phenomenological intent by the communication partners. It adopts a variety of epistemological perspectives focusing on learning and knowledge transfer as it looks at the presence of the tools among actor coalitions, or the role of the tools as 'modes of communication' aimed at the construction of 'credible experts' and 'reliable expertise'. This chapter addresses the following three research questions: 'What types of learning and knowledge transfer are present within the environment specifically in relation to the indicator-based tools?', 'What types of resistances, barriers and blockages are present with regards to these tools?', and 'What purpose do the tools serve in relation to actor coalitions and knowledge transfer within the coalitions?'. The study of knowledge transfer (or lack thereof) is hereby described with regards to different audiences (i.e. stakeholders) in order to point to the different practices actors apply in order to share knowledge or block knowledge sharing. The final section of this chapter moves away from the perspectives of learning to a much broader enquiry of the role of indicator-based tools within different epistemic communities and actor coalitions.

6.1 Learning and Knowledge Transfer as Practices: Sharing and Resisting the Indicators

This section looks into the various forms of knowledge transfer which occur in relation to the international indicator-based tools. The framework applied here approaches learning as knowledge sharing, thus referring predominantly to the theoretical outlines developed by Radaelli (2008), Zito and Schout (2009). These authors classify types of learning with regards to the subsequent processes of 'knowledge use'. The section first addresses the questions related to learning and knowledge use, as it moves on to open up the topic of 'technocratisation' in gender equality policies through quantifiers and subsequent changes in values.

6.1.1 Learning from the perspective of 'knowledge use' theories

After recollecting some of the aforementioned tools, the communication partners were requested to speak of the different ways they make use of the tools. Some of the communication partners openly declared that they utilise them for the purposes of educating, advocating and lobbying among a variety of stakeholders (see table below). These practices can be understood as practices of knowledge transfer. With regards to the narrations of communication partners, we were able to identify two major groups of stakeholders who were described as primary audiences of knowledge sharing. These included: 1. Political elites and bureaucrats, and 2. Practitioners in the area of 'violence against women'[95]. It is also crucial to note that within their narrations, many of the communication partners conflated the groups of 'political elites' and 'bureaucrats'. As they oftentimes hinted, this is because they deemed the two groups to be considerably intertwined. It was also implied that the ministerial/bureaucratic level falls subject to the political agenda, and therefore is limited in its agency – thus a mere subject to the 'whims of the political'. The following table summarises the types of learning which were most commonly associated with the groups of political elites and bureaucrats, as well as the practitioners.

Table no. 5: Practitioners in the area of 'violence against women' and learning

Practitioners in the area of 'violence against women'	
Type of learning	**Communication partners referring to blockage**
Social learning – framing of the issue of violence (in a particular manner), learning about the nature and the extent of violence	CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA CP 3 – PUB/NGO

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95   The question stands whether this analysis should include practitioners, rather than the group of 'general public' (as many of the respondents make use of the tools in their work in advocacy towards the general public). However, with regards to indicator-based policymaking, we believe the positionality of practitioners is crucial, since they represent actors with considerable knowledge and working experience with regards to the field of violence and service provision. Moreover, many of the identified practitioner groups fall within the area of public service. Furthermore, as they defined the various audiences which they reach, many of the respondents considered it relevant to refer to this group of actors

Political elites and bureaucrats	
Instrumental policy learning – learning about ways to redesign policy and carry out specific objectives	CP 5 – PUB/NGO CP 6 – NGO/ACA CP 9 – NGO CP 10 – PUB/NGO CP 13 – PUB/NGO CP 19 – NGO
Social learning – framing of the issue of violence (in a particular manner), learning about the nature and the extent of violence	CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA CP 5 – PUB/NGO
Political learning – learning about preferences of other (including supranational) actors	CP 3 – PUB/NGO CP 10 – PUB/NGO

The communication partners were requested to 'think out loud' about the instances when they perceived the communication to be successful (as they were later requested to speak of the instances when they encountered exactly the opposite). It was clear from the accounts provided by the interview respondents that they preferred to talk about the various forms of 'non learning' (Zito, Schout, 2009) among the groups of practitioners, bureaucrats, as well as political elites, which will be addressed in the next section devoted to blockage and resistance to learning.

If the communication partners were able to identify accounts where they witnessed learning and subsequent change, it were most commonly the instances of what we may identify as social learning and instrumental (policy) learning. The communication partners were referring to the ability of the tools to sensitise the stakeholders - i.e. to sensitise them to the nature or the extent of the problem of 'violence against women'. This was the only type of learning recalled with regards to the practitioners working within the field of 'violence against women'. In this case, social learning refers to the actors' ability to look at policy issues via new perspectives, or to absorb a new (discursive) framing of a particular issue.

The concept of instrumental policy learning (lesson drawing) was, on the other

hand, linked to the actors' ability to learn how to redesign policy instruments in order to carry out specific objectives. This type of learning was most commonly mentioned as a program and agenda change which occurred after knowledge sharing. With regards to the political elites, some of the communication partners also spoke of the ability of the indicator-based tools to signalise 'what is considered to be crucial' within the international policies. This type of learning can be identified as political learning (symbolic learning). Defined by Radaelli (2008), it is linked to the preferences and agenda of a variety of actors (on the national as well as supranational level), whereby actors learn how to appeal to these preferences and amend their agenda accordingly.

It is important to acknowledge that 'organisational learning', whereby actors learn how to modify their political agenda within organisational structures, has not been directly recalled by any of the respondents. There may be different potential explanations to why respondents have not referred to any such learning with regards to practitioners, bureaucrats and political elites. However, what we may understand as a particular form of organisational learning is the ability of the non-governmental representatives to change their practices of drafting grant applications, strategic and framework documents with regards to indicator-based policymaking. Of course, this was not addressed without criticism: *"Well, the indicators are always crucial... when you are drawing money...and in order to report on the effectiveness... the easiest ones are the quantitative ones, because the qualitative... that is difficult. So to rely on quantitative data seems to be the standard... Because you know, it is so easy to say – the number of services extended to this and this, however, what is the quality of these services?!.. well that you would not know."* (CP 10 – PUB/NGO). Despite the criticism, this communication partner identified indicators and quantifications as an established mode of communication within organisations which may lead to attaining a specific objective. The role of the indicators as modes of communication was also addressed with regards to their beneficial ability to simplify complex social issues. However, this led some communication partners to contemplate such ability with regards to the requirement to provide a change in values.

6.1.2 Indicators, 'technocratisation' and change in values

As it was mentioned before, there were very few instances when the actors would speak about knowledge transfer which would lead to direct organisational change. However, some of the communication partners spoke of the indicator-based tools as modes of communication which foster a specific 'policymaking logic/rationality of the quantifiers'. According to them, this logic would be pervading different organisational practices, especially the processes of financial grant management. In this regard, some of the respondents spoke of what they understood as a 'technocratisation' of gender equality policies. Others even clearly identified this rationality with the continuous 'emptying' of the feminist agenda, as well as different value shifts with regards to the state-funded feminist agency.

The 'logic of quantifiers' has been, according to the communication partners, affecting their work within the field of violence against women, both in relation to policymaking and to project coordination (in the public and the non-governmental sector). Many of the respondents understood the widespread desire for quantifiers (i.e. measurable outcomes of their work, tangible data on violence against women, measurements of the quality of the services, etc.) as an ever-pervasive logic, which affected how they drafted and promoted their projects, or lobbied other policymakers and political elites. Some stressed the importance of the way indicators are talked about within the policymaking environment, even proclaiming that this logic has been fostered by the international level of policymaking on the account of international funding (i.e. in relation to EU funding and the EEA grants), (CP 12 – NGO/ACA, CP 16 - NGO, CP 19 - NGO, CP 22 - PUB). According to these communication partners, the logic of quantifiers was promoted by the international funding schemes as a mode of communication which is to convey measurable accountability.

This particular 'logic of quantifiers' was described as a form of rationality which manifests itself in some sort of a 'language of simplicity and accountability'. Some communication partners even acknowledged a certain shift within the discourse on violence against women within the policymaking structures. One governmental representative

understood quantifiers as an efficient mode of communication among policymakers, which she perceived as leading to the simplification of communication on complex issues (CP 10 – PUB/NGO). Recalling different objectives of this rationality, another respondent from the non-governmental sector (CP 9 - NGO) spoke directly of a certain level of 'technocratisation' of national policies, where quantifiers have become a mode of communication linked to the declaration for efficiency and accountability: *"I think this is a double-pressure thing… we can scream and kick from below, and then there are the international obligations. Sophisticated requirements… which may be understood by the bureaucrats better than the real need… However, I fear one thing, and that is the over-bureaucratisation and the shift to numbers. I worry that the specifics of the stories of the women will disappear."* (CP 9 - NGO). In the same vein, another communication partner viewed quantifications as a 'necessary evil' - a lobbying tool, which the non-governmental actors had to be familiar with and skilled in using as a form of an argumentative strategy, i.e. a practice of knowledge transfer with a lobbying potential (CP 19 - NGO).

The understanding of the 'necessary evil' points to the ability of the actors to recognised the rationality/logic as flawed. One of the communication partners expressed concern, as she feared that the growing 'technocratisation' and development of an 'audit society' could take over the individual stories of violence, and thus empty the substance of the issue of violence against women. As one of the communication partners remarked, the adoption of this rationality specifically with regards to the issue of violence against women can lead to the overt simplification of such a complicated phenomenon based in inequality (CP 9 - NGO).

Furthermore, going back to the desire to construct the 'language of simplicity and accountability', one communication partner provided a different critique (CP 12 – NGO/ACA). According to her, the logic of quantification embedded within international good-practice sharing serves the purpose of accountability and a form of 'neoliberal alibism', whereby simple quantifiers account for 'money well spent'. In the same vein, one of the respondents proposed a completely new indicator-based tool as she claimed that the contents of the indicators are not necessarily well-suited (CP 10 –GOV/NGO).

She claimed that a benchmark is currently missing at the national level of policymaking - a so-called 'period of violence'. According to this actor, this benchmark would measure the 'procedural nature of service provision to victims of violence'. This idea itself, however, was established by the respondent as problematic, as it would require the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Another communication partner remarked that the logic of quantifiers within the practice of good-practice sharing tends to be problematic. She criticised specifically the linear objective of 'measuring everything': *"And you cannot say – the more the merrier... this is the whole problem of the progress. The comparing, measuring... which implies, that things can only go one way, from bad to better, from lower to higher. Or from less people to more people – all you have to do is try and things will get better."* (CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA). According to her, the logic of quantifications followed a particular linear narrative which could not be disrupted. This was recognised as particularly challenging for some non-governmental actors, as the logic of quantifications may be detrimental to some national projects, which would fail to quantify their outcomes (CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA). Projects which prefer to focus on aspects neglected by this particular logic of quantifications (i.e. long-term efficiency of the project, care work of those involved in it, the educational value of the project) may be in explicit danger. The interviewee ascribed this threat to the wider implications of 'neoliberalisation' – the required linearity and 'technocratisation' of development projects.

It is thus clear that a number of communication partners expressed their concerns with the dominance of numbers as a mode of communication with regards to the topic of violence against women. This was also because some of the communication partners referred to the area of policymaking as inherently value-based, and thus problematic. Two respondents referred to an 'ideological' nature of policies tackling violence against women as something which needs to be acknowledged when appealing to political elites as well as the wider public (CP 13 – PUB/NGO, CP 3 – PUB/NGO). Furthermore, two other communication partners (CP 9 – NGO, CP 17 – NGO/ACA) spoke of the values and attitudes towards women's rights, the unity of family, and gender roles, which, according to them, created the ideological substrate of the policies

tackling violence against women. When asked what role the indicator-based tools may play in lobbying and advocating for change in such policymaking environment, the communication partners pointed to the requirement to provide not only 'the data', but also 'the stories'. When talking about the potential changes in people's values, one of the respondents even claimed that quantifiers can hardly elucidate this kind of change with regards to violence against women as a topic of inequality and injustice (CP 3 – PUB/NGO).

A similar position was expressed by another communication partner who argued that: *"Because there is always someone who does not like the numbers, or who does not understand them... or they see other interpretations behind them. But if you have the chance to speak to the people about their attitudes, to maybe shake their grounded beliefs, and then you speak... then it happens to be more successful, rather than an authoritative – this is what it says..."* (CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA). This statement can be approached through the interviewee's perception of what she considered to be 'challenge-worthy' during lecturing or lobbying. While providing statistical information may, as a practice, be challenged on the grounds of the validity and the reliability of the data, the process of challenging someone's values happens through completely different practices which are more likely to be successful when aiming for long-term change. A similar situation was recalled by one of the communication partners, who considers the opposition of the agenda of gender equality policies by 'reactively oppositional actors' (CP 12 – NGO/ACA) to be based on 'clearly oppositional values'. This, according to the respondent, could not be tackled by sharing the knowledge of indicator-based tools and resulted in absolute non-learning, which will be addressed in the next section.

6.2 Non-learning and the Practices of Resistance: Opposition to Indicator-based Tools

This section looks into the various forms of resistance to knowledge sharing with regards to indicator-based tools. We look at the different types of resistance to

knowledge sharing which were identified within the narrations of the communication partners. Namely, the aforementioned classification proposes two types of resistance to learning: 'No' learning – knowledge transfer has been identified, however there was no behavioural or cognitive change, as actors prefer the status quo (actor-centred or informational blockage); as well as the so-called blocked learning, whereby actors experience cognitive change, but local structures or organisational settings block this potential change (structural or organisational blockage), (Zito, Schout, 2009).

We were able to identify three major groups of stakeholders within the narrations of the communication partners, who were framed as receptors of information within the policymaking field within the discussion. These included: 1. Political elites and bureaucrats, 2. Practitioners in the area of 'violence against women', and 3. Reactively oppositional actors. It is crucial to note that the group of 'reactively oppositional actors' only appeared with regards to different modes of resistance to learning, and not learning *per se*. This is due to the fact that none of the communication partners identified them as a stakeholder group with the 'ability for knowledge transfer'.

Table no. 6: Political elites, bureaucrats and practitioners and resistance to learning

Political elites, bureaucrats and practitioners	
Form of blockage to learning	**Communication partners referring to blockage**
Informational blockage – lack of prior knowledge among actors (including issues with quantifiers and data collection methodology)	CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA CP 3 – PUB/NGO CP 4 – NGO CP 9 – NGO CP 10 – PUB/NGO CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA CP 17 – NGO/ACA CP 22 – PUB
Informational blockage – actors as an impenetrable epistemic club	CP 3 – PUB/NGO CP 9 – NGO
Informational blockage – lack of transferability/usefulness of data	CP 3 – PUB/NGO CP 4 – NGO CP 5 – PUB/NGO CP 7 – NGO CP 10 – PUB/NGO

Actor-centred blockage – political resistance to the supranational level	CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA
Actor-centred blockage – resistance to learning as a strategy of protecting the institutional legitimacy	CP 9 – NGO CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA CP 13 – PUB/NGO CP 22 - PUB
Actor-centred blockage – direct ideological opposition towards gender equality topics (i.e. discourse of gender ideology)	CP 4 – NGO CP 10 – PUB/NGO
Structural and organisational blockage – lack of agenda prioritisation (including lack of financial allocation for the agenda)	CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA CP 4 – NGO CP 5 – PUB/NGO CP 6 – NGO/ACA CP 7 – NGO CP 9 – NGO CP 13 – PUB/NGO CP 22 – PUB
Organisational blockage – lack of networks and communication at the organisational level	CP 9 – NGO

The most commonly recalled type of blockage to learning among political elites and bureaucrats was mentioned with regards to the structural and organisational aspects of policymaking. The majority of the respondents referred to the lack of prioritisation in the agenda of the political elites, which was also connected to the insufficient financial allocation within the area. The respondents identified the situation as a situation of 'blocked learning' whereby knowledge transfer has occurred, but without significant change in behaviour of the stakeholders. This, according to some respondents, was ascribable to the 'soft' nature of the knowledge-based tools, which do not create any structures of accountability.

With regards to the stakeholder group of political elites and bureaucrats, informational blockage was also identified as significant in the process of knowledge transfer. The communication partners spoke of two different stakeholder groups – those with prior knowledge and those without it. When talking about blockage to learning,

many ascribed the blockage to the lack of prior knowledge (i.e. gender competence) and social science research among the actors: *"What I also encountered was the deprecation of social sciences and humanities in general – they say, what you ask for, that is what you get."* (CP 12 – NGO/ACA). Some of the respondents also expressed fear or scepticism with regards to this lack of prior knowledge among bureaucrats, which could, according to them, lead to Potemkin harmonisation: *"That someone understands it in the way, that they simply keep putting in numbers – this is the amount of women, and this is the amount of men... in such a shallow and ridiculous way, well, that signifies the lack of knowledge of the agenda... it needs to be more profound."* (CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA). On the other hand, the communication partners also spoke of the other group of stakeholders, those who already poses significant gender competence. Hereby, the communication partners spoke of an informational blockage which is based on the lack of transferability, or usefulness of the indicator-based tools and their data for these stakeholders (CP 3 – PUB/NGO, CP 4 - NGO).

In the same vein, with regards to the stakeholder group of practitioners, some of the communication partners spoke of situations where they experienced resistance to the indicator-based tools. Such resistance was linked to the lack of prior gender competence and the reluctance to grasp the quantifiable nature of the presented data (CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA, CP 9 - NGO). According to these interviewees, the ability to efficiently 'read' the quantifiers and the indicator-based tools was related to stakeholders' prior ability to recognise the presence of gender inequality. According to one interviewee (CP 3 – PUB/NGO), the resistance of a particular group of practitioners (i.e. the judiciary) was either related to their prior (conservative) beliefs and attitudes, as well as their own self-perception as an epistemic authority/community in the area of violence and crime (CP 3 – PUB/NGO).

The practices of 'non-learning' were also identified with regards to direct actor-centred blockage. The resistance to indicator-based tools manifested itself in the opposition to the data by political elites and bureaucrats as a form of protection of institutional legitimacy (CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA, CP 13 – PUB/NGO, CP 22 - PUB). This was narrated by one of the communication partners (CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA)

as a story of the bureaucrats' direct opposition towards the EU Gender Equality Index 2015 (and the very negative results which posited Slovakia to the near-last place of the index, only followed by Romania). She understood the resistance of the bureaucrats within the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family as a conscious strategy to uphold the legitimacy of the Ministry's agenda and policymaking.

Table no. 7: Reactively oppositional actors and resistance to learning

Reactively oppositional actors	
Form of blockage to learning	*Communication partners referring to blockage*
Informational blockage - based on data validity and reliability of data	CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA CP 3 – PUB/NGO CP 6 – NGO/ACA CP 10 – PUB/NGO CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA
Actor-centred blockage – based on direct ideological opposition	CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA CP 3 – PUB/NGO CP 6 – NGO/ACA CP 7 - NGO CP 10 – PUB/NGO

Some of the interviewees identified 'reactively oppositional' actors as a specific group of stakeholders who are positioned within the policymaking structures and who tend to exhibit resistance to the indicator-based tools. Some communication partners directly identified members of this group as the actors who make use of the 'gender ideology' discourse also within the Committee on Gender Equality. Other respondents spoke of conservative groups, 'catholic groups', or the organisations for the advocacy of the rights of fathers, which we hereby put under the category of 'reactively oppositional'. The communication partners oftentimes spoke of the resistance to learning and the indicator-based tools as a conscious strategy within the decision-making platform (i.e. the Committee) to disrupt the activities of the Committee.

The communication partners identified two particular strategies of opposing the indicator-based tools within political arenas, i.e. the ideological opposition and ques-

tioning of the validity and the reliability of data. However, while some of the communication partners distinguished these two strategies, others conflated them together (i.e. according to some, the questioning of the data happened on the basis of ideological opposition). Some of the communication partners spoke directly of the practice of doubting or opposing the presented data based on the methodology or the data collection process: *"What was not addressed within that research is the logical paradox – that is not being interpreted... what oftentimes happens is false interpretation of the data [by some actors], which was collected for the FRA research, which maps the prevalence of violence..."* (CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA). Here, the communication partner explains the situation whereby the reactively oppositional actors directly pointed to the results of the *FRA Violence against Women Survey* which showed higher level of prevalence of violence within countries which tend to have high scores in the gender equality indexes (i.e. Sweden, or Denmark). According to her, the paradox of this situation was exploited by the 'gender ideology rhetoric'. Therefore, the processes of resistance to learning and the questions of ideological opposition of the reactively oppositional actors gave way for the requirement of this case study to focus particularly at the positionality of the indicator-based tools within the actor coalitions of the policymaking environment. These will be addressed in the following section.

6.3. Knowledge and Epistemic Actor Coalitions: Indicator-based Tools as Resources

The following section draws upon the role of indicator-based tools with regards to the studied positionality of the members of the Committee and the Expert Group within actor coalitions, as well as with regards to their status of 'experts' on gender equality. This section aims to answer the question: 'What purpose do the indicator-based tools serve in relation to actor coalitions (and epistemic communities) and what is the role of the practice of knowledge transfer within these coalitions?' Such perspective looks at the different practices of constructing 'expertise', but also sheds light on the different discursive practices of identifying actors as experts within the policymaking environment. As this section shows, these practices are hereby linked to demonstrating, shar-

ing, or resisting particular types of knowledge. In this section, we look at the different discussions within expert bodies on the topics of 'proper terminology', 'valid expertise' and 'reliable experts'.

The initial narrative reading of the meeting minutes of the two advisory expert bodies allowed us to gain a broader picture of the different actors present within the two advisory bodies. Such initial reading allowed us to focus on the different conflicts as agonistic struggles among the members of these organisations. Within these conflicts, knowledge (in different forms, ranging from simple information to recognition of specific expertise) played a crucial role which lead us to adopt the framework of epistemic communities and actor coalitions in order to look upon the actors and their relation to the indicator-based tools. In particular, the reading of meeting minutes of the Committee on Gender Equality led us to identify actors who openly oppose the dominance of certain knowledge paradigms (as epistemic frameworks) and discourses promoted within the Committee on Gender Equality.

6.3.1 Terminology, ideology and international conventions

The discursive practices signalling agonistic struggles between the identified 'feminist/women's rights' actor coalition and the 'reactively oppositional' coalition within the advisory bodies were identified initially through the narrative reading of the meeting minutes. Such struggles surfaced in various conflicts occurring during discussions related to 'knowledge' in a variety of forms.

These included early accounts of debating the 'correct terminology' which occurred within the advisory bodies as early as in 2013. While it seems a rather simple question: 'Which words should be used in the preparation of strategic documents?', the simplicity is a false assumption, since the terminology used with regards to the topic of violence also has a framing potential and is a discursive strategy aimed to identify problems, provide their diagnosis and their prognosis. Furthermore, it may seem that the members of the Committee 'simply debated the correct terminology', but in effect,

they were oftentimes discussing the concept of 'gendering' violence. For example, as early as in 2013, an NGO representative within the Committee claimed that there are is a community within the Committee which *"does not agree with the dominant terminology applied within the Committee"*[96]. The representative referred to the terminology using the concepts of 'gender'.

As already mentioned, the studied meeting minutes of the Committee also contained a number of other occasions where the 'correct terminology' was discussed with regards to the prepared strategic documents. These debates included a number of non-governmental representatives openly opposing the term 'gender' or 'gender equality' (i.e. sk. *rod, rodová rovnost*). In order to tackle this oppositions, public-sector and non-governmental representatives tended to promote the argument that the relevant terminology is also present within international conventions and hard law norms which are binding to the Slovak government. This included references to the *Istanbul Convention*, CEDAW and the *EU Victim's Directive*[97]. The 'correct terminology' was thus framed by the feminist coalition as established and legitimised by an international club[98], to which Slovakia belongs. Other arguments which would frame the debate in different terms, such as the structural aspects of violence, or terminology legitimated by the academic scholarship, were absent.

The practices of 'de-gendering' violence by the members of the reactively oppositional coalition were also present during the debates on the ratification of the *Istanbul Convention*, and specifically with regards to its 'terminology'. This includes one meeting of 21 October 2013 whereby the reactively oppositional actors openly countered the gendering of the topic of violence by opposing the term 'gender-based violence' (sk. *rodovo podmienené násilie*). During this discussion, some of the members of the non-governmental sector argued that the international conventions which 'promote gender ideology' need to be discarded and 'common sense' must be evoked[99]. Further-

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96   Committee on Gender Equality, meeting minutes – 21/10/2013.

97   Committee on Gender Equality, meeting minutes – 30/1/2014.

98   Expert Group, meeting minutes – 21/10/2013.

99   Committee on Gender Equality, meeting minutes – 21/10/2013.

more, during a debate in 2015, the *Istanbul Convention* was also addressed by the reactively oppositional coalition as a document promoting 'gender ideology' imposed 'from above'[100], thus opposing the supranational level of policymaking.

While the agonistic struggles were first connected to the opposition towards the terminology, it became more clear towards the year 2015, that the actors who oppose the terminology understand it as ideological. A similar strategy connected to discourses, rather than their materialisations (i.e. terminology) was developed by two members of the non-governmental sector (CP 20 – NGO, CP 21 - NGO) during the in-depth semi-structured interviewing. These respondents expressed their criticism of the dominant discourses on domestic violence within national policymaking, which they claimed required change, as they predominantly focused on women, thus omitting men: *"In Slovakia, I have never experienced, that it would be communicated maybe not in this way, but equally,... that the violence would be spoken about in general, that it would be denouncing all of the victims who would require help. To divide victims into groups of different individuals or so,... that does not result in sufficient aid, [it is not set out] for all... and that is not equal."* (CP 20 - NGO). These respondents called for change of the focus on 'women as victims' within the national policies, thus calling for a shift in the onus on violence as a gendered practice primarily affecting women.

Thus, we can speak of the members of the reactively oppositional coalition as ones who make use of the 'gender ideology' discourse in order to oppose the proposed developments within the Committee through the agenda of countering the gendering of the topic of violence. The opposition presenting itself as the attempt at de-legitimisation is hereby linked to the use of the terminology, which stems from the feminist perspectives to intimate partner and non-partner violence. However, while such discussions within the Committee started in 2013 and continued until 2015, the later discussions saw a shift from their focus on 'terminology' to 'data and research'. The following section provides the narrative reading of select meeting minutes, which we believe will provide the reader with a clearer picture of the constitution of the epistemic and actor coalitions through the practices of 'knowing', sharing or opposing knowledge

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100   Committee on Gender Equality, meeting minutes – 3/6/2015.

as a form of expertise.

6.3.2 Actor coalitions, 'valid knowledge', and 'legitimate experts'

The narrative reading of the meeting minutes showed a significant shift over time in the debates between the actor coalitions of the Committee on Gender Equality. On 3 June 2015, the Committee on Gender Equality discussed then-recent developments within policies tackling violence against women. The debate centered at the legal framework as well as some developments within national policies. During the discussions on the 'framework' adopted within the policies, it has been advocated by some members of the committee (NGO sector) that false accusations of cases of sexual violence are never taken into consideration by the international and national indexes on the extent of violence. It was also argued that it is often omitted that men also fall victims of violence. Such accounts of opposing the discursive framework of the prepared strategic documents on 'violence against women' have been building up since 2013. However, what was also argued during this debate in 2015 by an NGO representative, was that the choice of indicators for evidence-based policymaking is subjective and also allows some women's organisation to *"fabricate abused women"*[101]. The dispute between representatives of the NGO sector which followed was concluded by a representative of the Ministry of Labour, Family Affairs, and Family who functioned as a broker between the coalitions, with the statement that *"everyone has the right for an opinion"*. However, it was further explained by another governmental representative from the Ministry of Labour, Family Affairs, and Family, that the policies within the area of violence against women need to be understood as a form of an affirmative action, as within the scope of the intimate partner violence, it is predominantly women who are the victims. This claim was further opposed by another NGO representative who argued that *"feminist organisations are in majority within the Committee, however, that does not mean that they are qualified to provide expertise"*. While we chose this example of a conflict situation within the Committee for its direct connection to violence against women policies and indicator-based tools, it stands as one of the nu-

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101   Committee on Gender Equality, meeting minutes – 3/6/2015.

merous debates within the Committee which can be understood as a conflict between two actor coalitions. However, these were no longer only agonistic struggles over the 'correct terminology' of even the 'correct discourse', these were debates on the status of the experts and their presence within the advisory bodies.

Practices of self-identification as a coalition member and practices of identification of the 'adversary coalition' were numerous within the Committee on Gender Equality and they oftentimes occurred with regards to the construction of what constitutes 'relevant knowledge' of the experts. The criticism of the 'expertise provided by feminist organisations' was presented at another meeting in 2015, whereby a member of the NGO sector claimed that the *"Ministry should reconsider cooperation with some NGOs, as they provide false and invalid data on the situation of gender equality in Slovakia"*. This was in relation to the shadow report provided to the CEDAW committee and the 5th and 6th UPRs, which was drafted by a number of feminist and women's NGOs[102]. The debate upon the validity of the UPR shadow reporting continued to the meeting of 13 June 2016. It was argued by some reactively oppositional actors that the shadow report prepared for the periodic review was biased[103], since the provided knowledge could not be understood as objective expertise, but rather as an ideological perspective on the dealt-with issues (in this case reproductive rights). One of the NGO representatives critically addressed the shadow reporting process by claiming: *"I would like to say, that not as a member of the Committee, and not as a representative of an organisation, but as a person who has been teaching the methodology of humanities at a college, I can honestly declare, that the foundations of the research which constitute the report are scientifically and professionally incorrect"*[104]. Through the label of 'unscientific approach', the reporting process was further criticised by framing the rapporteurs as un-objective and ideological. Thus the representatives of the feminist NGOs were understood by the reactively oppositional coalition as biased lobbyists, rather than gender equality experts with legitimate claim to participation in the policymaking process.

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102 Committee on Gender Equality, meeting minutes – 13/10/2015.

103 Committee on Gender Equality, meeting minutes – 13/6/2016.

104 Committee on Gender Equality, meeting minutes – 13/6/2016.

Conflicting situations within the Committee on Gender Equality, which were based on the discussions of 'legitimate knowledge and expertise' continued until the end of 2016. This was the period when the debates on the new Committee regulation took place and brought questions about the committee membership. The draft regulation contained a suggestion to only accept representatives of NGOs which clearly adhered to the concept of gender equality in their founding regulations. This has been opposed by a number of NGO representatives. One representative countering this proposal questioned the concept of 'gender expertise' itself as it was framed by the regulation. As he claimed, organisations representing men have been excluded from the Committee, while: *"For example, the whole policy of gender equality leads to the assumption that a man is a perpetrator, a tyrant, and the fathers are only donors of the genetic material"*[105]. Further on, the same representative asked the members of the Committee to reflect upon the question of who is an expert on gender equality, as he posited that it can be anyone with a formal education in social sciences. These claims were addressed by a representative of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family, who posited that the plurality of opinions is valued within the Committee, however: *"questioning of the area of violence against women cannot be understood as plurality of opinions, since there is clear data and evidence"*[106].

The discursive strategies of the reactively oppositional coalition countering the different indicator-based tools was further addressed within the interviews. Most of the communication partners spoke either of the practice of doubting the validity and/or reliability of the data, or criticising the framing of the issues which is provided by these tools. For example, one of the communication partners (CP 8 - NGO) of the reactively oppositional community understood the choice of data upon which the tools were based as invalid and unreliable by default, therefore also ideological. According to him, in general, the statistical data and research based on self-identification of respondents as experiencing discrimination was inherently unreliable. As a graduate of natural sciences (which he tended to accentuate), he claimed that the motivations of such data gathering are inherently dubious and ideological. Furthermore, two other respondents

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105   Committee on Gender Equality, meeting minutes – 28/22/2016.

106   Committee on Gender Equality, meeting minutes – 28/22/2016.

of the same community (CP 20 – NGO, CP 21 - NGO) pointed to the 'neutrality' of the tools of inter-governmental cooperation, but accentuated the subsequent exploitation of different framings occurring at the national level, as being orchestrated by some (mostly feminist) actors. The respondents claimed that a particular (and ideological) framing of the issues of partner violence is being promoted within national policymaking. According to them, this epistemo-centrism, which was blind to men experiencing different (mostly institutional) forms of violence from their partners and authorities (during divorce proceedings), is also putting their non-governmental organisation into an outsider position, whereby they struggle to push for their agenda and gain funding.

The discussions on the positionality and recognition of experts oftentimes led to a variety of practices of 'othering'. It was recognised by some of the 'feminist coalition' communication partners that the presence of 'reactively oppositional' actors within the Committee on Gender Equality is necessarily linked to broader issues related to the political and social construction of 'legitimate expertise' within gender equality policies. As it was mentioned before, both of the actor coalitions tend to identify the other as 'ideological actors', as well as 'non-expert actors'. Such opposition was most eloquently described by a representative of a feminist non-governmental organisation, who claimed the following (CP 16 - NGO): *"Well, we [feminist actor coalition] have canasta cards and we would like to play bridge… and they [reactively oppositional actor coalition] are seated by the table with us, but what they have are Uno cards… so, it is difficult to argue with someone who does not have the basic knowledge."* Hereby, the feminist coalition member openly speaks of the epistemological differences between the two coalitions, as she does not recognise the 'level of expertise' of the other actor coalition to be equally sufficient within the policymaking advisory body. A similar position was adopted by another member of the feminist coalition: *"When you keep constantly hearing about gender ideology in the Committee on Gender Equality…, that is as if you went to a string theory lecture and someone there would claim that the earth is flat… it was very frustrating, and thus the committee never progressed. Because every single time, someone from these organisations stood up at the beginning and claimed that there are things which they oppose."* (CP 7 - NGO).

Furthermore, in the earlier years, the different conflicts among the actor coalitions were approached by representatives of the governmental sector as a 'mere difference in opinions', rather than differences in expertise (let alone differences in ideology). Such understanding of the conflicts was also present when discussing the opposition to indicator-based tools within the Committee. As one of the communication partners of the governmental sector posited himself: *"That was happening among the non-governmental organisations... that they disagreed with the statistical data, what they were basically doing is that they were doubting them... because all this time, we were leading to that there is a "difference in opinions", because everyone is just looking for their own agenda..."* (CP 15 - PUB).

The narrative reading and the in-depth interviewing disclosed visible practices of 'othering' among both actor coalitions. Both coalitions view each other as problematic – both of them view each other as 'being ideological' as well as 'lacking expertise'. The actors of the coalitions belong to the non-governmental sector, as the governmental sector clearly aimed to take the position of a coalition broker (Weible, Sabatier, 2007), occasionally siding with the feminist coalition. It is also important to note the position of the governmental officials, who approached the questions and disputes first by claiming that it is a matter of 'opinions'. By framing the issue as a 'question of opinions', a governmental representative understands members of both epistemic communities as equal experts - equal providers of 'opinions' on technical issues, which merely happen to be oppositional. Later on, the same governmental official claims that the choice of indicators and resulting policies is led by the framework of an affirmative action. In 2016, the same representative takes a much clearer position and posits that it is the recognition of the data and the evidence on violence against women which constitutes an expert, and thus openly opposes a member of one coalition. Nevertheless, neither of the two arguments of 'bounded rationality' of an affirmative action within the policies contended a member of the reactively oppositional coalition who claimed that expertise presented by some feminist coalition members is neither valid, nor legitimate.

The presence of indicator-based within this environment of actor coalitions

serves the purposes of the agonistic struggles within the Committee. When asked about these discursive strategies of de-legitimising the tools themselves, one of the communication partners spoke of the necessity to counter 'attacks on the research' by the researchers or stakeholders themselves (CP 22 - PUB). She claimed that promoting indicator-based tools within policymaking processes of advocacy and lobbying requires scholarly honesty, as a practice of research ethics. She also further explained that actors promoting these tools need to be honest about the rationalities (ideologies) and the motivations behind the data collection, as well as able to communicate the data collection process and the nature of the tools efficiently: *"Yes, of course, I don't know of a research project where the methodology would not be doubted. And that is legitimate. Every method has its limits, it is important to have it as transparent and calibrated as possible, and it is important to admit the limits."* (CP 22 - PUB). However, she also continued to explain that not even this is a bulletproof strategy against reactively oppositional actors, since even such application of research ethics is challenged by non-scientific practices with ideological objectives: *"But if someone then uses this to doubt all the numbers and statistics… well that is explicitly political."* (CP 22 - PUB).

The following section takes the practice of 'constructing an expert' through the recognition of 'valid and relevant knowledge' even further as it looks at the debates from the epistemic perspectives on authority and legitimacy.

6.3.3 Expertise, epistemic communities and epistemic opposition

The process of semi-structured in-depth interviewing also touched upon the topic of the positionality of (gender equality) experts within both the national and the international field of policymaking. Some of the communication partners were eager to talk about the fleeting and oftentimes debated positionality of 'gender experts' (sk. *rodová expertka*) within the studied advisory bodies, as well as within international cooperation. On some accounts, the positionality itself was linked to the ability to 'read' the indicators, understand the research and communicate the data as a practice of identifying 'experts'. For example, one of the communication partners (CP 9 - NGO)

claimed that when communicating the data, the non-governmental representatives also make use of the indicator-based tools when advocating for the victims of violence. However, this was also with the objective to present themselves as 'experts', i.e. with the use of a particular discourse on violence. This means that the knowledge itself can function as a mode of communication which is to establish who is the 'relevant and educated knower'.

The topic itself came about when reflecting upon the long-term developments of national policymaking. The change in the positionality of 'gender experts' was mostly identified on two accounts - with regards to the discourses on violence promoted by experts, and with regards to the status of these experts in policymaking institutions. As one communication partner claimed, gender experts are now more clearly identified within the field of violence against women. She posited that it has now been identified 'in which way one is allowed to talk' about specific issues: *"What changed is that people cannot simply come and say what violence is and what it is not. That we have... how to call them... it is not decision makers, but maybe opinion makers, who work within the topic and they have the knowledge."* (CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA). However, as two other communication partners claimed, while the experts are 'allowed to talk' about violence in a specific way, they are still not present at crucial positions of power (CP 4 - NGO, CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA). According to one of the communication partners, this change which led to the experts being actively recognised, has been fostered by international cooperation, i.e. through the construction of an international network of experts (CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA). However, another communication partner argued that despite the changes, the environment still allows the presence of some practitioners who consider themselves experts despite the lack of particular (gendered/feminist) knowledge within the field. The interviewee hereby referred to conservative and catholic organisations providing support to victims of violence (CP 19 - NGO).

Furthermore, the presence of indicator-based tools and the ability to share this knowledge within the policymaking environment is also linked to broader questions on 'understanding science'. With regards to the concept of expertise and indicator-based policymaking, the ability to 'read' statistical data and its tools, understand social sci-

ence research and communicate the data transparently came up in the interviews. It has been argued that the reactively oppositional actors are successful in countering and opposing indicator-based tools specifically because it is difficult for individuals without sufficient social science knowledge to 'read the data', including recognising what is validity and reliability within research. One respondent recalled a number of instances whereby she tried to communicate the data and social science research was deprecated with the argument, that, *"what you ask for, that is what you measure"* (CP 12 – NGO/ACA). The ability to interpret data was flagged as crucial: *"And that is the problem of how all the anti-gender organisations took hold of that research, as they started pointing out that in countries with higher gender equality, the prevalence of violence is higher. And this is one of the scariest results of this, and which showed how interpretation of the data is crucial..."* (CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA).

While the aforementioned accounts of the respondents clearly indicated the discursively negotiated positionality of experts within the policymaking environment, some of the respondents also identified particular forms of epistemo-centrism, which they presented to be detrimental to knowledge sharing coming from the international level, as well as to the execution of the policies. On one hand, this epistemo-centrism was identified at the supranational level – for example, one respondent claimed that the work of EIGE is, to a great extent, conducted without a significant recognition of expertise coming from the national level (CP 4 - NGO). On the other hand, some of the respondents claimed that knowledge transfer and learning with regards to the indicator-based tools occurs only among specific actors and communities at the national level (CP 6 – NGO/ACA, CP 9 - NGO, CP 13 – PUB/NGO). Hereby, knowledge sharing occurs only among actors who have already reached a specific level of gender competence. This was explained in relation to sharing good practices: *"Particular people attend particular events"* (CP 9 – NGO); or in relation to indicator-based tools used in training – *"The educated only speak to those already educated"* (CP 13 – PUB/ NGO). For example, in order to explain this particular context, an interviewee recalled a discussion with a woman – a police forces official who complained to her that she has become some sort of an informal (yet limited) focal point at her organisation, whereby she is the only one assigned to attend trainings and seminars and her colleagues

are excused from these events (CP 7 - NGO). This accumulation of knowledge within organisations only among some nodal points is particularly problematic with regards to the bureaucratic structures. According to two respondents (CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA and CP 17 – NGO/ACA), lack of gender competence among bureaucrats can result in Potemkin harmonisation (CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA).

<div align="center">♀♂♀♂♀♂♀♂♀♂♀♂♀♂♀♂♀♂</div>
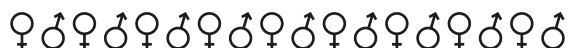
This chapter approached the presence of indicator-based tools of benchmarking, ranking and good-practice sharing within Slovak policies tackling violence against women from a number of perspectives. First, the chapter looked at the different ways the studied actors of public, non-governmental and academic sectors deploy these tools in order to lobby or advocate among different stakeholders. We were able to look at the different processes of learning and non-learning with focus on the most commonly perceived blockages/barriers to learning which were described among different types of actors: political elites and bureaucrats, practitioners, and reactively-oppositional actors (mostly within the NGO sector but also among political elites and bureaucrats).

The last two sub-sections of the chapter focused on the role of the indicator-based tools with regards to the two dominant actor coalitions of the Committee on Gender Equality (i.e. the feminist actor coalition and the reactively-oppositional actor coalition). These sub-sections focused on the questions of epistemic communities, as well as the discursive negotiation of 'expertise' and 'experts on gender equality' within the advisory bodies. These sections aimed to summarise the narrations of the communication partners with regards to the presence of indicator-based tools within their own agenda as diversity workers present within a substantially 'ideology-ridden' area of policymaking.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

> *Neil Perry: "As you proceed through the poetry in this book,*
> *practice this rating method.*
> *As your ability to evaluate poems in this manner grows,*
> *so will your enjoyment and understanding of poetry."*
> *John Keating: "Excrement. That is what I think of Mr Jay Evans Pritchard, PhD.*
> *We are not laying a pipe, we are talking about poetry.*
> *How can you describe poetry like an American bandstand?*
> *I like Byron, I give him a 42, but I can't dance to it."*
> (Dead Poets Society, 1989)

The scene above from the 1989 American classic Dead Poets Society takes place at an all-boys high-school lecture on literature, as it ponders the answer to whether one can truly measure the 'greatness' of a poem. The scene ends with a collective page ripping ritual which is to symbolise resistance to 'quantificantions' in assessing artistic expression. Asking as complex questions as this one, the author of this thesis opted to go beyond page ripping (despite being very close to it, not once). Instead, this case study pondered the post-positivist question of Europeanisation studies: 'How have the indicator-based tools (i.e. benchmarking, ranking, and good-practice sharing) been influencing the Slovak policymaking in the area of violence against women?'. In order to study the presence of indicator-based tools within the Slovak environment, the core research question had to be broken down to an actor-centred and practice-based perspective of the tools as modes of communication and carriers of knowledge. Such perspectives prioritised phenomenological, hermeneutical approaches and discursive-sociological institutionalism focused on learning and non-learning. In view of the existing scholarship, the case study delved into partial research questions, which will be hereby addressed.

1. Which are the dominant frames within the strategic policymaking documents wherein the tools of indicator-based policymaking figure?

The construction of the Slovak strategic and framework documents dedicated to gender equality policies and policies tackling violence against women followed two particular argumentative logics present since the very early studied documents (i.e. 2004). One of these two logics fostered 'research and knowledge as evidence' as a framework for desired development within these policies. Indicator-based tools of international organisations were frequently incorporated into this logic as they seemed to have filled in the gap of data as evidence which was missing at the national level. Such shortage was also oftentimes described within the documents, as we will explain further.

The studied documents defined 5 issue frames of Slovak policies tackling violence against women. Aside from the first one, almost all of these issue frames, which help us to observe 'what is a problem represented to be' (Bacchi, 2009), were also present within the descriptions of the communication partners who were asked to describe what they considered to be then currently the most challenging issues of the policymaking area:

- Requirement of legal changes
- Insufficient standards for services
- Problematic culture and discourses
- Requirement of standardised policymaking
- Demand for reliable data

Within the issue frame 'problematic culture and discourses', the indicator-based tools predominantly developed by EIGE and FRA appear in order to provide for the diagnosis of the issue – the data clearly points at sexism and patriarchal perspectives of violence against women in the general population and among practitioners within the area. At the same time, the evidence provided by these tools emphasises the extent and the latency of the issue of violence against women.

On the other hand, the issue frame 'requirement of standardised policymaking' promotes the indicator-based tools of European Union policymaking – particularly the Council Conclusions and the EIGE indicators – as the normativity and the prognosis. It is these tools which are to provide a better framework for conducting policies - i.e. their monitoring and evaluating.

The 'demand for reliable data' as evidence for policymaking appears as an issue frame of the documents as early as in 2004. The issue frame appears to be constructed by two fragments which are also interacting – the lack of national data, and the lack of coherence in its collection. Both of these frameworks also appeared within the cognitive interviewing of the communication partners. Within the prognosis, the European Union, with its indicator-based tools, figures as the provider of the solution – first as the actor who develops and contributes evidence, and then as an expert structure and a provider of methodology for national data collection and analysis. However, in the later documents, the European Union policymaking also appears as a fragment within the diagnosis. Such cases happen when the issue frame contains appeals to the national administration organs with the argument that the EU policymaking structures require and demand national data on violence.

2. How do public sector and non-governmental actors perceive the indicator-based tools in the context of international and national policymaking?

This case study disclosed what the communication partners tended to think about the indicator-based tools of policymaking within two registers. First, they spoke of the presence of indicators within the bureaucratic structures and project management of the non-governmental sector. In this sense, they spoke of the tools as modes of communication which aim to convey the 'aura of transparency and accountability' for particular projects and organisations. Second, they spoke of indicator-based tools as particular statistics-based tools - as 'evidence' which feeds into the policymaking processes in order to advance a particular agenda. While the first understanding is closer to the concept of 'neoliberal rationality' within policymaking, both of these approaches

understand indicator-based tools as 'modes of communication' centred at quantifiers, a particular language shared among actors who use it with the primary objective to understand each other. Such perspective is also very close to Szoltysek and colleagues (2017) and Kiersey and colleagues (2013) who identify both the 'knowledge effect' and the 'governmentality effect' of indicators. Despite them being classified as two separate effects, this case study also points to the finding that governmentality is interconnected with the knowledge essential for the studied tools.

Furthermore, the two-register perspective is also a paramount finding for the studies of Europeanisation and the role of indicator-based tools within their dispositions as 'soft' tools of intergovernmental cooperation. When asked about the particular objectives within intergovernmental cooperation, the communication partners mentioned three in particular. First, the 'ability to present information as a particular form of expertise' also serves the objective of the European Union structures to attain a status of a 'governing subject' through the positionality of an expert organisation. The second recognised objective of indicator-based tools was the ability to 'attain unification of processes', which was within the narrations of the communication partners mostly related to the processes of policymaking themselves – i.e. most frequently in relation to service provision. And lastly, the objective of 'modifying the state behaviour' was related to the discursive politics and the objective of the tools to 'change discourses' on violence and result in a change of priorities.

While many communication partners (specifically those from the non-governmental sector) spoke of the role of indicator-based tools and 'econometrics' for their own work, it is essential to note that the presence of these was oftentimes a subject of negotiations. As subjects of the 'governmentality' themselves, the communication partners actively negotiate the presence of these tools within their own work in the policymaking structures. That means that they comply to them, promote them or resist them - sometimes all at the same time. As such, the indicator-based tools can be barely described as accepted without reservations by the 'governed subjects'. Some of the communication partners explicitly denounced the tools of policymaking as problematic. The most commonly mentioned issue was the failed attempt to translate complex

social phenomena into quantifiers, and the discourse of 'linear progress' and 'transparency', which ascribes neoliberal values to quantifiers.

The effects of such governmentality, which were percieved as the 'neoliberalisation' of feminist agenda were perceived by the actors as rather detrimental to their own work. Communication partners spoke extensively of international funding which prioritises indicator-based governance of national projects, specifically with regards to European Union financial programmes which prioritise benchmarking and good-practice sharing as principles of steering and controlling. This seems to push organisations to professionalization and constant quantification of their outputs. This may oftentimes be clashing with what they view as their own and organisational 'feminist values'. However, the level of negotiation and acceptance of indicator-based tools was particularly visible when communication partners spoke about the tools as modes of communication with regards to the 'knowledge effect'. As the partners claimed, this mode of communication was particularly popular among other bureaucrats and political elites. As such, the tools were viewed as the necessary evil.

Many of the interviewed communication partners in particular spoke about what they perceived to be the role of the European Union indicator-based tools. Some of them reflected the presence of the 'soft' tools as a very weak one compared to the direct conditionality of the pre-accession period, as they tended to reminisce about the former power of 'sandwiching politics' (Roth, 2007). According to some, 'the European pool of resources' has been draining when it comes to discursive and the strategic 'use of the European'. On the other hand, some communication partners put the presence of indicator-based tools in the current policymaking structures into contrast to the former state-socialist regime, whence the lack of data symbolised a lack of interest in tackling violence against women within the political agenda. The communication partners thus reflected upon the lacking concept of 'evidence-based policymaking' with regards to the area of gender equality. The presence of international organisations and their demand for data is to signify a shift in policy discourses. Within this shift, the promotion of indicator-based tools is understood as the objective of the intergovernmental cooperation to acknowlede the existence of this issue - violence against women

is a pervasive and requires political attention.

3. What types of learning and knowledge transfer are present within this environment specifically in relation the indicator-based tools and the data they provide?

Many interviewed communication partners seem to actively negotiate the use of indicator-based tools for a variety of objectives, despite the reservations which they may have to their nature and downsides. Representatives of the public sector, the non-governmental sector and the academia reported on employing the indicator-based tools in the past in order to raise awareness and to lobby among the political elites and bureaucrats. As such, they described their use of the indicator-based tools mostly in their dispositions as gender experts and diversity workers. Hereby, the tools were deployed in order to:

- Emphasise the extent and nature of violence against women,
- Set a 'gendered' discourse within policies tackling violence against women (i.e. talk about the causes and effects rooted in 'gender' as a social structure),
- Change the priorities of political stakeholders,
- Point to the requirement of specialised services for persons with experience of violence.

It seems that social learning (Radaelli, 2008) was the most commonly detected type of learning by the diversity workers themselves. However, the communication partners also explained that some stakeholders (primarily political elites and bureaucrats) and the partners themselves, engage also in political learning and organisational learning. Through the lenses of political learning and organisational learning, we can view indicator-based tools as modes of communication which are applied when political actors communicate their agenda. While political learning was related to the change in the stakeholders' priorities, the requirement of better services could be also understood as organisational learning with a structural nature. Quite surprisingly, in-

strumental policy learning seems to have been reported on the least frequently.

With regards to social learning, the process of 'gendering' of the discourses on violence was particularly emphasised. Hereby, the gendered nature of violence (i.e. its cause and effect) became visible. In this regard, the communication partners spoke of the ability of the indicators to capture the massive extent of intimate-partner violence and non-partner violence, experienced predominantly by women, thus putting the issue into a broader context of gender inequalities. However, some communication partners were rather sceptical of the ability of the tools to capture complex social phenomena and to result in a change of attitude. Throughout the interviews, they explained that in their professional field of diversity workers, they also put emphasis on 'individual stories', rather than 'abstract numbers', because they wish to attain a 'change in attitudes'.

4. What types of resistances, barriers and blockages are present with regards to these tools?

The communication partners interviewed for this case study reported on a variety of endeavours of knowledge sharing in relation to benchmarking, ranking, and good-practice sharing which were hampered. These included three different types of blockages (according to James, Jorgensen, 2009; Saurugger, Terpan, 2016):

- Informational and structural blockage – a lack of previous 'gendered knowledge' of stakeholders which would provide the substrate for further learning, and a lack of data transferability rooted in insufficient or useless data,
- Actor-centred blockage – political and ideological resistance, protection of institutional legitimacy by governmental officials,
- Structural and organisational blockage – lack of efficient networks for knowledge sharing (due to division of competences and authorities), lack of prioritisation within organisations.

It is a puzzling finding that social learning, previously mentioned as the core mode of learning among a variety of stakeholders, has been also identified as the type of learning that is most commonly resisted to, or that it rather results in non-learning (Zito, Schout, 2009). For this particular reason, the communication partners expressed the scepticism towards the tools themselves, as mentioned before.

The communication partners spoke in particular of an 'ideological' blockage of the tools. This is understandable if we put away the 'technocratic' perspectives of the tools and their supposed 'aura of objectivity' and instead approach them as 'ideological carriers of knowledge' on inequality (Kunz, Prügl, 2019). The tools are not able to provide for a change of attitudes where previous 'gendered knowledge' is missing or where political attitudes are oppositional to certain developments in the area of gender equality in general. Such lack of knowledge and oppositional attitudes can also lead to resistance towards learning, which was described by the communication partners as a 'lack of prioritisation'.

Such lack of previous knowledge does not have to be defined as an 'ideological opposition' *per se*. This is also explained by Ahrens (2018) within the concept of a kind of inertia, the so-called 'nescience' – i.e. the general lack of gender competence or lack of awareness on gender inequalities. Ahrens (2018) goes on to explain that such 'nescience' may result in the creation of the division between 'the gender people' and 'the mainstream people', which would also be the case of the Slovak policymaking environment. Within the Slovak bureaucratic structures, the sharing of knowledge itself is complicated by the fact that the agenda of gender equality is subsumed only under one ministry (i.e. Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities at the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family). This results in structural and organisational blockage, since by this division, the gender expertise is on one hand predominantly culminated within one ministry, and at the same time, the officials struggle to reach out to other structures due to the division of authorities and competences.

5. What purpose do the tools serve in relation to actor coalitions and knowledge transfer?

This case study also looked at the presence of indicator-based tools among members of the studied advisory bodies. It has been identified through cognitive and narrative interviewing and the narrative reading of the meeting minutes, that different epistemic communities formed into actor coalitions and are now present within the policymaking environment – these included primarily the 'feminist actor coalition' (feminist non-governmental sector and some public sector officials) and the 'reactively oppositional actor coalition' (members of conservative non-governmental sector representatives, catholic NGOs and fathers' rights organisations)[107]. The role of the indicator-based tools within the deliberations of the two studied bodies was particularly visible in the Committee on Gender Equality, where the actors of the 'reactively oppositional coalition' have been actively engaging in the 'discursive de-legitimisation of gender policies' (Kirzsán, Roggeband, 2018) since 2013.

This practice occurred in a variety of forms. The debates prior to 2015 focused on the questions of 'correct terminology', while the later ones opened up a new discursive arena with regards to questions of 'valid and reliable data', as well as the epistemic authority and legitimacy of some actors as 'gender experts'. This process of discursive de-legitimisation appeared within a number of partial strategies: de-gendering of the topic of violence, de-legitimisation of feminist actors as experts, questioning of the data/methodology of research/indicator-based tools, open opposition to policies and agenda of international organisations. Within these partial strategies, the indicator-based tools played a number of roles which often led to active rhetorical opposition towards them when they were communicated within the Committee:

- Indicator-based tools as carriers of 'gendered' knowledge on violence against women,
- Indicator-based tools as knowledge-based resources of the 'feminist actor coalition',

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107 Rather than being a fixed characteristic, the identification of the members of these coalitions needs to be understood 'discursively' as negotiated within speech and their own agenda within the studied bodies.

- Indicator-based tools as carriers of knowledge constructed based on a certain 'bounded rationality' which prioritises inequality experienced predominantly by women,
- Indicator-based tools as products of international organisations'.

A particular attention needs to be devoted to the role of indicator-based tools as knowledge-based resources of the 'feminist actor coalition'. It has been established by a governmental official within the Committee in 2016 that it is in particular the 'gendered knowledge of the data', which defines a 'gender expert'. As such, the recognition of indicator-based tools aids the members of the 'feminist actor coalition' to be recognised as experts by the governmental officials who hold the authority on this matter. However, the 'reactively oppositional actors' also strive to be recognised as equal experts - despite the fact that they actively oppose the 'gendered' nature of violence, the international organisations' policies (whereby the EU is even presented as the leading authority on 'gender expertise'), or even the 'bounded rationality' of the tools. The political nature of the tools as carriers of ideological knowledge seems to clash with the core beliefs (Weible, Sabatier, 2007) of the 'reactively oppositional actors'. As such, they resort to countering and doubting the data collection processes and the methodological structure of indicator-based tools – thus keeping well within the 'scientific discourse' (as in Valkovičová, Hardoš, 2018). As such, indicator-based tools and their presence is actively negotiated in these arenas as it is the status of an 'expert', and therefore a valid 'policymaking actor' which is at stake.

Broader implications of the findings

As the summary above of the main findings of the case study demonstrates, the presence of indicator-based tools within the Slovak structures of policymaking can be hardly described as harmonious and non-problematic. This situation exists despite the fact that these tools are oftentimes described as 'soft' ones compared to directives or resolutions. However, not even the scenarios of 'neoliberalisation and technocratisation' or gender equality policies and feminist agenda are exactly correct. While it has

been previously argued that feminist agenda has become a servant of neoliberal polices since the transformation of the state-sponsored feminism (Kantola, Outshoorn, 2007), the Slovak reality is much more complex. For example, Eschle and Maigwasha (2018) argue that feminist activists within the public and non-governmental sectors have been relentlessly forced to lead a precarious existence where they realise that 'one cannot dismantle the master's house with the master's tools', yet, these tools are oftentimes the most powerful and available at hand. Even now, the way the actors negotiate the use of indicator-based tools has to be taken into consideration with the sidelining of the feminist non-governmental sector, the dwindling discursive power of 'the European' and the cutting of budgets (Krizsán, Roggeband, 2018). Then again, the political tool of 'gender ideology' which aims to oppose developments in gender equality policies (Verloo, 2018a, 2018b), cannot be detached from these conditions either.

As Verloo (2018a) reminds us that within the region of Central and Eastern Europe and elsewhere, feminist activism has played a crucial role in producing de-essentialised and gendered knowledge about different social phenomena, including violence – thus also influencing the policy discourses and creating a community of gender experts and femocrats. Besides this, within the national administrations, these same actors have also been extensively benefitting from the connection and support of the European Union structures, which have, for example, developed networks of experts (e.g. through the cooperation of EU Member States and EIGE). Therefore, the opposition of the 'reactively oppositional actor coalition' and their use of the 'gender ideology' rhetoric towards the indicator-based tools can be, to an extent, viewed as an expression of resistance to 'epistemic injustice' (Fricker, 1999; McKinnon, 2016), where the indicator-based tools appear as a tool in the game of 'de-legitimising gender equality policies'. Such injustice can be experienced as a hermeneutical marginalisation of the 'reactively oppositional coalition', whereby the actors experience the uneven distribution of epistemic authority because of the dominant (feminist) ideology[108].

Gender equality policies (as much as human rights policies) are 'ideological' by

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108 Such resistance was previously documented also within the Czech fathers' movement (Saxonberg, 2017; Fafejta, 2018).

nature, as they aim to tackle the presence of structurally embedded inequalities based on gender. Opposition to projects of gender inequality, which makes use of the 'gender ideology' rhetoric needs to be recognised as rooted in ideological antagonisms despite their tendency to be clad in 'scientific discourse' (e.g. Kuhar, 2015; Pető, 2015; Valkovičová, Hardoš, 2018). Within policymaking, institutions exist which create and uphold the framework of what and whom is considered to be an expert 'worth listening to' (Hardoš, 2018). When it comes to advisory bodies of the Slovak policymaking structures on gender equality, it is the governmental officials who regulate and oversee the bodies. In this regard, approaching the actors who make use of the 'gender ideology' rhetoric as actors 'with another point of view' legitimises them as 'alternative experts' within advisory bodies, as well as it validates their oppositional claims - yet again, through the discourse on expertise. While their discourse is not essentially embedded in the current and academic knowledge of social sciences, it has been legitimised as an 'alternative one' nevertheless. Or, to use another card-game metaphor: They may not know how to play the cards, but they certainly can shuffle them.

Such understanding contributes to the conclusions of Verloo (2018c, p. 227) who contends that: *"[…] while political opportunity structure matters greatly for the success of societal projects (and social movements within them), the larger causal relation is between the inequality of democracy and the space available to social justice projects and to the projects and activities that oppose them"*. The problematic role of expertise and the position and recognition of experts within policymaking seems to be the playing field. In this field, the opposition to gender equality projects and policies (including the European Union ones) found its way, by using of the 'gender ideology' rhetoric. However, would gender training of public officials be the solution to its growing presence even within the bureaucratic structures? According to this research, what also seems to be lacking among the stakeholders (primarily bureaucrats and political elites) is the ability to 'read indicator-based tools' and the skill of understanding how social science research is constructed (from the 'ideological' construction of research questions to the analysis and reporting). Here, we argue once again, simply applying gender mainstreaming would just fall short.

Falling short with the case study

By adopting a phenomenological perspective which aims to be sensitive to the study of its subjects, their positionality, and agency, this study aspired to adhere to the feminist research ethics in political science and international relations (Ackerley, True, 2010). As such, it is certainly ethical to recall the main limitations of this study which aimed to contribute to the field of 'Europeanisation studies' by focusing on indicator-based tools.

Firstly, it is essential to acknowledge that this study focused predominantly on the framework of 'violence against women' policies, which, in the Slovak context, primarily targets the topics of intimate-partner violence and non-partner sexual violence against women. As such, other issues of policymaking, such as human trafficking or 'violence against children' were excluded, since they are also subsumed under different institutions and organisations. Furthermore, such choice of field came about due to the prioritisation of the topic within the Slovak policies, as well as due to the dominance of indicator-based tools within the EU gender equality policies on violence *per se*. It also needs to be acknowledged that the objective to infer a complex perspective of the studied subject from a simple case study within a particular field may be contested (Bryman, 2015). However, adding another layer or a country-comparative aspect to the study would complicate the data collection and analysis process to the extent that the studied fields would suffer from neglect. Therefore, only a call for more case studies focused on indicator-based tools of intergovernmental policymaking is in order.

With the objective to tackle the demand for diversified data, which is appealed to by practice/process tracing scholars (Bennett, Checkel, 2015; Pouliot, 2015), this case study looked at the national strategic and framework documents, read through the meeting minutes of two selected advisory bodies, and conducted narrative and cognitive interviews with their members. Despite this objective, it needs to be acknowledged that the predominant phenomenological perspective could only look into 'what was written or said'. Studying how 'learning happens' through the narratives of the communication partners proved to be particularly challenging. The fact that the contem-

porary theoretical frameworks of learning within policymaking emphasise taxonomies of learning outcomes also added to the issue. Since communication partners have only limited knowledge of what further happens to the knowledge they share, tracing learning is certainly an investigative endeavour. While self-report studies come as recommended (Witting, 2015), they also have considerable limitations with regards to validity and reliability. For example, this study showed that when enquiring about the types of learning, the communication partners were more inclined to talk about the situations which they understood as moments of non-learning. Most likely, this happened due to their own frustrations as diversity workers, or it is possible that as negative experiences, these prevailed in their own memory. In essence, retrospection is another issue as it complicates the reliability of the data. This is also due to the possibility that the memory serves current objectives and interest of the interviewed communication partner (Bogner, Menz, 2009). Therefore, 'social desirability' and the limitations of retrospection need to be taken into consideration as serious limitations of this study.

Developing 'Europeanisation studies'

By asking the partial research questions mentioned above, this case study aimed to look at learning as a socially constructed practice (Dean, 2007; Pouliot, 2015), therefore seeing it as both a dependent and independent variable in studying the impact of European Union policies at the EU Member State level (Radaelli, 2002; Benson, Jordan, 2011). By applying the perspective of Europeanisation processes as an opportunity structure (Forest, 2006) and as a layer of policymaking (Saurugger, 2005), we were able to look at indicator-based tools, which leave a much more difficult impact to trace. This allowed us to broaden the framework of previously studied abilities of the 'soft' knowledge-based policymaking tools, primarily by focusing on their ability to foster social learning. And by adopting an actor-centred perspective of discursive-sociological institutionalism (Lombardo, Forest, 2012), this study led to the analysis of epistemic structures and discursive dynamics which necessarily come to play when 'knowledge' and 'expertise' get involved with policymaking. To provide a very brief

conclusion, yet a very politically incorrect one with regards to the topic of this case study – Europe does indeed 'hit home' in a variety of ways.

This study of the 'soft' nature of indicator-based tools of policymaking understands them as modes of communication aimed at learning, accounting, steering, and controlling (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, Halligan, 2015). A number of scholars have previously linked the study of the 'econometrics' of benchmarking, ranking, and good-practice sharing to the concept of Foucauldian governmentality (e.g. Espland, Sauder, 2007; Fougner, 2008; Manokna, 2012). However, while scholars have recognised both the 'knowledge effect' and the 'governmentality effect' (Szoltysek, et al., 2017; Kiersey, et al., 2013), the policymaking structures, actors, and auditing companies are yet to follow (see e.g. Valkovičová, 2017b). While the Europeanisation studies have been inclined to look at the 'knowledge effect' and thus study the 'soft' tools as promoters of social learning (Radaelli, 2008; Bruno, 2009), the social reality of our communication partners was much more complex. It was the 'governmentality effect' in particular which they actively negotiated and resisted. Even the strategic and framework documents spoke of two particular roles for the European Union indicator-based tools: 1. As providers of evidence for 'evidence-based policymaking' in an area which is notorious for its former lack of recognition and prioritisation, 2. As a provider of framework for better coordination, monitoring and evaluation of policies (i.e. projects aimed at tackling 'violence against women').

Recalling the work on expertise within policymaking by Boger and Meinz (2009), within the study, the indicator-based tools were recognised as containers of both technical knowledge and interpretative knowledge. The latter should be approached as a set of experts' beliefs about a given issue, which needs to be understood as 'political knowledge' (Kunz, Prügl, 2019). As carriers of discourses on particular issues, the indicator-based tools within the realm of (gender) equality policies need to be recognised as tools applied by stakeholders within their dispositions of political actors and diversity workers (Ahmed, 2012, 2018). On the other hand, this case study also approached policymaking arenas as rhetorical spaces which contain a variety of stakeholders with particular and conflicting agendas. Therefore and unfortunately, this means that the

hope that indicator-based tools would be able to provide an answer to 'a moral demand for impartiality and fairness' (Bruno, 2009, p. 277), and would also tackle the conflicts and agonistic struggles, was rather optimistic. Nevertheless, that does not mean that the further study of indicator-based tools within EU policymaking should be rendered futile.

Researching further – 'gender ideology' and 'going soft'

In their recent monograph on equality policies across Europe, authors Verloo and Paternotte (2018) call for more attention to be directed towards the discursive, epistemic, and the symbolic processes linked to the opposition towards various feminist projects. The authors emphasise the study of 'the epistemic' – the process of (re) production of knowledge among actors. In the same vein, Verloo (2018a, 2018b) calls for the analysis of the epistemic positionality of sciences within the policymaking structures. This particular case came to the conclusion that the role of gender experts in bureaucratic structures, including in the advisory bodies, requires further analysis and scrutiny in an environment where the 'gender ideology' rhetoric becomes normalised and mainstreamed through policymaking structures. In their study, Krizsán and Roggeband (2018) argue that 'low key' incremental processes and practices leading to backsliding of gender equality policies oftentimes remain unnoticed. One of the ways of studying what usually goes unnoticed is to look at the minor work, or even the drudgery of the members of epistemic communities within policymaking. The study of 'velvet triangles' (Mazur, 2002; Woodward, 2004) has been well established with regards to the inclusion of feminist agenda into policymaking. This study proposes to look at the actors who make use of the 'gender ideology' rhetoric as an epistemic community as well. Within such perspective, the indicator-based tools, as well as other knowledge-based tools of policymaking can be understood as negotiable resources. While previous research in Europe has pointed to the finding that the rhetoric itself connects actors from distant political axes (Kuhar, Paternotte, ed., 2017), this case study suggests to delve into the study of the networks of shared knowledge.

Another call for further research pertains to the role of the 'power of the European' itself. First, the approach to non-learning as irrational (Ford, et al., 2008) will be insufficient when it comes to indicator-based tools which aim to foster not only social learning. Actors seem to resist such learning on a number of accounts. But when we have gone past such simplistic approach of 'Do they learn?', we can go further to other questions such as – 'Can the actors be made to learn?', 'Who defines the framework of what is to be taught?', 'Who defines who is to be the teacher?', 'Which are the factors that foster learning?', or even 'How to strengthen the legitimacy of the diversity workers?'. All these questions deserve answers and, primarily, deserve an actor-centred approach which looks at how learning occurs under the 'auspices of the European' – i.e. that will understand the European Union structures only as one of the intervening variables. With the new venues in EU policymaking fostered by indicator-based tools and their orchestrators, such as EIGE and FRA, new qualitative case studies are needed, as the previous concepts of 'norm-life cycle' and veto points and misfits will not do when it comes to current European Union gender equality policies.

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LIST OF RESOURCES

Interviews with communication partners:

Interview with communication partner CP 1 – PUB/NGO/ACA, conducted 15.3.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 2 – PUB, conducted 12.4.2018

Interview with communication partner CP 3 – PUB/NGO, conducted 19.4.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 4 – NGO, conducted 3.5.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 5 – PUB/NGO, conducted 22.5.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 6 – NGO/ACA, conducted 23.5.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 7 – NGO, conducted 22.5.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 8 – NGO, conducted 6.9.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 9 – NGO, conducted 8.6.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 10 – PUB/NGO, conducted 16.6.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 11 – PUB/NGO/ACA, conducted 17.7.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 12 – NGO/ACA, conducted 6.8.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 13- PUB/NGO, conducted 8.8.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 14 – PUB, conducted 10.8.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 15 – PUB, conducted 10.8.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 16 – NGO, conducted 16.8.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 17 – NGO/ACA, conducted 17.8.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 18 – PUB, conducted 12.12.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 19 – NGO, conducted 20.10.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 20 – NGO, conducted 13.10.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 21 – NGO, conducted 13.10.2017

Interview with communication partner CP 22 – PUB, conducted 17.5.2018

Strategic documents in Slovak language, available at:
https://www.gender.gov.sk/dokumenty/legislativa/dokumenty/
Celoštátna stratégia rodovej rovnosti 2014 – 2019
Akčný plán rodovej rovnosti na roky 2014 – 2019
Národná stratégia rodovej rovnosti na roky 2009 – 2013
Národný akčný plán rodovej rovnosti na roky 2010 – 2013

Strategic documents in Slovak language, available at:
https://www.zastavmenasilie.gov.sk/strategie-a-spravy
Národný akčný plán na elimináciu a prevenciu násilia na ženách na roky 2014 – 2019

Vyhodnotenie plnenia NAPu za roky 2014-2015

Národný akčný plán na prevenciu a elimináciu násilia páchaného na ženách na roky 2009 – 2012

Vyhodnotenie plnenia NAPu za roky 2009-2012

Národný akčný plán na prevenciu a elimináciu násilia páchaného na ženách na roky 2005 – 2008

Vyhodnotenie plnenia NAPu za roky 2005-2008

Národná stratégia na prevenciu a elimináciu násilia páchaného na ženách a v rodine 2004

Správa o násilí páchanom na ženách za rok 2009

Správa o násilí páchanom na ženách za rok 2010

Správa o násilí páchanom na ženách za rok 2011

Správa o násilí páchanom na ženách za rok 2012 – 2013

Meeting Minutes of Committee on Gender Equality

Dates: 23/9/2011, 10/11/2011, 1/12/2011, 17/2/2012, 25/9/2012, 28/1/2013, 21/10/2013, 30/1/2014, 20/5/2014, 2/10/2014, 24/2/2015, 3/6/2015, 13/10/2015, 13/6/2016, 28/11/2016.

Available at: https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/vybor-pre-rodovu-rovnost/

Meeting Minutes of Expert Group on Elimination of Violence against Women

Dates: 26/4/2013, 8/10/2013, 3/7/2014, 4/2/2016, 25/10/2016

Available at:

https://www.minv.sk/?zlozenie-expertnej-skupiny-pre-eliminaciu-nasilia-pachane-ho-na-zenach

APPENDICES

Appendix no. 1: *Members of the Committee on Gender Equality and members of the Expert Group on the Elimination of Violence against Women*

Members of Committee on Gender Equality in period 2011-2016. Retrieved from: www.employment.gov.sk/sk/vybor-pre-rodovu-rovnost/ (25 October 2016)

Ján Richter
Predseda výboru (Chairperson of the Committee)
Adriana Mesochoritisová
Podpredsedníčka výboru (Vice-Chairperson of the Committee)
Oľga Pietruchová
Tajomníčka výboru (Secretary of the Committee)

Členky a členovia podľa čl. 4 ods. 5 písm a) štatútu (Members and members under Art. 4 para. 5 (a) of the Statute)	Členky a členovia podľa čl. 4 ods. 5 písm. b) štatútu (Members and members under Art. 4 para. 5 (a) (b) of the Statute)
Marian Galan Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu SR (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic) **Mario Mikloši** Ministerstvo zdravotníctva SR (Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic) **Marián Saloň** Ministerstvo obrany SR (Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic) **Monika Deneva** Ministerstvo pôdohospodárstva a rozvoja vidieka SR (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic) **Vlasta Jánová** Ministerstvo životného prostredia SR (Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic) **Branislav Ondruš** Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny SR (Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family) **Iveta Kodoňová** Ministerstvo kultúry SR (Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic) **Juraj Palúš**	**Monika Rakovská** Združenie samosprávnych krajov SK (Association of Self-Governing Regions of the Slovak Republic) **Božena Kováčová** Združenie miest a obcí Slovenska (Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia) **Eva Šťastná** Únia miest Slovenska (Union of Cities of Slovakia) **Natália Juráková** Slovenské národné stredisko pre ľudské práva (Slovak National Center for Human Rights) **Bez nominácie (No nomination)** Kancelária verejného ochrancu práv (Office of the Public Defender of Rights) **Iveta Griačová** Republiková únia zamestnávateľov (Employer Republic Union) **Margita Vitálošová** Konfederácia odborových zväzov (Trade Union Confederation) **Miriam Špániková** Asociácia zamestnávateľských zväzov a združení SR (Association of Employers' Associations and Associations of the Slovak Republic)

Ministerstvo spravodlivosti SR (Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic) **Radovan Majerský** Ministerstvo financií SR (Ministry of Finances of the Slovak Republic) **Ondrej Varačka** Ministerstvo vnútra SR (Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic) **Barbara Illková** Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí SR (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic) **Rastislav Chovanec** Ministerstvo hospodárstva SR (Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic) **Iveta Šimonovičová** Ministerstvo dopravy, výstavby, a regionálneho rozvoja SR (Ministry of Transport, Construction, and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic)	**Albert Breier** Slovenská akadémia vied (Slovak Academy of Sciences) **Tatiana Čorejová** Slovenská rektorská konferencia (Slovak Rector's Conference) **Tatiana Šušková** Rozhlas a televízia Slovenska (Slovak Radio and Television) **Simona Majerníková** Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny (Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny) **Hedviga Polcíková** Sociálna poisťovňa (Social Insurance Agency) **Sylvia Porubanová** Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny (Institute for Family and Labour Research) **Ľudmila Ivančíková** Štatistický úrad SR (Statistical office of the Slovak Republic) **Hana Špaleková** Úrad splnomocnenca vlády SR pre rómske komunity (Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Community) **Jana Mochňacká** Národný inšpektorát práce (National Labour Inspectorate)

Členky a členovia podľa čl. 4 ods. 6 štatútu (Members and members under Art. 4 para. 6 of the Statute)

Jana Zezulová
Možnosť voľby (Freedom of Choice)
Jarmila Filadelfiová
Inštitút pre verejné otázky (Institute for Public Affairs)
Mária Chaloupková
Združenie žien Slovenska (Association of Women of Slovakia)
Zuzana Vranová, Zuzana Kulašiková
Profesionálne ženy (Professional Women)
Šarlota Pufflerová, Andrea Chorváthová
Občan, demokracia a zodpovednosť (Citizen, democracy and responsibility)
Katarína Farkašová, Dáša Malíková
Aliancia žien Slovenska (Alliance of Women of Slovakia)
Katarína Minrovičová, Monika Bosá
EsFEM
Zuzana Magurová, Zuzana Kiczková
Ženská loby Slovenska (Women's lobby of Slovakia)

Hana Smitková, Eva Riečanská
Záujmové združenie ASPEKT (Interest organisation ASPEKT)
Dušana Karlovská
FENESTRA
Magda Haburová
Žena tretieho tisícročia (The Third Millennium Woman)
Barbora Burajová
Nadácia otvorenej spoločnosti (Open Society Foundation)
Irena Belohorská
Únia žien Slovenska (Union of Women of Slovakia)
Adriana Šklíbová
Top centrum podnikateliek (Top Centre of Women Entrepreneurs)
Apolónia Sejková
Záujmové zdrženie MyMamy (Interest Group MyMamy)
Viera Petrašová
Združenie lesníčiek (Association of Women Foresters)
Andrea Bučková, Ingrid Kosová
Kultúrne združenie Rómov Slovenska (The Cultural Association of the Roma of Slovakia)
Mária Raučínová
Katolícke hnutie žien Slovenska (The Catholic Movement of Women of Slovakia)
Monika Vrábľová
Národná rada občanov so zdravotným postihnutím v SR (National Council of Citizens with Disabilities in Slovakia)
Renata Ocilková
Fórum kresťanských inštitúcií (Christian Institutions Forum)
Stanislav Trnovec
Klub mnohodetných rodín (Multiple-children Families Club)
Jozef Tinka
Spravedlnost detem
Striedavá starostlivosť o deti (Justice for Children, Alternate childcare)

Members of the Expert Group on the Elimination of Violence against Women 2013-2016. Retrieved from:
https://www.minv.sk/?zlozenie-expertnej-skupiny-pre-eliminaciu-nasilia-pachane-ho-na-zenach (25 October 2016)
Ing. Oľga Pietruchová, M.A. (Chairperson of the Expert Group)
Ing. Mgr. Miloslava Jezná
Mgr. Katarína Farkašová
Mgr. Barbora Holubová
Mgr. Dušana Karlovská
Ivan Leitman
Mgr. Apolónia Sejková
mjr. JUDr. Andrea Babušáková
JUDr. PhDr. Branislav Kadlečík
Mgr. Martina Brychtová
Mgr. Martina Matejková, MPH

Appendix no.2: *Interview structure*

Introduction to the interview:

You have had the chance to read the information sheet of this research which is focused on knowledge-based tools of public policymaking, the so-called soft tools of policymaking, which are based on indicators. These are tools that make use of benchmarks, rankings, and indexes. Their basic principle is that they use scientific expertise, statistics and comparison. Thus, there are different rankings, international indices and statistics, different development goals, but also good practice programs which have been developed at the international level.

Today, I want to talk to you about gender equality policies and the field of violence against women and the various international institutions and organizations that use such tools. Some of my question will be broader, but the majority of them is focused at the area of violence against women. If there is a question which does not concern your work or you do not have expertise in this area, let me know, we can skip it.

I would like to remind you that I am not here to test your knowledge or question your work. I am asking each of the communication partners about international policies and organisations in order to find out what influences your work at the national level and how. I will also be asking you of your opinion. Feel free to interrupt my questions if you have yourself any or when you want to enquire about something.

- *After you read the information sheet – what were the first knowledge and indicator-based tools in the context of international policymaking, which came to your mind? (the international organisations can include the United Nations, Council of Europe or the European Union)*

- *I will narrow down the choices now. When it comes to the European Union institutions and organizations (I mean the traditional EP and EC organizations as well as agencies such as EIGE or FRA), did any particular indicator-based tools come to your mind, such as indexes, rankings, benchmarks and good practices? And in the context of 'violence against women'?*

- *In the context of international organisations such as the UN, the EU or the Council of Europe, are you aware of any statistical reports on violence against women or gender-based violence? Do you work with any?*

- *And specifically with regards to the EU?*

- *Why are these reports part of the policies? What is the objective of devising these reports?*

- *You mentioned the objectives of..... Do you think these objectives in particular are also fulfilled? Why yes/no?*

- *Now I would like to focus on the tools of policymaking such as international organisations' conclusions and recommendations. When it comes to these with regards to 'violence against women', which do come to your mind?*

- *When it comes in particular to the European Union structures and for example the European Union Council Conclusions, are you aware of any with regards to 'violence against women'?*

- *Why are these conclusions part of the policies? What is the objective of devising these conclusions?*

- *You mentioned the objectives of..... Do you think these objectives in particular are also fulfilled? Why yes/no?*

- *Now I would like to focus on programmes of sharing good practices in the international arena. When it comes to these with regards to 'violence against women', which do come to your mind?*
- *When it comes in particular to the European Union structures?*
- *Why are these programmes of sharing good practices part of the policies? What is the objective of devising these programmes?*
- *You mentioned the objectives of..... Do you think these objectives in particular are also fulfilled? Why yes/no?*

The following questions will be only focused on European Union policies tackling violence against women and the indicator-based tools that we just talked about:

- *Now I am interested to know how you get to know about these tools usually. By which channels would that usually happen. Please try to focus on particular situations which you can recall.*
- *Can you think of particular situations with regards to your work when you made use of these tools such as benchmarks, ranks, indexes or good practices? Can you think of particular situations with particular tools?*
- *Did you ever make use of these tools in particular when working with a specific group of stakeholders? Can you think of particular situations?*
- *Did you ever make use of these tools in particular at some political fora – such as expert groups or in committees? Can you think of particular situations?*
- *Can you think of particular situation when the communication with regards to the given stakeholders, this communication was successful? Can you think of particular situations when you communicated the tools and you reached the outcome you were seeking?*
- *Or the contrary – situations where the communication was unsuccessful? Why do you think that was?*
- *Have you ever experienced a situation when you were working with these indicator-based tools and someone was questioning their content? If yes, what was the situation?*

Thank you very much for your answers. I have just a couple of general questions at the end

- *Which do you currently consider to be the most crucial challenges related to policies tackling violence against women? Which do you consider to be the most paramount issues which need to be addressed?*
- *When you look back at the recent years of policies tackling violence against women, do you think the indicator-based tools of international policymaking had an effect on them? Why and how yes/no?*
- *Do you consider this impact to be positive/negative/or it can be completely disregarded? Please explain...*
- *Are there according to you any factors in the Slovak policymaking environment which impact the use of the knowledge of the indicator-based tools? Or are there any factors which hamper the flow of the knowledge?*

Appendix no. 3: *Information sheet for communication partners*

Dissertation topic: International impact and Slovak policies tackling violence against women
Mgr. Veronika Valkovičová, MA
Department: Institute of European Studies and International Relations, Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University in Bratislava

Dear participant,

this factsheet serves to familiarize yourself with the basic objectives of the dissertation research on the international impact and Slovak policies tackling violence against women. The reason I approached you for a research interview for my dissertation is your involvement in this public policy area. You have been included on the basis of two factors among the communication partners in this research - based on your participation in the Committee on Gender Equality or the Expert Group on Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women, and your knowledge of gender equality issues.

The aim of this dissertation is to pay attention to various knowledge-based tools of public policymaking of the European Union and other international organisations, -the so-called soft law tools. These are tools that use both quantitative and qualitative research to try to express inequalities in simpler and measurable indicators. As such, they use various benchmarks, rankings, statistics and indicators. From the point of view of international organizations (such as the EU, the Council of Europe and the UN), there may be, for example, various indices, comparative instruments, good practices, or development goals.

These tools can also influence your work, the work of experts at different levels in different ways. Therefore, in many areas, this research is interested in the different ways these tools may be influencing your work, but also in the opinions you hold of these tools. The aim of this dissertation is not to ask questions about your agenda or the effectiveness of you or your organization. At the beginning of the interview, you will be asked to provide information about your career history within the period 2008 - 2016. This is not to help identify you in the interview, but to give us some more thorough insight into your professional career and ask you more targeted questions in the context of this public policy.

The interview (transcript) and the information you provide will be used in the dissertation and publications that will be the output of this research. The record will be anonymized, which means that any information that might identify your person or your organization will be removed from it. The record will be assigned a specific identifier according to your professional classification (e.g. non-profit sector: NGO rep. 1, 2, etc.,

e.g. state sector: GOV rep. 1, 2 etc.). The citations from the record will also be referred to in this work based on this identifier.

If you have any questions, please contact me at my email address or at my phone number. You have the right to contact me at any time to inquire about the research project. At the same time, I attach an informed consent form to this information leaflet, the signature of which is necessary for participation in this research. You can opt out of research at any time - the information you provide will not be included.

28.1.2017   Mgr. Veronika Valkovičová, MA

Informed Consent Form

	Yes	No
1. Did you read the information sheet of the research project?		
2. Did you gain relevant information about the research project, which allowed you to participate at the research?		
3. Do you consent to the recording of the interview?		
4. Did you freely choose to participate at this research project?		
5. Are you aware of the possibility to leave the research project at any time without giving a reason?		
6. Are you aware that if you decide to withdraw from this research, your transcript will not be used in research?		
7. Do you understand the terms of the anonymisation of this research interview?		

I confirm that I agree with the use of the research interview transcript for research purposes.

Name of the communication partner:

Date and signature:

Author of the research project – *Mgr. Veronika Valkovičová, MA*

Date and signature: