



Gender Equality in the Energy Sector Within the Scope of the European Green Deal

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The transition from a growth strategy that focuses on increasing gross domestic product to a new green growth strategy that promises a fair and prosperous society will only be possible with an approach that focuses on the planet and people. Establishing a people- and planet-focused economic structure, in other words, addressing sustainability holistically for a sustainable future; should be defined as the mutual interaction of environmental, economic, and social development.

Climate crisis, ecological collapse, economic vulnerabilities, and related social problems reveal the need to address sustainability in all its dimensions. "leaving no one behind" or the "Just Transition Principle" has a central role in the transition process defined as green, fair, and competitive, proposed by the European Green Deal, which is the road map of the sustainability ecosystem with its environmental, economic, and social aspects.

When we look at the Just Transition Principle in terms of sustainable development goals, we see that the principle is mostly addressed in the context of SDG 8, "decent work and economic growth", and therefore has a narrow focus. A just transition is not just a matter of the male-dominated population working in these sectors becoming unemployed due to the exit from the male-dominated fossil fuel-based sectors. A just transition, which should be viewed from a broader perspective, should also consider all interactive inequalities (SDG 10), especially gender inequalities (SDG 5).

Women will be disproportionately affected by ecological collapse, economic vulnerabilities, and social problems during the transition period, where not everyone is affected equally. Existing gender roles, power relations that work against women, and their unequal position in accessing resources and opportunities cause the burdens of transition to fall more heavily on women's shoulders. Therefore, the just transition principle envisaged by the Green Deal requires a transformative paradigm that broadly addresses how different individuals, groups, and gender identities affect, and prioritize those who are subjected to systematic exclusion and inequalities. It is essential to mainstream this perspective in all action plans and policies regarding a just transition.

We need a Gender-Sensitive European Green Deal if we want to create a sustainable, durable, and inclusive economy and society in a geography where half of the population is female. Below are some findings that should be considered for the creation of a gender-sensitive European Green Deal in the field of energy:



1- Today, in many countries, including the European Union, the majority of those educated in the field of energy are men. The reasons why working hours in the energy sector are not flexible and workplaces do not provide enough training opportunities for women are due to both sexist stereotypes and the lack of an inclusive workplace culture. In addition, women who want to increase energy efficiency and invest in renewable energy or energy-efficient buildings have extremely limited access to financial resources. For economic and social sustainability, regulations regarding financial inclusion, working conditions, and the right to education must be made.

2-In terms of unpaid care work such as child and elderly care, domestic work, and relations with people, household energy consumption is high and almost all these jobs are undertaken by women due to gender inequality. However, it is known that women's energy consumption, especially in transportation, is lower than men. Updating the tax-related legislation should be supported by data-based studies on this subject; The reality of care labor must be considered in taxing energy consumption.

3- Low participation rates of women in policymaking, both in the European Parliament and in the context of energy ministries, prevent the desired transformation from occurring in the male-dominated energy sector. It is extremely important to abandon policies that lack gender sensitivity and to establish a perspective that focuses on women's needs in decision-making processes.

4-Consumers have a central role in the transition to renewable energy. While male dominance is observed in energy production and consumption based on fossil fuels, many interview-based studies show that women have a responsible consumption (prosumer) approach based on household energy production due to their greater ecological sensitivity. Therefore, gender-sensitive prosumer models can be considered as a consumption model in the transition to renewable energy.

5-It seems that women are more affected by energy poverty than men. In addition to being a woman, when other causes of vulnerability such as age and ethnicity are added, the situation of energy poverty deepens. In this context, women who are not homeowners, work part-time, live as single parents, are refugees, immigrants, or disabled, and are not on equal terms with men in terms of wages and retirement income should be supported. However, first, energy poverty must be defined with an understanding that considers its multidimensional structure, including gender.

6-In the process of transforming existing buildings into energy-efficient buildings, many tenants, especially the vulnerable women mentioned above, are forced to leave their homes, rents increase, disadvantaged groups move to suburbs with poor transportation facilities and unhealthy urbanization, and existing inequalities increase. It is seen that especially elderly women who do not own a home and live alone have a higher rate of being evicted by their landlords than elderly men in the same situation. In addition, the fact that the presence of women in the construction sector is lower than that of men results in women not having a say in decision-making processes regarding building renovations.

7-Energy taxation is a form of taxation that affects consumption and investment decisions entirely aimed at combating climate change. Energy taxes are essentially a consumption tax and can create different results depending on the different consumption needs and priorities of men and women. Since taxes to be introduced to reduce the use of fossil fuels at home will affect energy-poor women the most, tax exemptions should be phased out and tax compensatory measures should be taken into consideration. It is extremely important to shape taxes on energy consumption according to gender.

As a result, in the process of updating energy-related legislation and policies, considering the issues of energy production and consumption, energy efficiency, energy saving, renewable energy investments, renovation of buildings, and taxation of energy, as well as the relations between gender, forms the basis of a gender-sensitive European Green Deal and just transition principle.

