

# Mainstreaming Gender and Climate Change to Achieve a Just Transition to a Climate-Neutral Europe

GILL ALLWOOD

Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham

In November 2019 the European Parliament (2019/2930(RSP)) declared a climate and environmental emergency, calling for urgent and concrete action. The year 2019 was Europe's hottest year on record (Copernicus Climate Change Service, 2019), and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018, p. v) reported that 'emissions of greenhouse gases due to human activities, the root cause of global warming, continue to increase, year after year'. Swedish teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg inspired and led a worldwide school strike movement, and mass protests dominated by young women took place around the world (Wahlström *et al.*, 2019). The European Parliament resolution of 14 March 2019 (2019/2582(RSP)) 'welcomes the fact that people across Europe, in particular younger generations, are becoming increasingly active in demonstrating for climate justice'. At the institutional level 2019 was a year of renewal, with the European Parliament elections in May, the adoption of a new Council strategy in June and the appointment of a new Commission in December. Climate change was a priority for all these institutional actors. The Council strategy 2019–24, for example, insists on the urgent need to build a 'climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe'. The new President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen announced her intention to see Europe become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

Climate change arrived on the EU agenda in the 1980s, emerging out of environmental policy, which was already established as an area that required transnational action. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s the climate ambition of the EU exceeded its ability to agree on, and implement, effective actions (Dupont and Oberthür, 2015). When the USA withdrew from the Kyoto protocol in 2001 the EU took on a global leadership role and has continued to construct an identity as a global actor around the issue of climate change (Jordan *et al.*, 2010). This had economic motivations (to avoid being undercut by exporters with lower environmental standards) but was also part of the post-Maastricht efforts to increase the EU's global actorness. The past decade has seen climate change gain prominence and take centre stage. In 2009 the landmark climate and energy framework (COM(2014)15 final) introduced targets for greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency and renewable energy. Within the European Commission climate action gained its own Directorate General, DG CLIMA. This was an important part of the process of institutionalizing climate change. The issue of climate change continued to rise up the EU and the global agenda, and there was a strong dynamic between the two. The Lisbon Treaty (2007) gave the EU competence to conclude international environmental agreements. The EU, along with its member states, is a party to the United Nations

Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and plays a key role in trying to reach agreement on global targets (Biedenkopf and Dupont, 2013; Oberthür and Groen, 2018).

It is in this context that the EU emerged as an influential player in the 2015 Paris Agreement, the first climate agreement to be universal and legally binding. International targets and monitoring and reporting have acted as an impetus for action on the part of the EU and many, although not all, its member states (Dupont, 2019). The European Green Deal (2019), drafted against the background of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018) report on the predicted impact of a global temperature rise of 1.5°C, further highlights the way that the issue of climate change has become part of the institutional fabric of the EU. Reinforcing the EU's commitments under the Paris agreement, as well as the UN's 2030 Agenda, with its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015), it provides a framework in which the EU can try to assert leadership and mould its own efforts towards a sustainability that 'leaves no-one behind'. The Council's conclusions on climate diplomacy of 18 February 2019 describe 2019 as the year of pushing further convergence between the SDGs and the climate agenda.

The initial focus of EU climate policy was climate change mitigation. This refers to strategies for reducing climate change, largely through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Key policy frameworks are the Climate and energy package and the Environmental Action Programme, which provides an overarching framework for all environmental and climate policy. The European Green Deal (COM(2019)640 final), proposed by the new Commission in 2019, sets out a strategy to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 while sustaining economic growth, and promises to enshrine this in legislation, with the first climate laws due to be proposed in 2020.

Since 2013, internal EU climate policy has also included an adaptation strategy, in recognition of the fact that climate change is having an impact within the EU, as well as, more obviously, elsewhere. While climate change mitigation is more readily framed as an issue to be dealt with at the EU level, adaptation to the effects of climate change appeared, until recently, to require local responses or to be of concern only in the countries that are most severely hit by the impact of climate change, and are concentrated in the global south. The floods and heat waves of the early 2000s raised awareness of the impact of climate change within the EU and of its cross-border nature (Rayner and Jordan, 2010), prompting the adoption of an EU adaptation strategy (COM(2013)216). Member states are encouraged to produce national adaptation strategies, setting out, for example, how they will climate-proof their transport, energy and agriculture sectors, and protect their populations from flooding, droughts and heat waves.

Adaptation has a longer history as part of EU external relations. The visible impact of climate change in developing countries, and the use of development aid for adaptation purposes, mean that climate change has been prominent in EU development policy. A Commission communication in 2003 (COM(2003)85 final) declared that climate change was a problem for development, as well as an environmental problem. Since the Lisbon treaty (2007), however, climate change has been substantially reframed on the external agenda, replacing a development frame with one much more closely related to migration and security (Youngs, 2014). Development policy is expected to align with the Union's strategic priorities, set out in the Global Strategy (2016), which is the overarching statement of EU foreign policy and that frames climate change as a security threat and a root cause of migration (Global Strategy, 2016, p. 27).

This article will focus on two aspects of recent EU climate policy. The first is not new, but is important. It is the recognition that climate change, like other cross-cutting issues, cannot be addressed in isolation. It is inextricably connected to key areas of EU activity, including energy, transport and agriculture. Climate objectives need to be integrated into all areas of policymaking. This is referred to as climate mainstreaming and has been embraced by EU policymakers as a desirable practice. It has obvious parallels with gender mainstreaming, but, as this article shows, is itself gender blind, and this is problematic. The second aspect of recent EU climate policy on which this article focuses is new. It is the growing presence of statements about the need for a 'just transition' to a climate-neutral economy, one which 'puts people first' and ensures that 'no-one is left behind'. I argue that embedding a gender lens in these two aspects of EU climate policy makes a valuable contribution to efforts to create a sustainable and just future.

## I. What Does Gender Have to Do with Climate Change?

On the surface, it may seem that climate change affects everyone equally. As British Conservative MEP and member of the European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, Marina Yannakoudakis, said, 'The climate is the same for males and females, so far as I know. When it rains we all get wet' (BBC News, 2012). However, gender, development and environment scholars have produced a large volume of literature demonstrating that climate change is, indeed, gendered. The early contributions to this literature argued that structural inequalities in the global political economy and within societies increase women's vulnerability to the impact of climate change (Agrawala and Crick, 2009; Alston, 2013; Brody *et al.*, 2008; Skinner, 2011). They argued that climate change has a particularly detrimental effect on the poorest countries and, within them, on the poorest parts of the population. As women constitute a large proportion of the poorest in society, they will be amongst the hardest hit and the least well positioned socially, legally and economically, to respond (Morrow, 2017). There is evidence to support the argument that women's vulnerability to the effects of climate change is increased in relation to men's by their relative disadvantage in terms of access to resources, land ownership, education and caring responsibilities (Dankelman, 2010). However, there is also a crucial insistence in the literature that women cannot be perceived as helpless victims of climate change (MacGregor, 2017).

A second strand of the early gender and climate change literature emphasized women's agency and specific skills and knowledge which, it was argued, made them potentially useful actors in climate change adaptation. As food producers, for example, they were well placed to adapt agricultural techniques to changing environmental conditions. It was also argued that, as energy users in the home, they could play a role in climate change mitigation by adopting new forms of cooking stoves, for example. The gendered impact of climate change and women's role as climate actors are not confined to the global south, and researchers have demonstrated these links in rich industrialized countries, including EU member states (Tschakert and Machado, 2012, p. 278). They have shown that there are gendered differences in the causes of climate change, including transport and energy use. They have exposed gendered differences in vulnerability to the effects of climate events, such as heat waves and floods, and they have discovered gendered differences

in attitudes towards climate change and towards the need to adopt mitigation and adaptation measures.

Drawing on Buckingham and Le Masson (2017, pp. 2–3), gender is understood here to ‘comprise relations between women and men, and between and among different groups of women and men, not to mention between different conceptualisations of masculinity and femininity, which can each be practised by either, and both, women and men’. Gender inequalities intersect with other structural inequalities including class, race/ethnicity, physical ability, sexuality, region and age (Collins and Bilge, 2016). Gender is one of many axes of power that have an impact on the lives of groups and individuals. Its pervasiveness as a marker of difference and inequality makes it worthy of attention, in its intersections with other structural inequalities.

An intersectional analytical lens has been used by feminist scholars to make important contributions to our understanding of the impact of climate change and responses to it (Djoudi *et al.*, 2016; Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014; MacGregor, 2014; Nagel, 2012, 2016; Sultana, 2014; Tschakert and Machado, 2012). Intersectionality can help us understand individual and group-based differences in relation to climate change. Rather than designating women as vulnerable victims of climate change, an intersectional approach demonstrates that social structures based on characteristics such as gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, nationality, health, sexual orientation, age and place influence the responsibility, vulnerability and decision-making power of individuals and groups. For example, research on Sweden and the EU (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014; Kronsell, 2013; Magnúsdóttir and Kronsell, 2016) shows that there are gendered differences in energy consumption and transportation, but that gender is not the only relevant factor. Class sometimes matters more than gender; women are not a homogenous group and there are considerable differences within the global north and the global south. Magnúsdóttir and Kronsell (2016, p. 66), for example, argue that, ‘Well-educated, female climate experts most likely have less in common with low-income working class women across Europe than with their male colleagues at the Commission and this applies to their climate impact as well as climate vulnerability’. An intersectional approach leads us to ask which inequalities matter in each case (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014, p. 422).

Scholars and activists have pointed out that women’s presence in climate decision-making is poor, and some have called for this to be rectified (Women’s Environment and Development Organization, 2018). There is some evidence that women in climate decision-making make a difference. For example, Magnúsdóttir and Kronsell (2015) show that carbon emissions are lower in countries where women have higher political status. These findings support the argument that women should be included in climate decision-making because they bring different perspectives, knowledge and experience, which would lead to different policy outputs.

However, not all agree that there is a direct positive correlation between the presence of women in climate decision-making and gender-sensitive policy outputs. In a later study, Magnúsdóttir and Kronsell (2016) find that a critical mass of women policymakers does not automatically result in gender-sensitive climate policy. Their study finds that, even in the most gender-sensitive European countries, gender differences in material conditions and in attitudes towards climate issues were completely invisible and excluded from climate policy texts. Policy-makers were largely unaware of the relevance of gender differences and how to consider them in relation to climate policymaking, regardless of

the gender balance of the institutions where climate policy is made (Kronsell, 2015, p. 77). This is not to say that women and men should not be equally represented in all sites of decision-making, but this would be on grounds of equality and justice, rather than substantive policy change. This is part of a much larger feminist debate on the extent to which women in decision-making make a difference to gendered outcomes (Franceschet *et al.*, 2012).

In summary, climate change is gendered, as a result of the deeply entrenched gender inequalities that exist in all societies. Policies that ignore gender inequalities risk perpetuating or even exacerbating them. Feminist international relations scholar, Cynthia Enloe, never ceases to encourage us to 'ask the gender question' (2004, p. 94). This does not mean simply looking at women. It means asking which women (and which men)? Which differences make a difference? We need to investigate and address gender inequalities in relation to climate change that can often leave women more vulnerable to its impact without suggesting that this vulnerability is innate or the same for all women. Taking a gender lens to climate change enables us to ask where and how gender matters. This is a first step to achieving gender justice in relation to climate change.

## II. Mainstreaming Climate Change, Mainstreaming Gender

There is a long-standing and widespread recognition in EU policymaking that some objectives cannot be reached by treating them as stand-alone goals, but that they need to be woven into all areas, and at all stages, of decision-making. Gender mainstreaming and environmental policy integration are two examples of this and both are treaty-based obligations. This means that gender equality and environmental objectives must be 'mainstreamed' or 'integrated' into all areas of EU policymaking, including sectors where they are not immediately obvious. In the case of gender equality, for example, this might include foreign and security, agriculture or industry. Mainstreaming also requires that the cross-cutting issue (gender or environment) be considered at all stages of the policymaking process, from definition of the issue and problem framing to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Calls for climate mainstreaming are increasingly common in EU policy documents (Dupont, 2016).

There is an extensive body of literature on gender mainstreaming, and much of it focuses on why mainstreaming has failed to realize its radical potential (Allwood, 2013; Guerrina and Wright, 2016; Rao *et al.*, 2016). Many authors draw attention to the contradiction between gender mainstreaming as a transformative, agenda-setting idea with radical feminist potential and gender mainstreaming as an integrationist policy practice (Arora-Jonsson and Sijapati, 2018; Chappell and Guerrina, 2020, p. 17; Porter and Sweetman, 2005).

In its integrationist form, gender mainstreaming is incorporated as a policy tool into structures, processes and norms that remain otherwise unchanged. 'Gender' in this form of gender mainstreaming lacks the meanings it carries in feminist and gender theory, in particular its underlying conceptions of power and intersecting inequalities (Zalewski, 2010). Instead, it refers to undifferentiated categories of men and women, and is often shorthand for policies targeted at women or is an excuse to discontinue such policies (Stratigaki, 2005). The integrationist form often consists of a set of tools and procedures, along with detailed instructions for their implementation and for the

measurement of their success (Meier and Celis, 2011; Woodward, 2008), hence the frequent assertion that gender mainstreaming has become a box-ticking exercise, devoid of any substantive content (Rao *et al.*, 2016, pp. 76–7).

The transformative form, in contrast, has its roots in feminist theories of gender and was originally proposed as a way of radically transforming policy approaches to gender inequalities. Instead of addressing gender inequality as a separate policy issue, gender mainstreaming brought a commitment to achieving gender equality in all policy areas, including those previously perceived to be gender neutral. It aimed to address gender at all stages of policymaking, so that policies would be designed with the goal of gender equality already contained within them, rather than remedial action being taken once they had already been formulated or implemented (Acker, 1990; Connell, 2006; Daly, 2005).

Studies of gender mainstreaming and other forms of policy coordination, including climate mainstreaming, have identified obstacles to their success (De Roeck *et al.*, 2018). Kok and de Coninck's (2007) study of climate change mainstreaming, for example, shows that organisational structures were not designed for cooperation, coordination and joint decision-making on different levels. There are power imbalances among Commission DGs; different configurations of the Council of Ministers and among the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission. The European Parliament, and in particular its various committees on the environment, development and gender equality, have together been increasingly active in advocating the mainstreaming of these issues throughout all European Parliament decision-making, but the Parliament can be squeezed out of forms of decision-making dominated by intergovernmentalism, and this applies to most of the Union's climate change policies. Power imbalances and inter-institutional rivalries make it difficult for issues such as environmental protection to impinge on policies shored up by powerful economic interests such as trade and agriculture. Gupta and van der Grijp (2010) specifically identify institutional resistance, often based on powerful economic interests, as the main obstacle to mainstreaming climate change. Specifically, mainstreaming this cross-cutting issue is seen as threatening the status quo and unsettling the vested interests of industry and the energy lobby. Resistance is therefore strong. Any policy competition or struggle for scarce resources will expose these imbalances, and rhetorical commitment to mainstreaming may lack underlying substance, particularly in times of economic crisis.

Mainstreaming is widely embraced in EU policy documents and has grown to encompass a range of new imperatives, from climate change to migration and security. There are also calls for these cross-cutting issues to be mainstreamed in combination, and not just singly. EU policy documents increasingly use the term 'nexus' to describe the intersection between two or more policy areas (Carbone, 2013; De Roeck *et al.*, 2018; Furness and Gänzle, 2017; Lavenex and Kunz, 2009). Climate change is placed in a series of nexuses, including climate security and climate migration. The Council conclusions on climate diplomacy of 26 February 2018 'resolve [...] to further mainstream the nexus between climate change and security in political dialogue, conflict prevention, development and humanitarian action and disaster risk strategies'. While this statement is an important recognition that policy issues are intersecting and cannot be addressed in isolation from each other, it raises substantial questions about how gender can be mainstreamed throughout other cross-cutting issues. Not only are climate change, migration and other cross-cutting issues to be mainstreamed, but so must be the nexus between them. This

raises questions about the practicalities of addressing complex webs of intersecting issues, especially when some of them are accorded priority status. It also creates a context in which the mainstreaming of gender becomes even more challenging (Allwood, 2019). The literature on horizontal policy coordination and policy nexuses suggests that successful policy coherence requires a strong, shared vision that acts as a strategic goal and maintains focus on the objective, and not on the procedural tools and instruments.

The substantial literature shows that, despite repeated rhetorical commitments by EU actors, gender mainstreaming is still absent from key policy areas and is often treated as procedural, rather than substantive (Meier and Celis, 2011). From the literature on nexuses and policy integration, environmental policy integration and gender mainstreaming, we know that institutional power relations persist and the more powerful actors can ensure that mainstreaming or policy integration acts in their favour. Power relations between the policymaking institutions give precedence to certain policy objectives, whether economic competitiveness or security. As policymakers increasingly refer to cross-cutting issues and to policy nexuses, we need a way to understand and improve how they intersect.

### III. Gender and EU Climate Policy

Taking a gender lens to EU climate policy reveals, firstly, that much of it remains resolutely gender blind. The European Green Deal (COM(2019)640 final) makes no mention of gender/women/men (although it states that the SDGs will be at the heart of the EU's policymaking action); the climate and energy framework (COM(2014)15 final) makes no mention of gender/women/men; A Clean Planet for All (COM(2018)773 final) makes no mention of gender/women/men; the Environmental Action Programme (1386/2014/EU) makes one mention of pregnant women as a vulnerable group. This is despite the fact that gender mainstreaming is a treaty obligation; that a framework for EU gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming is set out in the Gender Equality Strategy (COM(2020)152 final) and a framework for integrating gender equality into all external action is set out in the Gender Action Plan (GAP II); and that the EU is committed to the SDGs (2015) and to the UNFCCC's Gender Action Plan (2019).

Impact assessments are a tool to consider the potential impact of proposed actions and are a key component of the EU's gender mainstreaming toolkit. The Commission's impact assessments incorporate three dimensions: the potential economic, social and environmental consequences of the proposed initiative. Gender-related impacts are addressed under social issues. According to the EC guidance on social impact assessment, the following questions have to be asked: does the option have a different impact on women and men? Does the option promote equality between women and men? (EIGE, 2017). However, impact assessments are not always carried out, and when they are gender is often ignored. For example, the impact assessment accompanying the Environmental Action Programme (SWD/2012/0398) does not contain a single reference to gender, nor does the in-depth analysis (2018) accompanying the Commission communication 'A Clean Planet for All', or the impact assessment (SWD(2014) 15 final) accompanying the climate and energy framework proposal.

Elements of gender awareness in relation to climate change exist in fragments of EU policy, but they lack coherence. The Gender Equality Strategy 2020–5 has a short section on climate change that points out some of the ways in which climate change is gendered

and states that, ‘addressing the gender dimension can therefore have a key role in leveraging the full potential of these policies’, but it gives no detail about how this will be done. GAPII refers to climate issues twice, both in relation to women’s participation in climate decision-making. However, the relevant objective, ‘Equal rights enjoyed by women to participate in and influence decision-making processes on climate and environmental issues’, is the one least often included in the implementation reports submitted to the European Commission by the EU Delegations, member state governments and the European external action service.

EU institutions still tend to frame gender equality as ‘equality between men and women’, ignoring the heterogeneity of these two categories, the power relations within, as well as between, them, and the intersection of other structural inequalities with gender. There are institutional pockets in which a more nuanced gender analysis emerges. The Gender Equality Strategy (2020–5) makes some move away from a focus on equality between women and men. It states that the Gender Equality Strategy will aim to achieve ‘a Europe where women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are equal [...] The Commission will enhance gender mainstreaming by systematically including a gender perspective in all stages of policy design in all EU policy areas, internal and external. The Strategy will be implemented using intersectionality as a cross-cutting principle’ (p. 2). Although there is no detail about how this will be done, the recognition of intersectionality is an important step away from equating gender equality solely with a men-women binary.

The only EU institution that has paid significant attention to the relation between gender and climate change is the European Parliament, which has produced a number of relevant reports and resolutions. Some focus solely on women and adaptation in the global south (2018/2086(INI)), but others contain sophisticated gender analyses of climate issues and responses (2012/2197(INI)). For example, the European Parliament resolution of 20 April 2012 (2012/2197(INI)), based on a report by the French Green MEP, Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, states that ‘there will not be any climate justice without true gender equality’. This is a stark declaration of the inseparable nature of gender justice and climate justice. It predates the SDGs, but shares with them the insistence that a sustainable future requires inequalities to be addressed in synergy. The resolution does not call simply for the numerical presence of women in climate decision-making, but for the inclusion at all levels of decision-making of ‘gender equality and gender justice objectives in policies, action plans and other measures’, for systematic gender analyses, and for the inclusion of gender equality principles at all stages of climate change negotiation.

The European Parliament motion for a resolution on the European Green Deal (2019/2956(RSP)), put forward by Bas Eickhout on behalf of the Greens–European Free Alliance group, ‘Deplores the lack of gender perspective, actions and goals in the European Green Deal Communication and urges the European Commission to include gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive climate and environmental action at all levels; calls on the Commission to deliver on the commitment made by President von der Leyen to promote gender equality in all policy making and on the proposals made by Vice-President Timmermans to pursue a “twin-track approach on gender and climate change” and “take measures to redress gender and climate issues into all aspects of European development policy” (para. 12). It also ‘calls on the European Commission to implement systematic gender impact assessments and allocate specific funds for gender equality in relevant climate actions and policies of the European Green Deal’ (para. 120).



The text that was finally adopted by the European Parliament as its resolution of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal (2019/2956(RSP)) lost some of this wording, but still ‘emphasises the need for a gender perspective on actions and goals in the Green Deal, including gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive actions’ (para. 6). The adopted text also included the following paragraph from the original motion: ‘113. Calls on the Commission in its efforts to promote the EU as leader of international climate and biodiversity negotiations to design a concrete action plan to deliver on the commitments of the renewed five-year Gender Action Plan agreed at COP25 (Enhanced Lima work programme), to promote gender equality in the UNFCCC process, and to appoint a permanent EU gender and climate change focal point, with sufficient budget resources, to implement and monitor gender-responsible climate action in the EU and globally’, perhaps confirming Woodward and Van der Vleuten’s (2014) argument that gender equality is less contentious when it applies outside the EU.

In summary, there is no evidence of systematic gender mainstreaming of EU climate change policy. Climate change is framed as a technical and market problem, or as one that is deeply entwined with foreign and security strategic priorities. These frames do not invite obvious links to people-centred solutions, which could favour a gendered approach (Allwood, 2014, p. 9). The European Parliament’s efforts to integrate gender into climate change make an important contribution to policy debates, but climate decision-making has remained largely within the remit of the Council, which articulates a gender-sensitive approach to climate change only on the rare occasions when a Danish or Swedish presidency is able to exert influence.

An important additional obstacle to the mainstreaming of gender throughout climate policy is that climate change is constructed as a cross-cutting issue in itself and is situated in a series of nexuses with strategic priorities, such as migration and security. This contributes to the exclusion of gender equality from climate policy. The gender mainstreaming and policy coordination literature shows that overcoming this obstacle requires focusing on the objective of gender equality, rather than the process of gender mainstreaming, and recognizing that the goals of gender equality and climate justice are inseparable.

#### **IV. A Just Transition to a Climate-neutral Future**

EU institutions have adopted the rhetoric of a ‘just transition’ which ‘leaves no-one behind’. The European Green Deal (2019) states that the transition to a climate-neutral future ‘must be just and inclusive. It must put people first’. The idea of a just transition comes from North American trade unions concerned with protecting workers in carbon-intensive sectors. Trade unions and environmental organizations lobbied hard to insert a reference to the just transition in the Paris Agreement, which now acknowledges ‘the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined priorities’. The European Parliament resolution on a climate and environmental emergency states that ‘action [...] must be accompanied by strong social and inclusive measures to ensure a fair and equitable transition’. References to a just transition do not always provide any detail about what this means, however, and in EU climate policy documents the term often refers to addressing regional disparities, for example, between areas that produce coal and those that do not. Combined with the SDG rhetoric of ‘leaving no-one behind’, the notion of a just transition

is being used by civil society actors and by the European Parliament to build an inclusive approach to the creation of a sustainable future. This marks a change from the approach to climate action which focused on market and technological solutions to one that also recognizes some of the social implications of climate change and of climate action.

EU policy documents call for climate change to be mainstreamed throughout all EU activities. The European Parliament resolution of 14 March 2019 ‘stresses the need to mainstream climate ambition into all EU policies, including trade policy’. The Council conclusions of 4 October 2019 ‘[u]nderline the systemic nature of Europe’s climate and environmental challenges’ and stress ‘the need to prioritise actions for the green transition that is just and is better integrating environment and climate aspects into the design of the EU’s social, economic, and financial policies’.

This growing call for climate mainstreaming contributes to the increase in references to cross-cutting issues, nexuses and policy integration, coherence and coordination in EU policy documents. Policy integration is at the core of the SDGs, which recognize the important connections between policy sectors and objectives. Agenda 2030 states that gender equality is a prerequisite for sustainable development. The SDGs have an overarching pledge to the ‘systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agenda’ (2015, para. 20). However, at the same time, the SDGs separate gender (SDG 5) and climate change (SDG 13). EU reports on SDG progress show this split, with the reports on progress on SDG 13 remaining gender blind. The potential for the successful integration of climate change and gender equality has therefore not yet been realized.

## Conclusion

What can a gender perspective bring to the analysis of EU climate policy? The effects of climate change are not the same for everyone. Existing inequalities affect the impact of climate change and the ability to respond to it. Measures introduced to reduce climate change or to adapt to it also have different effects on people, according to their gender, class, wealth, ethnicity, physical ability and other structural inequalities. There are gender differences in the production of climate change, in attitudes towards it, and in access to climate decision-making.

Feminist studies of gender mainstreaming have investigated the gaps between rhetoric and reality. They have shown how gender evaporates before it reaches the ground and have argued that a stated commitment to gender equality is often no more than symbolic (Longwe, 1997). In a crisis, gender issues are always pushed to the bottom of the agenda (Allwood, 2019; Muehlenhoff *et al.*, 2020). But gender equality – and justice more broadly – cannot be left until after the crisis is resolved. It is not an add-on or an afterthought, but essential to creating a sustainable future for all (Cavaghan and O’Dwyer, 2018, pp. 104–5).

EU climate policy is edging away from an exclusive focus on technological solutions towards a recognition that climate change affects people, and that people are part of the solution. However, integrating diversity and intersectionality into the analysis of climate change and proposed responses to it is still a marginal concern. Efforts to address gender inequality and efforts to address climate change continue to exist in parallel, rather than being fully integrated into each other. Gender equality is not integrated into all aspects of decision-making and at all stages. Instead, it is tagged on or mentioned in separate

documents and debates, in what Acosta *et al.* (2019, p. 15) refer to as a ‘stale reproduction of set pieces of text [pointing to] significant levels of inertia in thinking and practice around gender mainstreaming issues’.

The Council conclusions 6153/19 on climate diplomacy describe 2019 as the year of pushing further convergence between the SDGs and climate agendas (2019). A successful integration of these two agendas would make a substantial contribution to a gender-and climate-just future, but again, this requires strong political will and effective policy coherence.

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