

Key messages on Beijing+25 review: Virginija Langbakk

There is a number of longstanding gender equality challenges in the EU. One of the most striking ones is the unequal division of unpaid work, which seriously limits women's participation in the economy - care responsibilities keep 7.7 million of working-age women out of the labour market compared to 0.5 million of men. Among other things, the unequal distribution of unpaid work contributes to substantial gender inequalities in the labour market, including employment, pay and pension gaps; increasingly precarious jobs and higher poverty risks for women; and lack of women in decision-making.

Beyond these longstanding inequalities, there is also a number of newly emerging challenges. The intensification of **climate change** and the threats it poses to the safety, livelihood and well-being of people is one of the most pressing concerns of our times. Mitigating the climate crisis and transitioning to a low-carbon economy, society and lifestyle will mobilise the energies and focus of all spheres of society. Data on attitudes and behaviour towards climate change shows women being more likely to adopt behaviours that are favourable to the environment^[1].

However, despite improvement in women's representation in UNFCC delegations, EIGE's data shows that women are still very much side-lined from decision-making role with only one fifth of all government ministries dealing with environment, climate change, energy and transport being entrusted to women^[2]. Policy-making on climate change adaptation and environmental protection is still gender blind.

We know that among other effects, global warming is pushing more and more people to move and seek refuge and greater livelihood opportunities elsewhere and that **migration flows** are likely to intensify in the coming years. EIGE's report shows much more work is need to ensure that the specific needs and concerns of migrant women and girls are met, in terms of protection from gender-based violence, health care and support through the asylum process. The EU's current response to migration appears to be increasingly focussed on securitisation, which can be seen in the large allocation for funds to institutions working on border enforcement. Along with this trend, we see a decreasing level of attention being paid to human rights and the gender specific needs of migrants and asylum-seekers^[3].

From women asylum seekers facing sexual assaults in reception centers to women political leaders receiving routinely receiving death threats on social media, **gender-based violence**, either sexual, physical or psychological, is one of the most pervasive forms of gender inequalities. The past two years have opened our eyes to how commonly women experience violence in all spheres of life. We are now grappling with the wide reaching impact this exposure to violence has on our societies. From young women choosing to remain silent in debates on line from fear of abuse^[4] to journalists and elected

^[1] This is seen across three examples of personal action taken to counter climate change, namely: reduce consumption of disposable items, reduce waste and recycle regularly and buy locally produced and seasonal food. Source: Special Eurobarometer 459, Climate Change.

^[2] In EU Member States, in 2018, women accounted for only a fifth (21.6 %) of all government ministers dealing with environment, climate change, energy and transport, compared to 30.2 % of all ministers. Source: EIGE's gender statistic database.

^[3] The European Agenda on Migration represents the European Commission's initial policy response to the increased numbers of asylum-seekers in 2015 (Degani & Ghanem, 2019). Although this document emphasises the importance of saving lives and protecting asylum seekers, it is still 'securitised', given its focus on border management and reducing incentives for irregular migration (European Commission, 2015b). Importantly, this response is also gender-blind, which means that the vulnerabilities and specific needs of to female asylum seekers are ignored (Degani & Ghanem, 2019).

^[4] In 2018, EIGE's report has shown that exposure to online abuse disproportionately affects young women. It can have far-reaching effects on their engagement online, including that of political and civic participation. After witnessing or

leaders turning away from political affairs due to toxic abuse from peers or complete strangers^[5]. Ending violence against women would take a profound cultural shift. One way for Europe to achieve it to accede the Istanbul convention, once and for all.

To address the enormous challenges facing the EU at the moment, from a crisis in European values, international tensions, climate change, migration flows, European countries simply cannot succeed if half of their population is held back with stigma and violence. The backlash against gender equality should encourage countries to renew their efforts and commitment to making gender equality a lived reality for all.

experiencing online hate speech/abuse, 51 % of young women and 42 % of young men in the EU hesitate to engage in social media debates due to fear of experiencing abuse, hate speech or threats.

^[5] A global survey of women parliamentarians found that over 80 % had been subject to some form of psychological violence, while two-thirds had experienced humiliating sexual or sexist remarks (IPU, 2016).