



**Draft**

**Title:** **On women and climate change in Europe**

**Tabled by:** EGP Mediterranean Network

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1 The European Union has a long-standing commitment to gender equality: it is a  
2 Treaty obligation, a core EU value, a fundamental right, a key principle of the  
3 European Pillar of Social Rights, and a necessary condition for the achievement  
4 of the EU objectives of growth and social cohesion. The Gender  
5 Equality Strategy 2020-2025 recognises the importance of diversity and  
6 intersectionality. It also outlines a set of key actions including ending  
7 gender-based violence and stereotypes, ensuring equal participation and  
8 opportunities in the labour market, and achieving gender balance in policy- and  
9 decision-making.

10 Yet, and although the first Commissioner for Equality has been appointed,  
11 climate action and gender equality remain compartmentalised. The European  
12 Climate Law, adopted in June 2021, does not take into account gender  
13 inequalities, but states that "the transition must be fair and inclusive,  
14 leaving no one behind". The EU Recovery plan states that 37% of spending will be  
15 allocated to climate action and 20% to the digital transition. But the  
16 allocation of spending on gender equality is not specified. The adjustment to  
17 Objective 55 includes the Social Climate Fund, which states that "Fuel poverty  
18 alone affects up to 34 million people in the EU today", but it makes no  
19 reference to the linkages between gender and fuel poverty.

20 Obviously, in Europe, just as elsewhere, the impact of climate change differs  
21 between groups and individuals. It exacerbates existing inequalities and is  
22 particularly severe for disadvantaged and marginalised populations. Social norms  
23 deeply rooted in our societies can also contribute to continuing the

24 marginalisation of some specific population groups, including people of  
25 different gender identities.

26 The European Parliament study on gender and energy notes that "because they have  
27 a lower average income, women are more at risk of fuel poverty than men".  
28 Moreover, since the end of 2021, the sharp rise in energy prices particularly  
29 affects women and girls from ethnic minorities, migrant women and girls, women  
30 with disabilities, single mothers and older women. Studies show that almost half  
31 of single-parent families in the EU are threatened by poverty and social  
32 exclusion, and almost 9 out of 10 single parents are women. Moreover, lower-  
33 income single women, especially ageing women, are most at risk of poverty. Women  
34 are the ones who suffer most from inequality in the workplace, whether it is  
35 unequal pay, which continues to be perpetuated in thousands of companies,  
36 unequal access to employment, maternity issues, the reconciliation of work and  
37 family life or even fighting against various forms of violence and  
38 discrimination. If women are disproportionately present in the poorest strata,  
39 they are also present in the oldest strata of the population and therefore the  
40 most vulnerable. These concerns fuel a major justice issue: in general, women  
41 contribute less to emissions because they have less spending power.

42 At the same time, the most severe consequences of climate change are being  
43 observed in the EU's Southern countries. In these territories, women are  
44 disproportionately represented among the poorest and most marginalised segments  
45 of the population. They are more likely to live in flood-prone areas, or in  
46 housing without air-conditioning during summer heat waves – as we saw once again  
47 this summer.

48 Furthermore, health problems caused by climate change during pregnancy are  
49 growing – heat waves increase premature births – or mental health issues caused  
50 by stress. Even more, in recent years, climate change in Europe has increased  
51 the threat of vector-borne illnesses such as malaria, dengue fever,  
52 and Zika virus, which are linked to worse maternal and neonatal outcomes. The  
53 number of respiratory diseases are worrying, with air pollution among the main  
54 risk factors for respiratory diseases. Elderly women with low incomes are also  
55 have the greatest difficulty in accessing health care, are more  
56 vulnerable to illness and therefore more vulnerable to the need for home care,  
57 which is provided mainly by female relatives in the poorest families.

58 Women in poor communities are highly dependent on local natural resources for

59 their livelihoods, particularly in rural areas where the effects of climate  
60 change and climate hazards have unequal impacts. Agricultural policies based on  
61 intensive production models and greater investments in energy production and in  
62 mining activities in ecologically vulnerable areas, under the aegis of the  
63 energy transition, not only leave women – whose economic activities largely  
64 depend on equitable access to natural resources – more vulnerable, but also put  
65 the balance of ecosystems at risk. Women in rural areas play a central role in  
66 the socio-economic development of a region, especially for the sustainable use  
67 and conservation of resources, even though women have less access than men to  
68 resources such as land, investments, agricultural inputs, decision-making  
69 structures, technology, training and extension services that would enhance their  
70 capacity to adapt to climate change. When disasters strike, women are less  
71 likely to survive and more likely to be injured due to long-standing gender  
72 inequalities that have created disparities in information, mobility, decision-  
73 making, and access to resources and training.

74 Moreover, we cannot undervalue the role of women in the education, training and  
75 empowerment of future generations, considering that, in the EU, women not only  
76 have higher graduation rates than men but also because there are more women than  
77 men working as educators and teachers at all levels of education. It is  
78 therefore important to strengthen the educational, academic and investigation  
79 areas to raise awareness and impel next generations to action, developing an  
80 inter- and intra-generational network, so that they can take well-informed and  
81 effective action in the future. As such, empowering young people is a priority.  
82 Education on climate action is key as young children are far more vulnerable to  
83 climate-related disasters and associated health risks than any other social  
84 group.

85 **Taking gender into account at all stage of policymaking is crucial because we**  
86 **need to:**

- 87 • Use the transition to a carbon-neutral economy as leverage to achieve  
88 gender equality in employment, skills and pay; work for equal pay and  
89 pensions;
- 90 • Tackle fuel poverty through renewable energy, energy efficiency and  
91 depauperization;
- 92 • Strengthen the resilience of women and girls to make them less vulnerable

- 93 to the impact of climate change by giving them access to decent  
94 employment, social protection, health systems, education, etc.;
- 95 • Create tools for a women-inclusive economy, fostering women's  
96 entrepreneurship and self-employment;
  - 97 • Opt for measures to support entrepreneurship that women prefer, i.e. aimed  
98 at improving their personal skills, self-confidence and capabilities,  
99 education, lack of information, difficulties in accessing social and  
100 business networks or life-related issues and difficulties in reconciling  
101 work and family life (while men are more interested in direct support);
  - 102 • Promote a gendered corporate social responsibility;
  - 103 • Promote inclusive governance by international bodies and national  
104 governments, with the integration of more women and marginalised groups  
105 into decision-making;
  - 106 • Increase the civic and associative participation of women responsible for  
107 the management of natural resources, through their empowerment,  
108 contributing to a greater visibility of their social and resilience role  
109 in addressing climate change;
  - 110 • Create the necessary conditions so that women can benefit equally from the  
111 distribution of the benefits of environmental management.

112 **Unless gender equality is explicitly included in policies, programmes and**  
113 **projects, gender inequalities which are deeply rooted in social norms, practices**  
114 **and institutions, will persist. Thus, for the European Greens, the following**  
115 **elements are crucial:**

- 116 • It is essential that gender mainstreaming – in all its diversity and  
117 intersectionality – fully accompanies efforts to take a comprehensive and  
118 coherent approach to actions against climate change. We must recognise  
119 that gender inequalities coexist with other structural inequalities,  
120 including location, age, ethnicity, and disability, etc., while  
121 mainstreaming strategies should also reflect these aspects;

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- Gender must be taken into account in the work of all EU Institutions and the Commission: it must be considered from the beginning and in all policies, even in areas that are seen by some as gender neutral: climate change, energy, transport, trade and agriculture;
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- Gender mainstreaming must take place at all stages of the policy process, from issue identification to policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Assessing gender needs and conducting gender audits are strongly recommended;
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- There must be gender impact analyses of previously completed policy cycles and projects to identify gender implications in both current and future policy-making and programming to guide them and make them more effective;
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- Gender budgeting: we need gender-responsive budgeting to ensure that budget decisions are based on gender analyses and promote equality between women and men, and all other genders. Further, there must be a robust monitoring and regular evaluation of policies;
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- We support the elaboration of an EU Women's Rights Charter promoting women's participation in the labour market and sexual and reproductive rights (including abortion) to be laid down in both the Treaty and the Charter;
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- We support the proposals to enshrine in the Primary Law the gender terminology, implement gender mainstreaming at all stages of EU legislations and programmes, and ensure 'gender parity' within the EU Institutions and related bodies themselves;
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- We support combatting gender-based violence and the definition of it as an 'EU crime'.