

# Decision-making in environment and climate change: women woefully under-represented in the EU Member States

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Environment and climate change is a hot topic across the globe and it is crucial that related policy decisions serve women and men equally. To make that happen, women need to be adequately represented in decision-making processes.

EIGE regularly monitors the share of women in positions of power in the environment and climate change arena within the EU. The time-series of datasets start from 2012 and the latest data is from 2020 or 2021 depending on the specific topic covered. The latest available data highlight where the gender balance is good, and where we still need to make progress.

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### National level – women significantly under-represented in key decision-making positions

Just 26.8 % of government ministers responsible for policies on environment and climate change are women, while 73.2 % are men. Although this represents a significant gender imbalance, the proportion of women is the highest since data was first collected in 2012 (19.2 %).

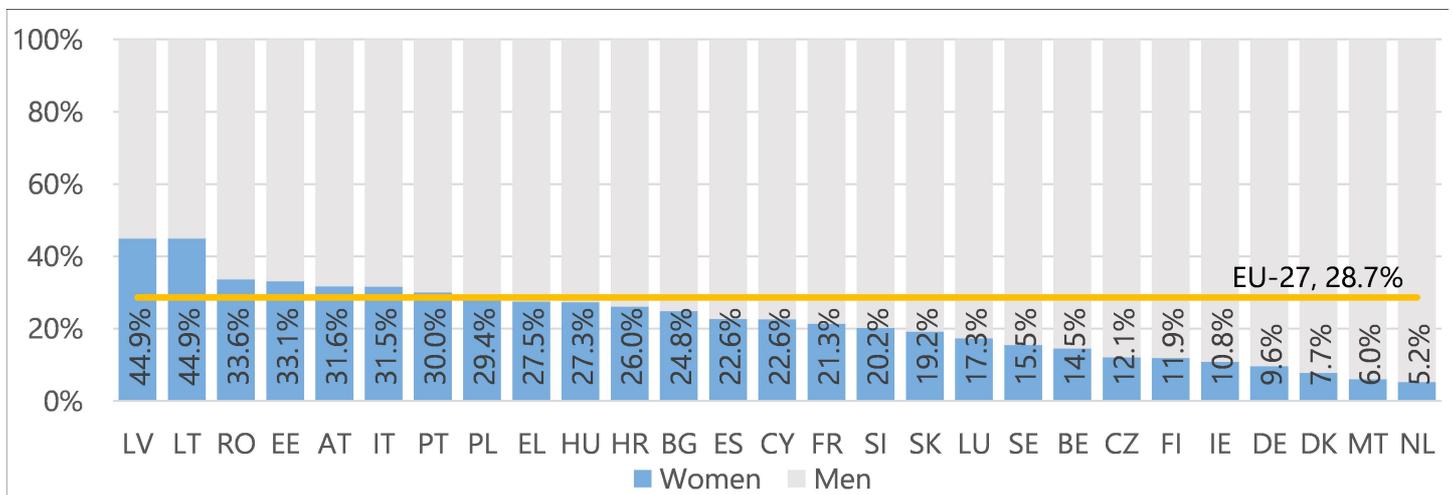
Within the national parliaments of EU Member States, the parliamentary committees that consider policy issues and scrutinise government action in relation to environment and climate change show a similar lack of gender balance, being made up of 29.7 % women and 70.3 % men. The composition of committees in individual countries tends to reflect that of the parliament as whole, with committees in Sweden, Italy and Spain all having 40 % or more of each gender, while those in Romania, Slovenia and Malta have at least 90 % men.

In the national ministries that implement government policy in environment and climate change, women account for 42.5 % of the top two tiers of administrators in 2020, which is an improvement from 33.1 % in 2012. However, women are considerably less well represented in the top level of management (31.7 % at level 1 compared to 45.3 % at level 2).

## Few women are involved in deciding how farms are run

Farming has an important role in maintaining the quality of the environment and in climate change (e.g. methane emissions from livestock), so decisions about how farms are run matter. According to 2016 data (data for 2020 is anticipated in 2022), only 28.7 % of farms in the EU are managed by women and 71.3 % by men. Women are more likely to manage small farms (30.9 % of farms smaller than 20 hectares, which include many subsistence farms where the holding family consumes more than 50 % of production), than large ones (13.9 % of farms bigger than 20 hectares). Consequently, countries in which small farms are more prevalent tend to have a better gender balance amongst farm managers.

**Figure 1:** Proportion of farms managed by women and men, 2016



**Source:** EIGE, Gender Statistics Database (based on data from Eurostat’s Farm Structure Survey)

## European level – solid gender balance in some areas, but progress needed in others

The four European Commission Directorate Generals (DGs) working on environment and climate change related issues<sup>1</sup> are led by two women and two men **Commissioners**. All **heads of cabinet** are men, but women outnumber men among cabinet members (58.3 % vs. 41.7 %). Senior administrators include two women and two men **Director Generals** (2 of each), and 42.9 % women and 57.1 % men at **director** level.

Women account for 41.1 % of **members** of the three environment related committees in the European Parliament, which is a slight improvement compared to 2012 (38.2 %).

There are eight European agencies working in areas related to environment and climate change, of which four have where a woman **leading** their highest decision-making body.

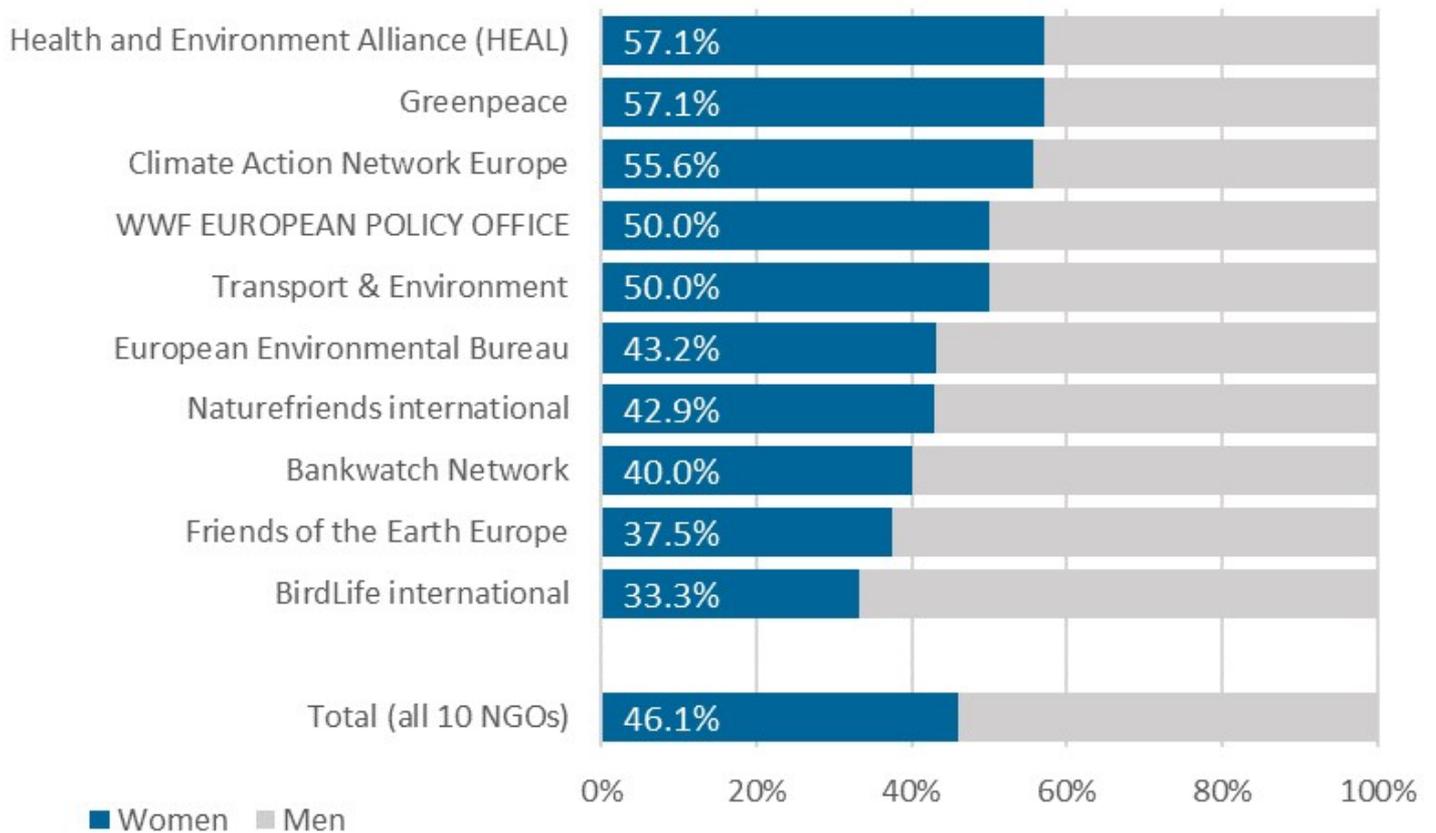
These bodies within these agencies are not well balanced, being made up of 24.8 % women and 75.2 % men. Moreover, only one agency has a woman as **executive head** (secretary general / managing director).

In EU-level social partner organisations working in sectors related to environment and climate change, women are poorly represented in top positions on both sides of the social dialogue.

Women account for 19.5 % of **members** (of the highest decision-making body) and 25 % of **executive heads** across the four **employee** organisations, and 17.6 % of **members** and 26.1 % of **executive heads** in the 20 **employer** organisations.

Gender balance is better among the 10 European level NGOs that are members of **Green10**, a coalition of ten of the largest environmental organisations and networks active at the European level. Three have a woman **president** in 2021, and the combined **members** of their key decision-making bodies include 46.1 % women and 53.9 % men, with only two organisations having less than 40 % of each gender.

**Figure 2:** Share of women members, environment and climate change related NGOs, 2021



Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database

## EU delegations to international climate change discussions are well balanced

Delegations from EU Member States to key bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are generally well balanced. In 2019, women accounted for 48 % of delegations from the 27 Member States to the Conference of Parties (COP), and 52.9 % of delegates to the Subsidiary Bodies.

### Notes about the data

In line with the indicators for monitoring Area K of the Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the Danish Presidency of the European Council in 2012<sup>2</sup>, the scope of EIGE’s data on “environment and climate change” is concerned with organisations and positions directly linked to four policy areas: environment, climate change, transport, and energy.

The data used in this article can be found in the [Environment and climate change](#) section of the [Women and men in decision-making](#) entry point of EIGE's Gender Statistics Database.

The data available from 2012 onwards covers 38<sup>3</sup> countries and monitors the gender balance in national governments, public administrations, environment-related DGs of the European Commission, environment-related committees in the European Parliament, as well as the Bureau of the Conference of Parties (COP) and EU and national delegations to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

From 2020 onwards, additional data (covering only the EU Member States, the United Kingdom and the three EEA countries) covers national parliamentary committees dealing with environment and climate change, relevant European agencies, European social partner organisations and NGOs, as well as data on farm managers derived from Eurostat's Farm Structure Survey (FSS).

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> DG Climate Action, DG Energy, DG Environment, DG Mobility & Transport

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST%2011638%202012%20INIT/EN/pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The 27 EU Member States, five candidate countries (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, and Turkey), two potential candidates (Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo), plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and the UK.

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## Metadata

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