

# The Gender Dimension in Urban Air Quality



**Theodora Slini**

*Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece*

**Fotini-Niovi Pavlidou**

*Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece*

## INTRODUCTION

In the light of several reports (IPCC, 2001; UNDP, 2007), it is evident that human contribution in global warming and climate change can be attributed differently between genders. Within the developed societies female's contribution tends to be less than male's on average, due to different social roles but also to different environmental consciousness and behaviour. E.g. women have different consumption habits (use of public transport, walking or cycling trips) and are more likely to support greenhouse gas emissions reduction policies related (support of recycling and energy efficiency initiatives). In Europe, direct and indirect energy consumption tends to be higher among male than female inhabitants a fact that is independent of income and age, approximately 39% higher in Germany and 22% higher in Sweden (genderSTE, 2014). Worldwide, it is declared that money paid to females is more mainly consumed on family needs, e.g. food and clothing, while money paid to males is more likely to be consumed on leisure, energy-intensive goods that cause high emissions. Thus, a greater proportion of an average man's carbon footprint is due to leisure than an average woman's (Druckman et al., 2012). Last but not least, women are more sensitive to extreme weather conditions, such as floods and heatwaves and more likely to experience fuel poverty due to income inequalities (Fouillet et al., 2007).

At the same time, the global economic system is male dominated and while women have an increasingly significant role in the economic system that led to global warming, they are underrepresented in the decision making, industries and organisations focused in the environmental (climate change, transport and energy) sector. Female often surpass the male participation in voluntary environmental campaigning actions, accounting for approximately two thirds in Europe (WEN, 2010). The average proportion of women in national ministries responsible for the environment, transport and energy, by level of authority in the EU-27 is extremely low, reaching the 25.6% in 2012 according to data generated from the European Institute for Gender Equality. The aim of the current study is to review the current conditions in Europe and Greece and identify the gaps, if any, of women's involvement in climate change and global warming decision making.

## BACKGROUND

### Gender Priorities in the European Union

Climate change affects both women's and men's living conditions, welfare and wellbeing, however due to gender roles, women do not affect the environment in the same way as men, and in many

countries women's access to resources, and hence their opportunities to manage conditions and adapt are quite limited.

At the same time, environmental policies are characterized by lack of sensitivity to women's different economic and social status and needs, having as a result women to be directly and disproportionately affected from environmental degradation. While consumption and lifestyle patterns still differ between two genders, with women to consume less and being more environmentally conscious, "women are clearly under-represented in environmental negotiations, budget deliberations and decisions on achieving a green, sustainable economy" (EC, 2012). According to 'Gender aspects of the economic downturn and financial crisis European Parliament resolution of 17 June 2010 on gender aspects of the economic downturn and financial crisis (2009/2204(INI))', the European Parliament "urges the need to encourage women in local entrepreneurial initiatives in green economy". The European Parliament (2012) resolution of 11 September 2012 'on the role of women in the green economy (2012/2035(INI))' "calls on the Commission and the Member State to introduce gender equality into all environmental policy areas" and introduce gender equality into all environmental policy areas, and at all levels of economic decision-making. On 14 November 2012 the European Commission published its proposal for a Gender Diversity Directive for improving gender balance on company boards, obliging companies with less than 40% of women non-executive directors to make significant efforts to make appointments in the next seven years to reach this target.

Furthermore, the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'The gender dimension in the Europe 2020 Strategy' 2013/C 76/02 (EU Legislation, 2013), the Commission is "highlighting the essential role played by women in sustainable development, while "women can have a key influence on decision-making concerning the environment, particularly with regard to climate change policy. This is a new opportunity

for women, who can play a key role and improve their personal and financial situation by getting involved with the new and emerging green economy, which is a crucial sector for development and job creation". After all "women's activism was critical in getting the conversation started," according to historian David Stradling, author of "Smokestacks and Progressives: Environmentalists, Engineers and Air Quality in America, 1881-1951."

In response to these requirements a gender perspective is a critical assumption towards a sustainable environment and a green economy in terms of the ecosystem, consumption, food, growth, transport, energy and citizen welfare.

## **Gender Priorities in Greece**

According to the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) for 2014-2020, the main tools for the implementation of gender policy will be integration of equal opportunities between men and women in all institutions, policies and actions (gender mainstreaming) and the assumption of certain specific activities in the following areas:

- Equal participation women in the labor market,
- The participation of women outdoor activities aimed at local development,
- Promotion of inclusion of women, prevention and control of female poverty and all forms of gender-based violence,
- Mainstreaming of gender issues in social protection and health,
- Support family,
- Equal participation of women in public life and processes of political, technological, social and economic decisions
- Combat discrimination based on sex and gender stereotypes and
- The integration of gender equality in public policies, monitoring and evaluation.

However, the Greek Legislation does not include the gender perspective as a critical parameter

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