Gender and the Climate Change: a focus for Europe in 2012

Public Hearing on ‘Women and Climate Change’
European Parliament
Committee of Women’s Rights and Gender Equality
11 October 2011

Ioana Borza, Gender expert
European Institute for Gender Equality
Gender and the climate change: a focus for Europe in 2012


Main findings of the literature review on gender and climate change (2011)
The Study on the area K of BPfA

Aims

To report on the current situation in implementing the first objective of the area K: Women and the Environment of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) at the EU and the Member States’ level and

To introduce indicators for monitoring the mentioned objective of this area for the EU
The Study on the area K of BPfA

Objectives

To produce a literature review on gender and climate change, with special emphasis on women’s involvement in decision making related to climate change and segmentation of education by gender;

To collect and analyse data regarding gender and decision making process related to climate change and segmentation of education by gender in areas of natural sciences and technology;

To propose indicators for area K on basis of available data;

To collect the MS policy initiatives related to climate change in sectors of transport and energy and analyze them from the perspective of gender equality.
The Study on the area K of BPfA

Outcomes:

Database containing information and statistical data
Report for the Presidency of the Council of EU (Denmark)
Summary of the Report (Main Findings)

Time-lines:

Beginning of December 2011
EIGE will provide the Report to the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming (EC) for comments, corrections and suggestion.

Beginning of February 2012
EIGE will adopt and make public the Report on the area K of the BPfA: Women and the Environment in the European Union
The gender dimensions of climate change

Literature review (2011)

Methodology:

An extensive body of publications (books, articles, reports, analyses) published and available in any of the EU official languages from all 27 EU Member States since 2000.

Topics considered under the literature review: impacts of climate change, perceptions and attitudes towards climate change, resource use and consumption patterns, policy measures and instruments for addressing climate change, participation in decision making and segmentation of education by gender.
Socially constructed gender roles and identities and the underlying power dynamics affect the way women and men contribute, experience and respond to climate change.

These gender differences can be identified in what regards:

1. the impacts of climate change and increase of their vulnerability;
2. the contributions to GHG emissions;
3. the capabilities to mitigate and adapt to climate change at the individual level;
4. the perceptions and attitudes towards climate change mitigation;
5. the impacts of policies and measures.

These gender differences in mitigation and adaptation need to be taken into account in climate change policies, measures and instruments.
The gender dimensions of climate change

Literature review (2011)

Impacts of climate change and increase in vulnerabilities

Gender differentiated roles and responsibilities in families and households, as well as the gender segregated labour market and respective income gaps, cause differentiated effects of climate change on women and men.
The gender dimensions of climate change

Literature review (2011)

Impacts of climate change, vulnerability

Examples:

In the Arctic region, climate change impacts have already resulted in significant degradation of the natural environment. Traditional activities, such as hunting and processing of the respective products, are hindered or no longer possible. In some communities, this has led to an erosion of social structures. Women tend to be able to cope with the changes, but men are less flexible.

Heat waves impact women and men differently due to biological factors, but also due to gendered care activities: while older women care for their (often even older) husbands, often there is nobody to care for the women as they get older alone. Generally extreme weather events such as heat waves and climate change related disasters lead to increased care work for those who are responsible for care giving for children, elderly and sick, up to now mostly women.
The gender dimensions of climate change

Literature review (2011)

Contributions to GHG (green house gas) emissions

Women and men contribute differently to GHG emissions:
- different amounts (foot-prints);
- different consumption fields;
- different purposes of consumption that lead to different carbon footprints.

The differences need to be evaluated, known and addressed.
Different energy consumption levels within single person households (both women and men): the energy consumption level is constantly higher among the male single households (22% on average) compared to female single households. The differences exist among all income and age groups. Absolute levels. (Studies carried out in Sweden, Germany, Greece and Spain)

The researches done in the areas of transport and mobility show that there are very high gender differences in consumption patterns of transport and in the total level of energy consumption needed in transport and mobility. The differences are not only based on societal roles, but also on the masculine identity(ies): driving bigger, faster cars demonstrates power and virility.
The gender dimensions of climate change
Literature review (2011)

Different capabilities to mitigate and adapt to climate change at the individual level

Education, gender roles, division of labour in the household and income shape the portfolio of options women and men have to:
- convert to a low carbon lifestyle;
- to invest in energy efficiency or in renewable energy installations.
Different capabilities to mitigate, and adapt, to climate change at the individual level

Examples:

Gendered segregation of education, with fewer women in technical professions, makes it more difficult for women to take informed decisions on technical installations, for instance boilers or solar collectors.

The influence on purchasing decisions at household level is depending on the roles and the division of labour between women and men, and their cultural background. A very common pattern is that women are responsible for many small day-to-day purchasing decisions, while men often have more influence on larger investments, for instance refurbishment of the house, or heating systems.
The gender dimensions of climate change

Literature review (2011)

Perceptions and attitudes towards climate change mitigation

Differences between women’s and men’s perceptions and attitudes towards climate change are well documented via surveys in many Member States, as well as for the EU 27 overall. They do imply, however, that different strategies to cut GHG emissions would likely be preferred if decisions were taken by female majorities.
The gender dimensions of climate change

Perceptions and attitudes towards climate change mitigation

Examples:

There is evidence that women opt for a stronger (stricter) climate change policy than men do. If women’s opinions and perceptions are not taken into account, we lose on ideas, visions and potential solutions, and also on support for strong policies.

In many polls, women state that they are more willing to change their behaviour in order to mitigate climate change, while men are more in favour of technical solutions. There is strong evidence that women reject technologies as solutions for climate change if they pose other risks.
Policy measures and instruments, in particular those influencing prices, such as taxes and financial or fiscal regulation, impact women and men differently. The gender pay gap in the EU 27 is 17.1% in average, ranging from 30.9% in Estonia to 3.9% in Slovenia.

There is a high share of women among the poorest (in particular single mothers and the elderly run the highest risk of poverty). Policy instruments leading to higher energy prices will hit these groups the hardest.
Literature review (2011): the gender dimensions of climate change

Impacts of policies and measures

Examples:
Research on economic incentives concludes that the impact of price signals is higher on women: around 50% of consumers reacted to a tax reform (energy tax) by changing their behaviour in relation to heat, electricity and car use. The majority of these were women, while the impact on men was weak (the study was carried out in Germany).

Strengthening the renewable energy economy is one of the main pillars of policies to combat climate change and promote a low risk and low carbon development. There is a lack of women in the ‘male dominated’ technical professions that benefit from job growth in the renewable energy sector. Women do not benefit from the increasing labour market in the renewable energy sector to the same degree as men.
Gender is not only women, and women are as diverse as men are

‘Gender’ should not be interpreted simply as the request to take into account women’s needs and vulnerabilities and to include women in decision-making (add ‘women’ and stir). Gender or genders represent the range of ‘socially constructed’ roles, behaviours, attributes, aptitudes and relative power associated with being female or male in a given society at a particular point in time and the interactions between them. The term ‘socially constructed’ means that these are not ‘givens’ or ‘natural’, but are constructed or produced by society, therefore they can be changed.

A generalization of ‘women’ and ‘men’ is problematic as promotes a fixed image of gender. Therefore, we have to look at the differences within each gender.

Intersectionality is also very important: linking ‘gender’ to further influencing factors, such as income, education, living and working conditions, and cultural and ethnic background.
From a gender perspective, what are the important issues?

There are two main components which need to be analysed. First, it is the question of power and participation in climate policy, addressing the question of “whom”: who is planning and deciding, and “how” the planning and decision-making is carried out.

Second, it is about the various dimensions of climate change: its impacts; who is emitting what amounts of GHG and for what purposes; how is climate change perceived; and which solutions for mitigation and adaptation are preferred. Energy and transport are two main areas responsible for the GHG emissions in EU.
The gender dimensions of climate change

Literature review (2011)

Conclusions

Why is it important to address gender issues in climate policy at all levels and in all world regions?

First, it is a matter of equality and equity: both women and men need to be equally and meaningfully involved in planning and decision-making. Furthermore, different implications for women and men of planned legislation, policies and programmes need to be assessed because climate change and climate policy might otherwise exacerbate existing inequalities.

Second, it is a matter of effectiveness and efficiency of climate policy. If climate change policies are not targeted at all relevant consumers, they are likely to be less effective.

“Only inclusive and gender-sensitive climate policies will be able to reach a majority of citizens.” (Alber, 2010)
Gender and the climate change: a focus for Europe in 2012

Gender and climate change should be **acknowledged as an important** topic for the area of gender equality.

Gender equality must **be mainstreamed** in the climate change policies, but:

‘Women do not want to be mainstreamed into a polluted stream: they want the stream to be clean and healthy’

( Bella Abzug, WEDO)

Thank you!
Contacts

Jolanta Reingarde – Senior Researcher
Jolanta.Reingarde@eige.europa.eu

Ioana Borza – Gender Expert
Ioana.Borza@eige.europa.eu

Ilze Burkevica – Statistics Officer
Ilze.Burkevica@eige.europa.eu

George Kyriacou – Communication Officer
George.Kyriacou@eige.europa.eu

EIGE - General enquiries
EIGE.SEC@eige.europa.eu

www.eige.europa.eu/content/activities/beijing-platform-for-action

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)
Švitrūgai g. 11M
03228 - Vilnius
Lithuania
Switchboard: +370 5 2394140