

1 Introducing the gender-environment nexus in the case of Greece

This chapter presents the gender-environment nexus and proposes a policy framework that could be introduced by Greece and other countries wishing to coherently integrate gender equality and environmental sustainability into their national policy making. It gives an overview of the analysis and methodology used to prepare this report, including limitations due to insufficient data.

1.1. The gender-environment nexus

Gender equality and environmental sustainability are gaining political momentum as global challenges that require urgent action at the national and international levels. The profound global shock created by the COVID-19 pandemic risks undoing recent progress made on both objectives.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a higher mortality rate among men, but its economic and social impacts have disproportionately affected women. Women face compounded challenges: a high share in the front-line healthcare workforce, putting them at risk of infection; increased unpaid care work in households; high risk of increased economic insecurity (both now and in the future); and increased risk of violence, exploitation, abuse or harassment during times of crisis and quarantine (OECD, 2020^[1]).

The recent COVID-19 pandemic along with the ongoing environmental and climate crises provide an opportunity for countries to prioritise gender equality and women's economic empowerment, and environmental and climate action, into their economic recovery measures. This approach could also bring wider benefits beyond the pandemic.

Building on the interlinkages between gender equality and environmental sustainability provides the basis for a more coherent approach to addressing gaps and inconsistencies in policy making. National recovery measures need to align with international commitments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the United Nations' Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda).

Gender equality and environmental sustainability figure prominently, though separately, in the United Nations 2030 Agenda, in Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and the five Planet Goals (SDGs 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15).¹ Identifying the interactions between these goals could help to maximise synergies and complementarities and, where there are trade-offs, minimise their negative impacts on sustainable development (OECD, 2021^[2]).

The gender-environment nexus recognises the extent to which slow progress on environmental measures affects the condition of women and men differently and hampers gender equality. It brings to the forefront how gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls can deliver positive impacts on the environmental aspects of certain policies (OECD, 2021^[2]). An integrated approach to gender equality and environmental sustainability could alleviate limitations to gender equality and women's economic empowerment deriving from existing social, cultural discrimination and biases; and could enhance women's role towards environmental sustainability and green growth.

The OECD's analysis on the economic and well-being benefits of integrating gender equality and environmental targets and policies (OECD, 2021^[2]) indicates that:

- Ensuring a just transition to low-carbon economies for men and women can increase productivity and lead to better economic outcomes and more resilient societies. Enhancing the participation of women in green innovation can be a source of high-skilled jobs for women and boost overall productivity.
- Sustainable infrastructure (i.e. transport, energy, water, etc.) that considers women's needs is key for enhancing their economic empowerment and labour force participation. Designing environmentally conscious infrastructure with a gender lens would provide win-win outcomes for all and improve well-being across the population.
- Incorporating a gender lens into public policies such as green product labelling, public information campaigns and targeted education programmes can help accelerate women's contribution towards more sustainable consumption patterns and boost the overall sustainability of production and consumption.

1.2. The OECD's gender equality framework

The OECD provides policy guidance for addressing gender inequality, and tackling some of the barriers and limitations faced by women and girls, through two Recommendations:

- The [OECD Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life](#) (2015), focuses on effective governance and accountability for gender equality; closing leadership gaps in public life; and equal access to public employment. It recommends that Adherents strengthen accountability and oversight mechanisms for gender equality and mainstream initiatives across and within government bodies. It also provides actionable guidelines to enhance women's equal access to opportunities in service and judicial appointments (OECD, 2016^[3]). The Recommendation is complemented by the [OECD Toolkit on Implementing and Mainstreaming Gender Equality](#), which presents good practices to support countries in the implementation of the 2015 Gender Recommendation (OECD, 2018^[4]).
- The [OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Education, Employment, and Entrepreneurship](#) (2013), sets out measures that Adherents should consider implementing in order to address gender inequalities in education, employment and entrepreneurship. In particular, it recommends that Adherents should – through appropriate legislation, policies, monitoring, and campaigning – ensure equal access to education; better enable female labour force participation; promote family-friendly policies; foster greater male uptake of unpaid work; work toward better gender balance in positions of public and private sector leadership; and promote entrepreneurship among women (OECD, 2017^[5]).

The OECD monitors countries' progress on implementing these Recommendations and extending their approaches to sectoral policies such as environmental and climate policies. Recent analysis shows that while most OECD countries do have a national strategy or action plan on gender equality or mainstreaming, there is no unified approach to addressing the nexus within environmental and climate policy making. A 2019 OECD survey on integrating gender in environmental policies showed that only 5 out of 28 responding countries “always” consider gender aspects in environmental policies, while 16 do so “occasionally”. OECD countries are considering gender equality when developing policies on climate change, green entrepreneurship and green jobs, as well as on agriculture and forestry (OECD, 2020^[6]).

1.3. An integrated gender-environment policy framework

Ensuring an equal role for women in sustainable growth is fair and constitutes environmentally, socially and economically responsible behaviour (OECD, 2021^[2]). Gender equality and the inclusion of more women in the green labour force would benefit the transition to a low-carbon economy. Yet, gender equality is rarely prioritised in policies on infrastructure or urban development, energy, research and innovation, or sustainable consumption.

Introducing gender equality and women's economic empowerment in environmental and climate policies can lead to better policies in these fields. Women's and men's differentiated experiences with the environment are often overlooked, which can lead to less effective policies introduced for half of the population. Gender-sensitive and gender-responsive policies would be more inclusive, covering issues of vulnerability related to energy efficiency and energy poverty, climate change, biodiversity, agriculture, etc., or even of opportunity for better policy results (OECD, 2021^[2]). Moreover, including more women in decision-making and leadership positions around the environment, whether in the public or private sector, could bring about more sustainable decisions and actions (Strumskyte, Ramos Magaña and Bendig, 2022^[7]). Finally, considering countries' international commitments on gender equality and environmental policies, enhancing coherence between the two policy areas would help reorient national priorities in the long term.

1.4. The case of Greece - Introducing the gender-environment nexus

Greece currently addresses gender considerations in policy making in three main areas: (i) eliminating gender-based violence; (ii) reinforcing women's economic empowerment; and (iii) ensuring women's participation in decision making. A comprehensive legal framework has been introduced to this end, but many steps remain to fully implement it and to apply gender mainstreaming in policy making across different policy domains.

Current Impact assessments of environmental and climate policies in Greece do not take gender considerations into account. Gender equality priorities such as women's economic empowerment and leadership are often not well integrated into measures across policy domains, lacking targeted sectoral action that could improve women's presence in environment-related economic activities.

Recent policy initiatives, especially during the COVID-19 recovery period, show that Greece, along with other EU member states, is prioritising the transition towards a net-zero economy. Gender equality is also built into the methodology that will provide social expenditure information on EU member states' recovery plans under the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the main financial instrument. Greece is currently prioritising gender equality by introducing reforms and investments that also address gender-relevant challenges. The gender-environment nexus is still largely absent in Greece's national policies, however.

To support Greece's interest in introducing an integrated gender-environment policy framework, the OECD has assessed the country's existing policies, highlighting complementarities and trade-offs, as well as possible benefits that could support Greece's shift towards green growth.

1.4.1. Methodology

The following methods were used to introduce the gender-environment nexus in Greece's national policies: (i) mapping the gender-environment nexus, (ii) evaluating the impact of environmental policies on gender equality and women's empowerment, and (iii) assessing whether gender equality policies advance environmental sustainability. This methodology could support Greece and other countries that wish to systematise their policy approaches, identify gaps and challenges, and develop and use indicators to evaluate future policy making under the gender-environment nexus.

This report analyses the following Greek national strategies, policies, and policy tools:

- National Energy and Climate Plan
- National Action Plan against Energy Poverty
- Just Transition Development Plan
- National Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation
- Circular Economy Action Plan
- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

They were assessed based on their implicit or explicit impact on gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Analysis was conducted using existing evidence, research and data (where available). This is complemented by case studies and examples of how gender-differentiated impacts of environmental measures have been addressed in other OECD countries.

This report also examines Greece's Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) through an environmental lens, analysing gender equality policy priorities that cover supporting women's economic empowerment in the green economy, increasing women's participation in public life through leadership positions, and mainstreaming gender in sectoral policies, such as budgeting and impact assessments, including data collection.

1.4.2. Methodological limitations

Challenges do exist. As indicated in previous OECD work, sex-aggregated data on member countries' environmental policies and green growth is limited. It is usually collected through time series surveys, which are costly and hence only collected about every ten years. Insufficient data makes it difficult to thoroughly evaluate the benefits of integrating the gender-environment nexus into specific policies.

Furthermore, the analysis attempts to apply an intersectional approach, based on available data. Grouping women and girls into a single category does not allow for a full representation of the differentiated impact that other factors, in addition to gender, may have. Women and girls may face diverse situations of exclusions and opportunities based on income, age, location and other socio-economic characteristics that should also be taken into consideration when designing policies.

Efforts to integrate the gender-environment nexus into policy making may expose deep-rooted gender inequalities based on cultural or other barriers. The reasoning behind these are beyond the scope of this report. The approach selected is limited to the interlinkages between gender equality and environmental sustainability, and therefore only highlights gaps that may exist in policy making, with the aim of overcoming social norms, practices and cultural barriers through gender mainstreaming in environmental policies. It also touches upon key issues such as advancing women's leadership positions in environment-related decision making, and women's economic empowerment in environment-related economic sectors.

Finally, the analysis related to women's economic empowerment and inclusion in the green economy is not only limited to environmental sectors, i.e. economic sectors that generate environmental products such as goods and services produced for environmental protection or resource management. It also looks into environment-related economic sectors and activities, i.e. economic sectors and activities that may have an environmental impact and where a green transition could be an option.

1.4.3. Targets and structure

Analysis in this report aims at identifying policy recommendations that, if implemented, could help Greece achieve the following targets:

- Gender mainstreaming in environmental and climate policies;
- Women's economic empowerment in male-dominated environmental sectors;
- Women's presence in environmental leadership and decision-making;
- Gender-sensitive environmental justice;
- Statistical data and monitoring progress in integrating the gender-environment nexus.

Chapter 2 analyses the extent to which gender equality and women's economic empowerment are integrated into Greece's environmental and climate policies and tools. Chapter 3 assesses gender equality policies and their role in advancing environmental sustainability in Greece. Based on the analysis conducted in the previous chapters, Chapter 4 presents a series of recommendations that Greece could introduce in order to better integrate the gender-environment nexus into its national policy framework and further enhance the complementarities of reaching both the goals of gender equality and environmental sustainability.

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Notes

¹ SDG 6 – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; SDG 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; SDG 13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; SDG 14 – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; and SDG 15 – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.



From:

Empowering Women in the Transition Towards Green Growth in Greece

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/a9eacee6-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2022), "Introducing the gender-environment nexus in the case of Greece", in *Empowering Women in the Transition Towards Green Growth in Greece*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/2b873a3b-en>

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