

Environment and climate change



Relevance of gender in the policy area

Environment is a cross-cutting issue. It encompasses issues relating to:

- water, air and soil quality
- waste management and the use of chemicals
- environmental assessment
- green public procurement, sustainable development and the urban environment
- the environmental impact of industry, land use
- the marine environment and the coast
- nature and biodiversity.

At EU level environment and climate change, although two separate issues, are increasingly associated and interlinked. Environmental change and climate change are increasingly caused by developments taking place at global level, including those relating to demographics, patterns of production and trade, and rapid technological progress. Such developments may offer significant opportunities for economic growth and societal well-being but nevertheless pose challenges and uncertainties for the EU's economy and society, as well as causing environmental degradation worldwide. Coupled with current wasteful production and consumption systems in the world economy, rising global demand for goods and services and the depletion of resources are increasing the cost of essential raw materials, minerals and energy, generating more pollution and waste, increasing global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and making land degradation, deforestation and biodiversity loss worse.

The gender perspective is relevant in all the different areas of environment policy. Gender relations between women and men, and girls and boys, play a key role in the access to and control of environmental resources, as well as the goods and services they provide. The relevance of gender to environmental issues has been discussed since the early 1970s, when the growing debate on environmental changes intersected with the emergence of studies on women's roles in development and development policy strategies within the international women's rights movement.

In this context, the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) identified environment as one of 12 critical areas for women. Area K of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), on women and the environment, asserted that 'women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns, and approaches to natural resource management'.

Gender is considered particularly relevant in climate protection policies, specifically in the design and implementation of adaptation and mitigation strategies as responses to climate change. When considering climate change from a gender equality perspective, various aspects should be taken into account. One consideration relates to the very low participation of women in decision-making in the sector. Secondly, to be effective climate policies should consider various gender-related aspects of climate change: the impact of climate change on women and men; their different contributions to and perceptions of climate change; and the solutions that women and men are perceived to prefer in terms of mitigation and adaptation. For example, measures intended to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and emissions from transport in the EU have led to increased demand for biofuels, a demand that can be met only by importing the latter from developing countries. This leads to land use changes, which are often gendered since the land used for biofuels production is most likely to be marginal land farmed by women for household subsistence rather than the prime agricultural land farmed by men for export .

Monitoring the gendered outcomes of climate change policy responses is thus important in pinpointing reforms to the climate protection system so that adaptation and mitigation responses promote gender equality, poverty eradication and sustainable development. As the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) notes:

Various research data show that gender differentials with regard to the impacts of climate change mean more casualties among women during extreme weather events and an increased burden from care work. There is also evidence of gender-specific consumption patterns that affect contributions to GHG emissions, and thus to climate change. For example, women spend more time at home due to care duties, and thus depend on domestic heating to a greater extent. For mobility, women depend on access to public transport to a larger degree due to lower levels of car ownership, but also because of their preferences for the use of environmentally-friendly solutions (public transport). Due to their lower average income, women are at greater risk of energy poverty than men, and have fewer options for investing in low-carbon options such as energy efficiency and renewable energies. Perceptions and attitudes towards climate change and climate policy options also vary substantially according to gender. Women are, on average, more concerned about climate change than men.

Environment and climate change is still an area influenced by a set of gender inequalities, which are as follows:

- women's under-representation in environment decision-making institutions

gender differences in adaptation and mitigation strategies
gender differences in the effects of climate change.

Gender inequalities in the policy area - Main issues

Women's under-representation in environment and climate change decision-making institutions

Women are still under-represented in climate change decision-making bodies at the national level in EU Member States. In 2011, women held 18.2% of positions at the highest levels in ministries dealing with the environment/climate change, transport and energy policy. At managerial or administrative level, this figure was 27%, while among heads of sectoral departments or divisions it was 27.6% on average. However, the role of women in climate change-related ministries varies considerably across Member States, with Finland and Sweden achieving gender balance at the highest level, with women and men nearly equally represented within ministries, committees, agencies and institutions relevant to climate change. Recent data show that in 2014 women represent the 28% of senior ministers and 22% of junior ministers in the EU-28. At administration level, women represent the 30% of level 1 administrators and 38% of level 2 administrators.

In contrast to the situation at national level in relevant EU directorates-general (DG), in DG Climate Action and DG Energy women play an important role in high-level decision-making (40% of positions in each DG are held by women). However, in DG Environment and DG Mobility and Transport, this percentage is lower (25% and 12.5% respectively). In the committees of the EU responsible for climate change and related issues, women hold on average 39.2% of the positions (51.6% within the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, 36.4% within the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, and 25% within the Committee on Transport and Tourism. In the directorates-general referring to environment and climate change (DG Climate Action, DG Energy, DG Environment and DG Mobility and Transport), as was the case in 2014, one in four commissioners is a woman (DG Mobility and Transport). While the commissioner of DG Environment is a man, as is the head of the cabinet, the members of the cabinet are equally represented by sex (50%). In terms of European Commission administrative positions (Director-General (Directorate-General), Directors (Directorates), women hold around 29% of posts at DG Environment, and 25% at DG Mobility and Transport and DG Climate Action, while 50% at DG Energy. At the European Parliament, 46% of the members of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee are women.

Within the Conference of Parties (COP) delegations to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the average proportion of women on the EU Member States' delegations and the EU delegation over the period 2006 – 2010 was 37.6%, increasing from 24.3% in 1996, to 32.4% at COP6 in 2000, and 40.5% at COP16 in 2010. Recent figures show that women have reached the 45% of National COP delegation in the UNFCCC of the EU-28 Member States.

Globally, under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, the proportions are less balanced: for example, on the executive board of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in June 2015, the percentage of women was only 10 (1 out of the 10 members). The proportion of women stood at 15% within the Least Developed Countries Expert Group, at 28% on the Adaptation Fund Board, and at 25% in the Technology Executive Committee. Of the party delegates to the 20th session of the COP and the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP), 36% were women.

Gender gaps in energy-related education are also relevant, in that the environment sector requires workers with scientific knowledge and domain-specific expertise in the sector. Women are strongly under-represented in this respect. According to an indicator developed by EIGE, in 2012 women accounted for 53.8% of the total number of graduates in the natural sciences, while in technological domains they accounted for only 28% of graduates. It must be emphasised, however, that not all areas included in the calculation of the indicator are directly linked with energy and/or climate change.

Gender differences in adaptation and mitigation strategies

Climate change is a complex environmental and social issue, affecting a world that is characterised by, and based on, deep-rooted unequal gender relations. This is not just a question of women's vulnerability and the fact that they generally hold less power and are, therefore, less able to mitigate and cope with climate change. It's also a question of understanding how women and men relate to one another and how these relationships influence the ways that households, communities, countries and the global community are affected by, and respond to, climate change.

Women and men have different capabilities in terms of mitigating and adapting to climate change at the individual and group level. Options available to women and men to convert to low-carbon lifestyles and related technologies are shaped by their education, gender roles, division of labour and income.

Uncovering these power relations helps us understand why some groups are contributing differently to GHG emissions and why some are affected differently by climate change than others. It also enables us to analyse the ways in which climate change mitigation and adaptation may lead to different roles and responsibilities in the future. These need to be taken into account in order to identify solutions that draw on the skills, knowledge, resources and experiences of both sexes.

Adaptive activities (e.g. climate-proofing agriculture and ensuring food security, promoting the conservation and efficient use of water, pest and disease management, fire management) are critical to sustainable development. Adaptation efforts, which are daily issues for individual women and men, families and households, are likely to require more resources than such individuals currently have available. Though this impacts on both women and men and women- and men-headed households, it is likely to be more acute for women and women-headed households due to gender gaps in income and social and economic resources.

Women and men living in Europe contribute differently to GHG emissions, both in terms of total emissions and the sectors in which emissions are produced. These differences are based on prevailing gender roles and identities, which are expressed by behaviour and consumption patterns. These gender differentials in the consumption of services and goods can be partly explained by gendered socialisation and the social roles assigned to, and performed by, women and men. Studies have shown that women are more likely to have a greater awareness of health issues and more highly developed risk perceptions, which often impacts on how they perceive health and environmental issues, while men tend to be more strongly oriented towards convenience.

Mitigation strategies are also not gender or equity neutral. Mitigation within the context of sustainable development can help to promote gender equity and women's empowerment by addressing at least four issues:

- 1 women and men's energy needs and uses
- 2 women and men's employment and entrepreneurship – though there are potential challenges and constraints in the agriculture, energy and power sectors
- 3 incorporating women and men's traditional knowledge and practices into mitigation strategies and policy frameworks

- 4 paying close attention to ensuring gender equity in the use, conservation and management of forests.

Some mitigation actions, such as the provision of clean and modern energy services, save both women and men time, reduce accidents and promote better health. However, other mitigation actions, such as affecting land use, can shift the balance of economic and social resource distribution between women and men and among different communities, and can therefore exacerbate inequality.

Gender differences in the effects of climate change

The effects of climate change impact on women and men differently, particularly where natural disasters are concerned.

Extreme weather conditions have gendered impacts. Many disaster studies from around the world show that drought and flooding often kill more women than men. Other differentiators such as age, socioeconomic status and ethnicity are also important determining factors in this context. The heat-wave in France in 2006 killed around 1% more elderly women than men due to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease and directly heat-related deaths.

Both women and men are vulnerable to climate change, particularly if it reduces their capacity to adapt to its negative impacts and also adversely affects their ability to contribute to mitigation. However, women are frequently exposed to additional gender-specific factors and barriers that consistently render them more vulnerable than men to the impacts of climate change and disasters. This prevents them from utilising their specific skills and knowledge (such as resource management and conservation) to improve mitigation and adaptation outcomes.

Existing gender-equality policy objectives at EU and international level

The gender dimension in environmental policies has begun to be addressed in policy initiatives and debates at the European and international levels only very recently. Gender equality and environmental sustainability have been mainstreamed into EU and international development policies in parallel processes.

EU level

European Council

The 2009 European Council Conclusions on Climate change and development underlined “the human dimension of climate change, including a gender perspective, and that poor people are most at risk, and that their resilience to climate change needs to be strengthened”. The document also refers to gender equality and women’s empowerment at the end of paragraph 6. This relates to support for programmes that contribute to a low-carbon and climate-resilient development path and adaptation to the adverse impacts of climate change: “In providing such support special attention should be paid to gender equality and women’s empowerment.”

The 2012 Council Conclusions on Gender Equality and the Environment stated that enhanced decision-making, qualifications and competitiveness in the field of climate change mitigation policy in the EU play an important role in the focus assigned to gender issues throughout EU environmental policies. These conclusions, which were informed by the report on gender and climate change commissioned by the Danish Presidency and produced by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) recognise that: “Women play a vital role in sustainable development, and that gender as well as social and employment aspects need to be integrated into efforts to combat climate change in order to improve them” (paragraph 1). They also state that: “Women and men affect the climate differently: their consumption patterns are different and they have different CO2 footprints, and they are not represented equally in decision-making in this field ... Studies show that women and men also have different perceptions and attitudes towards climate change: women are in general more concerned about this issue and more motivated to act. Women’s potential as agents of change needs to be recognised”. In addition, the conclusions stress that “There is an urgent need to improve gender equality in decision-making in the field of climate change mitigation, especially the transport and energy sectors, and to increase the number of women with relevant qualifications in scientific and technological fields as well as the number of women participating in relevant scientific bodies at the highest level” (paragraph 9). They claim that gender-based prejudices and stereotypes exclude women from areas of the green economy such as transport and energy, causing human resources to be wasted and preventing the EU from achieving its full competitive potential.

The Council calls on the Member States and the Commission to take active and specific measures aimed at achieving a balanced representation of women and men in decision-making in the field of climate change mitigation at all levels, including the EU level; to support women in science and technology at national and European level; to eliminate gender stereotypes and promote gender equality at all levels of education and training, as well as in working life; and to integrate the principle of gender mainstreaming into all relevant legislation, policy measures and instruments related to climate change mitigation. It calls on the Commission to provide guidance for gender mainstreaming of policy areas; to consider focusing on the issue of women and climate change in one of the future reports; and to take action, with the participation of civil society, to raise awareness of the gender dimension of climate change policy.

European Parliament

The European Parliament has been very active in this field since 2011, producing a number of resolutions which address climate change from a gender perspective. For example, in the European Parliament resolution of 29 September 2011 on developing a common EU position ahead of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), Article 19 emphasises that the Rio+20 Summit should discuss an integrated approach to address multiple challenges such as poverty eradication, health, food, employment, gender equality, climate change and energy supply.

The European Parliament resolution of 20 April 2012 on women and climate change is explicitly concerned with exposing and addressing the links between climate change and gender. In Article 8 it calls on the Commission and the Member States to collect country-specific and gender-disaggregated data when planning, implementing and evaluating climate change policies, programmes and projects, so as to effectively assess and address the differing effects of climate change on each gender, to produce a guide on adapting to climate change, outlining policies that can protect women, and to empower women to cope with the effects of climate change.

Article 20 calls on the Commission and the Member States to integrate the gender issue into strategies for preventing and managing the risks associated with natural disasters, to promote women's empowerment and awareness through capacity-building before, during and after climate-related disasters, and to further their active involvement in disaster anticipation, early warning systems and risk prevention as part of their role in resilience-building.

Article 35 stresses the important role played by women in implementing mitigation measures in daily life – for example, through energy- and water-saving practices, recycling measures and the use of eco-friendly and organic products.

Article 42 stresses the need for financing mechanisms to reflect women's priorities and needs, and for the active involvement of organisations that promote gender equality in the development of funding criteria. This includes the allocation of resources for climate change initiatives, particularly at local level and in the activities of the Green Climate Fund.

The European Parliament report on women and climate change (2012) calls on “the Commission and the Council, in order to ensure that climate action does not increase gender inequalities but results in co-benefits to the situation of women, to mainstream and integrate gender in every step of climate policies, from conception to financing, implementation and evaluation ... ”

Article 4 of the European Parliament resolution of 11 September 2012 on women and the green economy calls on the Commission and the Member States to compile age- and gender-disaggregated data when strategies, programmes and budgeting projects are being planned, implemented and evaluated for the environment and climate sectors.

Article 5 calls on the Commission and Member States to establish gender mainstreaming mechanisms at international, national and regional levels in environmental policies, as gender concerns and perspectives are not well integrated in policies and programmes for sustainable development.

The resolution also includes other recommendations regarding gender aspects of environment and the green economy in general, as well as particular recommendations relating to sustainable consumption, sustainable transport, the welfare sector, 'green' jobs, and sustainable policies in international relations.

Finally, the European Parliament, in its resolution of 9 June 2015 on the EU Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men Post 2015, calls on the Commission to gather gender-specific data with a view to conducting an impact assessment for women in the areas of climate, environment and energy policy. The resolution stresses the EU's responsibility and role as a model for gender equality and women's rights, and underlines that women are not only more vulnerable to the effects of energy supply and use, environment and climate change, but also effective actors in relation to mitigation and adaptation strategies, as well as a driving force for an equitable and sustainable model of growth.

European Commission

Like all EU policies, climate action is supposed to be gender mainstreamed, and DG CLIMA has named a gender focal person.

International level

United Nations

The United Nations play a pioneering role within the consideration of gender aspects in environmental policies. The World Summit on environment and development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) adopted a gender perspective in all development and environment policies and programmes, leading to the promotion of women's effective participation in the proper use of natural resources. This provided the first international precedent for including the gender perspective in promoting sustainable development.

As written in Principle 20 (Rio Principles) resulting from the UN conference on environment and development (UNCED) Rio, 1992: "Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential in achieving sustainable development".

During the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro on 13 June 1992, 178 governments voted to adopt the Agenda 21 programme: it describes action priorities to achieve sustainable development until the 21st century. While there is mention of women throughout the 40 sectoral and inter-sectoral chapters, chapter 24 – Global action for women towards sustainable development – is specifically dedicated to considering women.

This chapter identifies areas that require urgent international action to achieve equality between women and men, which in turn is necessary to enable effective implementation of the sustainable development agenda. It focuses on the crucial role they play in changing the present consumption and production model and stresses that, if the Summit's Resolutions are to be successfully implemented, they will need to play a part in politico-economic decisions. At the same time, there are proposed actions to end present discrimination against women. Agenda 21 recognises the importance of women's traditional knowledge and practices, stresses the contributions women have made to biodiversity conservation (Section 24.8 (a)) and asks that specific measures be adopted to transform objectives into strategies (Section 24.2(f)).

The convention on biological diversity (CBD), adopted in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio 'Earth Summit'), is the international framework for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the fair distribution of its benefits. The objective of the CBD is to promote the sustainable use of biodiversity. This convention recognises that biodiversity includes not only plants, animals, micro-organisms and their ecosystems, but also human beings and their needs (e.g. food, clean air, medicines and a clean and healthy environment). To date, it has been ratified by 190 states. Women's participation has been explicitly addressed within the CBD. Paragraph 13 of the Preamble of the Convention mentions the important participation of women in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity: "Recognise the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, emphasising the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policymaking and implementation for biological diversity conservation."

At the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, the link between gender, the environment and sustainable development was clearly defined. Area K of the Platform for Action makes specific reference to the environment with strategic objectives and action as central themes, including the poverty that affects many women; the need for women to participate vigorously in making decisions about the environment at all levels; and integration of the gender perspective in sustainable development policies and programmes. This perspective was later apparent in a number of international meetings that further explored the relationship between gender and sustainable development. BPfA Area K on Women and Environment identifies the following strategic objectives:

Strategic objective K.1: Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels

Strategic objective K.2: Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development

Strategic objective K.3: Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

The Earth Charter (2000), the international declaration of fundamental values and principles aimed at building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century, “seeks to inspire in all peoples a sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the human family, the greater community of life, and future generations”. In particular, Article 11 states: Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care and economic opportunity.

During the UN World conference on disaster reduction held in Hyogo (2005), the United Nations agreed on the opportunity to integrate gender equity into all decision-making and planning processes related to disaster risk management.

The Framework for Action of the World Conference on Disaster Reduction states: “A gender perspective should be integrated into all disaster risk management policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training. Develop early warning systems that are people centred, in particular systems whose warnings are timely and understandable to those at risk, which take into account the demographic, gender, cultural and livelihood characteristics of the target audiences, including guidance on how to act upon warnings, and that support effective operations by disaster managers and other decision makers. Ensure equal access to appropriate training and educational opportunities for women and vulnerable constituencies, promote gender and cultural sensitivity training as integral components of education and training for disaster risk reduction”.

The Future We Want outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development/ Earth Summit (Rio+20) held in Rio de Janeiro 2012, recognises gender equality as an important cross-cutting issue, makes several gender-specific references in the preamble and in sectoral and thematic areas, and includes a special thematic section on gender equality and the empowerment of women, in which several provisions are made to enhance gender equality in the context of sustainable development and the promotion of a green economy. The document states that “women have a vital role to play in achieving sustainable development” and recognises “the leadership role of women”. In the document the United Nations “resolve to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and to ensure their full and effective participation in sustainable development policies, programmes and decision-making at all levels”.

The Sendai Framework is the successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters. It was adopted at the Third UN World Conference in Sendai, Japan, on 18 March 2015. It is the outcome of stakeholder consultations initiated in March 2012 and intergovernmental negotiations from July 2014 to March 2015, supported by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction at the request of the UN General Assembly. Attention is posed on a participatory process which need to be tailored to the needs of users, including social and cultural requirements, in particular gender.

UNESCO

Since the fourth UNESCO Forum on Gender Equality held on 19 June 2008 with a deep focus on the gender dimensions of climate change, the commitment of UNESCO and its Division for Gender Equality to the mainstreaming of gender equality considerations throughout all of its actions to mitigate and/or adapt to global climate change, have clearly emerged. During the forum, UNESCO analysed the causes and foreseen effects of global climate change, highlighted the importance of integrating a gender equality dimension from the start into action to address climate change.

Policy cycle in environment and climate change

How and when? Environment and Climate Change integration of the gender dimension into the policy cycle

The gender dimension can be integrated in all phases of the policy cycle. For a detailed description of how gender can be mainstreamed in each phase of the policy cycle [click here](#).

Below, you can find useful resources and practical examples for mainstreaming gender into environment and climate change policies. They are organised according to the most relevant phase of the policy cycle they may serve.

Practical examples of gender mainstreaming in environment and climate change

Austria

Integration of gender-related concerns and gender perspectives in sustainable development policies and programmes is realised through the Austrian Development Cooperation Agency (OEZA). In this context, the OEZA recognises the UN's environmental conventions, the principles of EU policies and the OECD Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in the inter-ministerial Strategic Guideline on Environment and Development (Strategischer Leitfaden Umwelt & Entwicklung) which was adopted by the Cabinet in September 2009. Women, as important guardians of environmental knowledge, are crucial actors when it comes to changes in natural resource management.

Furthermore, in December 2012 the Austrian Foreign Ministry organised the Vienna Policy Dialogue on Gender Equality in cooperation with UNDESA and UN Women. The event, Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation and the post-2015 development agenda, was mainly aimed at preparing the fourth Development Cooperation Forum of the UN Economic and Social Council in 2014. The subjects discussed were, first and foremost, how gender equality and women's empowerment can be positioned in the global environmental development agenda of the future.

Finland

As part of Finland's presidency in the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2011, an electronic portal about climate change and gender was created. The Nordic gender equality ministers have been working to include a gender equality perspective into solutions targeted towards mitigation and adaptation work and to disseminate information on gender equality in climate change and sustainable development. The portal collects knowledge about climate and gender from a number of different perspectives including transport, consumption, food and energy. It also contains information about gender-aware climate work in the Nordic countries as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland and also on global level (UN). Furthermore, it contains information about activities, reports and political decision-making regarding gender equality and climate change as well as portrays practical examples about how women and men, and girls and boys, are affected, and how they in turn affect climate change through their lifestyles and behaviour patterns.

Sweden

The Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (Formas) is to pursue the impact of a gender perspective in research and promote equality between men and women. Formas annually reports on its work on, among other things, the distribution of women and men in its drafting groups and in applications received and approved applications.

Timeline

The key milestones of the EU environment and climate change policy are presented below.

United Nations Conference on Human Environment, Stockholm

1972 - 1972

First EEC Environmental Action Programme

1973 - 1973

EEC Treaty: Environment is integrated into the European Economic Commission (EEC) Treaty and a legal part of the (now called) European Union

The objectives of the European Environmental Policy are set in its Article 191.

1987 - 1987

EU sets emission targets

1990 - 1990

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro with its United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

1992 - 1992

During the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro on 13 June 1992, 178 governments voted to adopt the Agenda 21 programme

Read the programme [here](#).

1992 - 1992

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), adopted in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio 'Earth Summit')

[Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD), adopted in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio 'Earth Summit'), in which the important participation of women in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is explicitly mentioned.

1992 - 1992

BPfA Area K on Women and Environment

[BPfA Area K on Women and Environment](#)

1995 - 1995

Adoption of the Kyoto Protocol

[Adoption of the Kyoto Protocol](#) with the objective of reducing emissions of GHGs by 5% between 2008 and 2012 by taking more energetic (and legally binding) measures.

1997 - 1997

Adoption of the First European climate change programme (ECCP)

Adoption of the First European climate change programme (ECCP) which aims at identifying and developing all the necessary elements of an EU strategy to implement the Kyoto Protocol.

2000 - 2000

European Water Framework Directive

2000 - 2000

The Earth Charter

[The Earth Charter.](#)

2000 - 2000

European Commission Directive 2003/87/EC

European Commission Directive 2003/87/EC that regulates the EU Emissions Trading System, the EU's key instrument for reducing GHG emissions from industry.

2003 - 2003

The Kyoto Protocol comes into force

2005 - 2005

UN World conference on disaster reduction held in Hyogo (2005)

The United Nations agreed on the opportunity to integrate gender equity into all decision-making and planning processes related to disaster risk management.

2005 - 2005

EU Biodiversity Action Plan

2006 - 2006

Adoption of the Climate and Energy Package

Adoption of the Climate and Energy Package that introduced an integrated approach to climate and energy policy with the aim of transforming Europe into a highly energy-efficient, low-carbon economy. The Climate and Energy Package set the mid-term targets, commonly known as the 20-20-20 targets.

2008 - 2008

EU Climate and Energy Package of binding climate change legislation

It sets compulsory national targets for renewable energy which reflect Member States' different starting points and potential for increasing renewables production as well as for emissions from sectors not covered by the EU Emissions Trading System.

2009 - 2009

Council of the European Union conclusions on climate change and development. 2974th External Relations Council Meeting, Brussels

Read the conclusions [here](#).

2009 - 2009

European Parliament Resolution 29 September 2011: On developing a common EU position ahead of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

Read the resolution [here](#).

2011 - 2011

The Future We Want, outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development/Earth Summit (Rio+20) held in Rio de Janeiro 2012

Read the document [here](#).

2011 - 2011

Council conclusions on gender equality and the environment: Enhanced decision-making, qualifications and competitiveness in the field of climate change mitigation policy in the EU

Read the conclusions [here](#).

2012 - 2012

The European Parliament Resolution of 11 September 2012: On women and the green economy

Read the resolution [here](#).

2012 - 2012

The European Parliament Resolution 20 April 2012: On women and climate change, is concerned explicitly with exposing and addressing the links between climate change and gender

Read the resolution [here](#).

2012 - 2012

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, including objectives of environmental policy.

2012 - 2012

Adoption of the 7th Environmental Action Programme (until 2020)

2013 - 2013

Adoption of the European Climate Adaptation Strategy

[Strategy](#) aims to strengthen Europe's resilience against the impacts of climate change.

2013 - 2013

Resolution of 9 June 2015 on the EU strategy for equality between women and men post 2015

The European Parliament, in its [Resolution](#) of 9 June 2015 on the EU strategy for equality between women and men post 2015, calls on the Commission to gather gender-specific data with a view to conducting an impact assessment for women in the areas of climate, environment and energy policy.

2015 - 2015

Paris climate conference (COP21)

Paris climate [conference](#) (COP21) which in December 2015, adopted the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal.

2015 - 2015

Current policy priorities at EU level

The overarching policy priorities of EU policy for environment and climate are clearly identified in the 7th [Environment Action Programme](#) (EAP) will be guiding European environment policy until 2020.

In particular, it identifies 3 key objectives:

To protect, conserve and enhance the Union's natural capital: in this field the EAP commits the EU and its Member States to speed up the implementation of existing strategies, fill gaps where legislation doesn't yet exist, and improve existing legislation.

To turn the Union into a resource-efficient, green, and competitive low-carbon economy: the EAP sets out the conditions that will help transform the EU into a resource-efficient, low-carbon economy. There is a special focus on turning waste into a resource and to move towards more efficient use of our water resources. This requires:

- full delivery of the Climate and Energy Package to achieve the 20-20-20 targets and agreement on the next steps for climate policy beyond 2020

- significant improvements to the environmental performance of products over their life cycle

- reductions in the environmental impact of consumption, including issues such as cutting food waste and using biomass in a sustainable way.

To safeguard the Union's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and well-being: this third key action area covers challenges to human health and well-being, such as air and water pollution, excessive noise and chemicals. Europe needs to be sufficiently resilient to challenges posed by new and emerging risks, including the impacts of climate change. Thus it is necessary to:

- update air quality and noise legislation

- improve implementation of legislation relating to drinking and bathing water

- tackle hazardous chemicals, including nanomaterials, chemicals that interfere with the endocrine system and chemicals in combination, as part of a broader, strategic approach for a non-toxic environment.

A set of 4 so-called ‘enablers’ will help Europe deliver on these goals:

Better implementation of legislation, that would save €72 billion a year; increase the annual turnover of the EU waste management and recycling sector by €42 billion; and create over 400,000 new jobs by 2020.

Better information by improving the knowledge base, in order to improve the way data and other information is collected, managed and used across the EU; invest in research to fill knowledge gaps; develop a more systematic approach to new and emerging risks.

More and wiser investment for environment and climate policy, that can be effective only if impacts on the environment are properly accounted for and if market signals also reflect the true costs to the environment. This involves applying the polluter-pays principle more systematically; phasing out environmentally harmful subsidies; shifting taxation from labour towards pollution.

Full integration of environmental requirements and considerations into other policies such as regional policy, agriculture, fisheries, energy and transport will ensure better decision-making and coherent policy approaches that deliver multiple benefits.

Two additional horizontal priority objectives complete the programme:

To make the Union's cities more sustainable, promoting and expanding initiatives that support innovation and best practice sharing in cities; ensuring that by 2020, most cities in the EU are implementing policies for sustainable urban planning and design, and are using the EU funding available for this purpose.

To help the Union address international environmental and climate challenges more effectively, many of the priority objectives in the EAP can only be achieved in cooperation with partner countries or as part of a global approach.

Want to know more?