



RECOMMENDATIONS ON WOMEN AND CLIMATE



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INTRODUCTION

Around the world, hard-won women's rights and achievements towards gender equality are being rolled back, including in the European Union (EU), with shrinking space, reduced funding and attacks on women's rights, particularly for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In parallel, ambitious climate policies are losing political momentum, as institutions and governments water down ambitious policies aiming at addressing the environmental crisis. They therefore engage in a process of "deregulation" under the excuse of administrative burden and/or unnecessary costs.

Climate change does not affect everyone equally, it is not neutral: women and girls, especially those facing poverty, conflicts, displacement, discriminations, or any forms of marginalisation are often on the front lines of its impacts, suffering from food and water insecurity, to displacement and unpaid care burdens.

Despite clear evidence of women's crucial role in addressing climate change, particularly in leadership roles and in sectors such as corporate sustainability reporting and Information and Communication Technology (ICT), which are closely interconnected with climate, they continue to be significantly underrepresented in decision-making processes, including those shaping climate policy.

At the same time, women are often among the first and most severely affected by the impacts of climate change, as well as by poorly designed mitigation and adaptation measures that fail to account for existing inequalities between women and men. Excluding women does not make climate governance neutral, it makes it incomplete.

It is time the EU institutions recognise the deep connections between women's rights and climate change: addressing the democratic backlash and commit to a transformative climate action requires a gender-responsive approach that recognises these linkages and places equity, equal participation and social justice at the heart of a just transition.

To better understand the concrete and systemic barriers to gender-responsive climate policymaking, EWL carried out a two-year project entitled "Women in Climate", aimed at strengthening gender mainstreaming in EU climate policies. This initiative brought together a diverse range of stakeholders from six EU Member States (Romania, Bulgaria, Czechia, Netherlands, Portugal, Finland) who collected research and evidence on differentiated impacts of climate change on women and girls. Each participating country organised national events with experts to discuss the issue and developed national recommendations, which this policy paper seeks to elevate and translate into actionable proposals at the EU level.

Critical issues were identified and systemic barriers to gender-responsive climate policymaking include, among others, a lack of sex-disaggregated data in environmental and climate policy frameworks, which prevent accurate assessment of women's vulnerabilities and contributions, the absence of gender-impact assessments in national and local climate strategies resulting in gender-blind decision-making, chronic underfunding organisations working at the intersection of women's rights and climate justice, limiting their capacity to influence policy or scale effective models.

To effectively combat climate change without undermining women's rights, EWL has developed a set of recommendations focusing on: institutional integration of gender equality; women's representation and meaningful participation in environmental policymaking; financing, employment, and the green economy; education and training; as well as evaluation and monitoring mechanisms.



INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRATION

Making intersectional gender impact assessments mandatory

- EWL has a longstanding commitment **to gender mainstreaming, grounded in an intersectional approach, across all EU policies.** This includes not only gender-specific policies, but also broader frameworks, from EU budgeting and anti-poverty measures to the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Care Strategy, all of which must ensure that women's rights are fully respected and systematically integrated. Climate policies are no exception.
- The EU should also establish **targeted measures within EU cohesion and recovery programmes to support women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination,** including through dedicated calls for rural, disabled, Roma, and migrant women.
- With regard to climate policies specifically, all project participants highlighted the need to introduce **mandatory gender impact assessments in all national and local climate plans.** This requirement should be institutionalised at EU level to prevent gender-blind decision-making.
- EWL calls on the EU to make **intersectional gender impact assessments a mandatory ex-ante and ex-post requirement in the implementation of its climate legal framework,** including the European Climate Law, the full Green Deal framework, and National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs).
- The European Commission should embed **gender indicators into programme regulations, requiring Member States to submit an "equality chapter" in all implementation plans.**
- Compliance with gender impact assessment requirements should be **systematically monitored,** including through structured oversight by the European Parliament, in particular relevant committees, to ensure that findings effectively inform policymaking and are not treated as a procedural formality.

Comprehensive sex-disaggregated data & methodology

- To ensure the accuracy of gender impact assessments and NECPs, **robust sex-disaggregated data is essential.**
- Empirical research is needed to assess impacts and to support policies that effectively address climate change while safeguarding the rights of all people. Given the need for gender-disaggregated data on the impacts of climate change, future research should focus on:
 - ▷ **Assessing the effectiveness of existing climate change adaptation and mitigation policies in addressing social inequalities;**
 - ▷ **Examining governance and participation models that foster inclusive decision-making; and**
 - ▷ **Developing context-specific frameworks to support women, low-income groups, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities in building climate resilience and recovery capacity.**
- To address these critical areas, **mixed-method approaches should be applied,** including long-term case studies combined with quantitative impact assessments of implemented policies. For example, comparative analyses of community-led adaptation programmes across different socio-political contexts can provide valuable insights into effective practices for equitable climate adaptation governance.
- **EWL calls on the European Environment Agency (EEA) and Eurostat, in collaboration with civil society, to define and publish harmonised sex-disaggregated indicators for the green transition,** such as those proposed by UN Women¹, including indicators on employment, access to funding, time spent on unpaid care, and energy poverty.
- Responsible European Commission's services (Directorate Generals) could collaborate and develop, together with the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) **a common Gender Impact Assessment's template and a corresponding guidance note** on incorporating a gender perspective into NECPs and to be used across all EU-funded programmes. The focus should be on energy poverty experienced

¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/climate-scorecard>

disproportionately by women and promote women's roles in local energy communities.

- The European Parliament and European Committee of the Regions should also promote guidelines and pilot projects demonstrating how equality contributes to territorial resilience and population retention.
- To strengthen cross-sectoral coordination, **the European Commission should establish a permanent inter-service body** bringing together relevant Directorates-General to ensure policy coherence and integrate social and health considerations from the earliest stages of policymaking. This body should oversee the implementation and follow-up of gender impact assessments, ensuring that their findings meaningfully inform policy design rather than being treated as a procedural formality. Its work should be overseen by the European Parliament.
- To strengthen gender mainstreaming in climate policies and their implementation, the EU should develop and disseminate **gender-sensitive participation toolkits** to support organisations and NGOs at national level in conducting inclusive and meaningful consultation processes.

Displacement and crisis response

- EWL calls for the protection of women and girls affected by climate-induced displacement to be systematically integrated into EU and national migration and adaptation policies. **The European Commission and Member States should recognise people displaced by climate change, including refugees and internally displaced persons, as a priority group under the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum²**, and ensure that protection and support mechanisms are gender-responsive and fully aligned with international human rights standards.
- Additionally, EWL calls on the EU to make measures addressing sex-based violence in the **EU Civil Protection Mechanism** and climate crisis responses a standard clause in emergency planning.
- EU climate adaptation and disaster preparedness policies should explicitly address the specific vulnerabilities of **elderly women**, including exposure to extreme heat, energy poverty, and social isolation, and ensure locally accessible outreach mechanisms so that women in vulnerable situations can effectively access adaptation measures and information.



² European Commission, Communication on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, 23 September 2020

REPRESENTATION & PARTICIPATION

The democratic deficit in climate decision-making

- Equal representation in decision-making and leadership has been a long-standing issue for EWL. While some progress has been made in the EU, women remain under-represented in politics and decision-making across Europe. While women have the same formal political rights as men, and some hold high positions, **structural barriers prevent them from accessing decision-making roles. This under-representation means that over half the population, and its legitimate interests, needs, and expectations, remain insufficiently represented.**
- **Governance in climate policies is no exception**, and women remain underrepresented in this sector as well. The question is not only about justice and fairness, but also about impacts. Research and study show that while women are more badly affected by climate change than men, they are also better and stricter in enforcing climate policies, measures and rules.
- For instance, the EIGE Index 2023 reveals that corporate firms and banks play an increasingly important role in addressing environmental and climate issues and discloses several studies that have identified a positive relationship between diversity between women and men on the board of listed EU companies and stronger commitments to environmental and sustainability objectives. For instance, study shows that greater diversity between women and men at board level leads to more comprehensive Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting³.

³ Nicolò, Zamponi, Sannino, & De Iorio, 2022

Institutionalising Gender Parity in Climate Governance

- **The EU has a duty to promote the implementation of 50/50 gender parity across all levels of decision-making and in all sectors of society.** It must also demonstrate leadership and credibility in the fight against climate change by ensuring that climate governance reflects this commitment.
- EWL calls on the EU to **institutionalise gender-parity governance within all EU and Member State climate mechanisms**, such as the EU Climate Adaptation Mission, Horizon Europe clusters, and the Climate Pact Ambassadors scheme, all governance bodies, advisory councils, expert groups and delegations related to climate change, environment and green transition.
- The EU **should set primarily targets for women's representation in male-dominated climate, energy, sustainability areas (even "brown sectors") and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) sectors.** This can be supported through incentives for companies promoting women and EU-funded vocational training/reskilling programs. EIGE could monitor progress and share best practices.
- In parallel, the EU should **promote women's leadership in climate governance**, using accurate data such as the European Investment Bank's (EIB) report⁴ which reveals that over half of European firms are investing in climate action and that "women-led firms achieve great environmental, social and governance scores".

Civil society's participation in climate governance

- EU programmes should further **strengthen cooperation with grassroots women's organisations**, recognising their contribution to generating gender-sensitive evidence and implementing inclusive, community-based climate solutions.
- To ensure that citizens and civil society have a meaningful voice, the European Commission should strengthen existing dialogue platforms and

⁴ EIB survey: Evidence for why it makes sense to support female entrepreneurs in Europe, 2 November 2022

go beyond traditional public consultation processes. Regular, direct, and transparent engagement with EU institutions and national authorities should be organised with relevant civil society representatives.

- The EU must invest in **an inclusive communication strategy**, to inform citizens about climate information and policies, that established accessible communication channels, provides translation, sign language interpretation, summaries of legal texts and accessible digital content, including for people with disabilities.
- The European Commission should also develop a **European Civil Society Gender and Climate Action plan** and coordinate NGOs and women groups to draft a shadow report that can serve as a benchmark for EU policy.



FINANCING, EMPLOYMENT & THE GREEN ECONOMY

Gender-Responsive Financing and Budgeting

- EWL advocates for **gender budgeting** and calls on the EU and Member States to uphold their duty to promote gender equality in all policies, including budgets, funds and investments including through the EIB⁵.
- EWL urges the EU to **make gender budgeting mandatory across all EU climate financing mechanisms**, including a dedicated budget line in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for gender equality and feminist climate action.
- EU funding programmes should include **a gender marker system in EU spending**, similar to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee⁶ (DAC) gender markers, with annual reporting to the European Parliament and the Council.
- **Funding processes should be accessible, with pre-financing or direct upfront support and simplified application procedures**, particularly for low-income households and vulnerable communities, to ensure equity in access to climate funds (e.g., Social Climate Fund⁷, Just Transition Fund⁸, Cohesion Funds⁹).

⁵ See EIB: Gender equality and women's economic empowerment

⁶ <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/gender-and-development.html>

⁷ Regulation (EU) 2023/955 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 establishing a Social Climate Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1060

⁸ Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund

⁹ Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund

- **All EU green funding programmes should include clauses on equal pay for equal work or work of equal value and decent working conditions.** Access to reskilling and new green skills should prioritise women through 50/50 representation rules, scholarships, and targeted training.
- Dedicated research on **the impacts of climate change on women's health across the lifecycle**, including reproductive health and energy poverty, should be prioritised and funded through EU programmes such as Horizon Europe, CERV, and ESF+. This research should inform evidence-based policy measures to protect and promote women's health in the context of the green and just transition.

Support for women-led initiatives

- **Dedicated EU funding lines** (e.g., Just Transition Fund, InvestEU, CERV, LIFE) **should support women-led initiatives**, including small organisations and local projects, with particular attention to rural areas and village revitalisation efforts.
- EWL recommends creating **multiannual operational grants** under the CERV and LIFE programmes, as well as establishing a dedicated fund to provide rapid support and protection for women human rights defenders and their initiatives.
- EU programmes should fund mentorship, leadership, and capacity-building schemes for women in green sectors and community-led environmental initiatives.
- EU funding programmes should include resources for research on climate change solutions and their impacts on different groups, including marginalised women.

Care economy

- **Climate change and care work are deeply intertwined, although they remain treated as separate issues.** When climate change impacts grow and intensify, individuals' basic needs become harder to meet, and they create more care work automatically. This extra burden does not fall evenly and is disproportionately carried by women, lower-income households and communities in more exposed regions.

- **Funding instruments supporting the green and just transitions must explicitly allocate resources to the care economy including social infrastructure, childcare, elder care.** Recognising care as essential, low-carbon work crucial for social resilience is vital for a just transition that values work traditionally undertaken by women.
- The EU should develop **gender- and care-sensitive tax reforms, discouraging carbon-intensive production and incentivise life-sustaining sectors** such as education, health, food sovereignty, and community services.
- EWL calls on the EU to explicitly **link climate adaptation to social protection within the European Pillar of Social Rights and the European Social Fund+ (ESF+)**, ensuring socioeconomic and health security during the green transition.

Transparency and accountability

- EU programmes should make funding information accessible and application processes **feasible for all**, including marginalised women and women from diverse backgrounds.
- **A public EU database on gender-responsive climate finance** should be created, listing supported projects and specifying their gender impact ratings.



EDUCATION & TRAINING

- The EU should support Member States in producing **accessible educational materials on climate policy and gender mainstreaming**.
- EU-supported climate education and participation initiatives should take into account **the mental health impacts of climate change**, including climate anxiety, particularly among young women
- The European Education Area (EEA) and Erasmus+ should **promote education for sustainability and equality across curricula**, offering targeted scholarships for women and girls in STEM, climate policies, energy, and sustainability fields.
- The EU should launch **EU-wide literacy and awareness campaigns on gender and climate justice**, highlighting women's leadership in climate action and promoting regenerative consumption. Such campaigns should be coordinated by the European Commission and supported by Erasmus+, CERV and ESF+ and should include financial incentives for intergenerational participation.
- The EU should support dedicated training and awareness-raising **for women leaders and in climate governance, including at local levels**.
- The EU should also establish and enforce guidelines for **big tech companies** on monitoring and moderating misinformation across social media and content production platforms, recognising that emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), can play either a positive or negative role in the creation and dissemination of information on gender equality and climate policy. They should be held accountable and share responsibility with citizens, who are asked by the government to make individual efforts to reduce their energy consumption.



MONITORING & EVALUATION

- The EU should develop **sex-disaggregated data collection processes and gender-sensitive indicators for all climate policies**. These should include care economy metrics, such as time use and unpaid care, and be integrated into national monitoring frameworks and European Semester reporting.
- **Sex-disaggregated environmental data should be integrated into the European Climate and Environment Data Portal, as well as Eurostat databases**. The European Commission could mandate EIGE to implement and coordinate an **EU Observatory on Gender and Climate** to ensure comparable indicators across Member States, building on EIGE's Gender Equality Index methodology.
- Based on the data, the European Commission should publish an **EU Women and Climate Annual Report**, reviewed by the European Parliament, ensuring transparency, comparability, and accountability across Member States and enabling structured civil society oversight.
- The **European Commission should establish a permanent inter-service body** bringing together relevant Directorates-General to ensure policy coherence and integrate social and health considerations from the earliest stages of policymaking. This body should oversee the implementation and follow-up of gender impact assessments, ensuring that their findings meaningfully inform policy design rather than being treated as a procedural formality. Its work should be overseen by the European Parliament.
- The European Commission should introduce **an inter-institutional dialogue with the European Parliament** (similar to the one on budgetary affairs) and annual public hearings on women and climate.



The European Women's Lobby warmly thanks all the organisations, experts and participants who contributed to the "Women in Climate" project over the past two years.

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At a time of growing backlash against both gender equality and ambitious climate action, we hope these recommendations contribute to a more just, inclusive and sustainable future.

Because a just transition cannot happen without women.



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