



# Toward a sustainable and gender responsive economy

Delphi Economic Forum  
Thessaloniki International Fair

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POLICY AND GENDER EQUALITY



## Toward a sustainable and gender responsive economy

This report is a summary of the conversations that took place on Spring and Fall of 2022 in the Inclusivity Lounges at the Delphi Economic Forum V and at the Thessaloniki International Fair respectively. The Inclusivity Lounge was organized for the third consecutive year by Women On Top, with the support of the U.S. Mission to Greece and under the auspices of the General Secretariat for Demographic and Family Policy and Gender Equality.

This is not a verbatim transcript of the conversation and is based upon the video observation, secondary sources, and written notes of the author.

The notes are intended to capture only the main points made in the conversation and do not imply a specific opinion or commitment on the part of the discussants, the author or the organizers and hosts.

See and read more:

**Inclusivity Lounge @ Delphi Economic Forum 2022**

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXsK0ItWuolfjs53G3BviktR\\_6cvt8VH](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXsK0ItWuolfjs53G3BviktR_6cvt8VH)

<https://womenontop.gr/inclusivity-loungegia-triti-xronia-sto-delphi-economic-forum>

**Inclusivity Lounge @ Thessaloniki International Fair 2022**

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXsK0ItWuonKxWO\\_GQhrMaU17LlOlC55](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXsK0ItWuonKxWO_GQhrMaU17LlOlC55)

<https://womenontop.gr/4o-inclusivity-lounge-sti-diastavrosi-tis-emfilis-isotitas>

## INTRODUCTION

*Since 2020, the Inclusivity Lounge has been creating physical and virtual spaces for exchanging ideas and networking around the big issues of technology, the economy, sustainability and health and the ways these intersect and converse with the many aspects of gender equity, diversity and inclusion.*

*Our goal for this initiative has always been to bring issues of social cohesion, sustainable development and inclusive leadership to heart of important international fora for decision making and the exchange of knowledge, such as the Delphi Economic Forum, and the Thessaloniki International Fair.*

*In 2022, as the whole world reckoned with the need for decisive action at the face of the climate and energy crises, the IL brought together renowned Greek and international speakers to discuss the impact of climate change on women and marginalized populations as well as the role that female changemakers are and should be playing in the field of sustainable development.*

*Those conversations on the intersection of the gender equality and the climate crisis, inclusion, and sustainability, are not yet happening on a wide scale. But as Women On Top, we are committed to facilitating and disseminating these hard, open, and data-driven conversations and we are very grateful that through the Inclusivity Lounges we have the chance to do so with the help of very experienced and knowledgeable scholars, professionals, and policy makers from all over the world.*

*During both Inclusivity Lounges in Delphi and Thessaloniki, U.S. Ambassadors to Greece, Geoffrey R. Pyatt and George J. Tsunis, respectively, as well as Secretary General for Demographic Family Policy and Gender Equality, Kalypso Goula, offered their remarks. We created this report to summarize and synthesize all the important information and insights that emerged from the stimulating discussions that took place during both events. And it is our hope that this material will become a springboard for more worthwhile initiatives around crucial economic, political, environmental, and social issues.*

**Stella Kasdagli**  
Co-founder Women On Top



**inclusivity**  
LOUNGE @ DEF 2022

*"I think it is important for all of us to understand that the world is going through a series of crises, all of which have affected women disproportionately; the war in Ukraine I have talked about, the focus of the Inclusivity Lounge this year, the climate crisis disproportionately affecting women and mothers around the world; the COVID crisis, which we talked about last year. So, if we are going to be successful in addressing these challenges, we also have to address the improvement of the situation of women, the empowerment of women; this has been a priority for me almost since the day of my arrival in Greece six years ago. I have been really proud of all the different programs that the Embassy has been involved with, focused on reinforcing all that is already happening in Greek society, in terms of strengthening the position of women and girls, women's entrepreneurial empowerment, women's political empowerment."*

**Geoffrey R. Pyatt**  
Former U.S. Ambassador to Greece

April 7th, 2022

# A gendered climate: How is the climate crisis affecting women in Greece and the EU?

## Zefi Dimadama

Senior Research Fellow of  
the Department of International  
European and Area Studies  
at the Panteion University

## Vassilis Koutsoumbas

Co-founder and Executive  
Director of WeFor

## Aubrey Paris

PhD, State Department Advisor  
on Gender and Climate

In conversation with **Stella Kasdagli**, Women On Top Co-Founder

## THE ISSUE

Based on a 2022 study spearheaded by Women On Top and implemented by researchers from Panteion University and the SustainableWE team, on the gendered impact of the climate crisis in Greece and in the Mediterranean area, Zefi Dimadama laid out some interesting and concerning facts regarding the way the climate crisis disproportionately affects women.

- Women and men are affected differently from the climate crisis and the natural disasters (droughts, wildfires, floods etc.) that are often caused by it.
- More women die in natural disasters than men, and women experience mental health issues after those disasters. For example, in the case of the Mati wildfires in 2019, we have some studies indicating that we have had more women victims than men.
- One reason for that is that during crises, women are also primarily facing the task of protecting the children and the elderly.
- Even when local women try to offer their knowledge of the place as a way out for trapped individuals, many people do not trust them because of prevailing gender stereotypes, and they wait from male inhabitants to guide them.
- Although we have more women working, after the wildfires, as nurses and as volunteers in the area, unfortunately these women are not often in the leading positions that one would expect them to be.
- The climate crisis are mostly impacting rural areas, because of the economic effects of floods and droughts.
- Women who work in rural areas as farmers are often uninsured, which means that they cannot easily access financial support after natural disasters.
- Last but not least, 80% of climate refugees and climate migrants, who leave their places of residence because of the effects of the climate crisis, are women and children.

As Ms. Paris noted, the conversation around the intersection of gender and sustainability is one that has been at various stages in different parts of the world, probably because different parts of the world have been seeing this problem for longer than others. Climate change and gender intersect when it comes to factors like food security, water security, natural resource degradation, conflict and instability, migration and displacement, gender-based violence, health, education, livelihoods, and also entrepreneurship.

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Talking about the intersection of gender and sustainability, Ms. Dimadama added that we need more women leaders active in sustainability, because decision making bodies (such as Parliaments) with more women in their ranks are more open to having negotiations around issues of sustainable development.<sup>1</sup> It seems that women are more aware of the need balance the economy, the society and the environment, probably because they are more aware of environmental issues in their everyday lives. But, Ms. Dimadama emphasized, women are not immune to gender stereotypes around their capabilities, which sometimes they themselves internalize, with serious adverse effects for their self-confidence.

Referring to what this issue means for the United States Ms. Paris made a special mention at the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, which was released by the White House in October 2021. This strategy outlines a series of strategic priorities that must be addressed to achieve gender equality goals in foreign and domestic policy. One of the strategic priorities in this national gender strategy is promoting gender equity and mitigating and responding to climate change.

This recognizes a two-front approach to addressing the gendered climate axis. On the one hand, the disproportionate impacts of the effects of climate change on women and girls must be addressed, but on the other hand there is the equal importance of empowering women and girls as leaders in effecting change and addressing the climate crisis. This is of course true in decision making bodies, but it is also important to recognize the critical role that women and girls play on the ground often times running local organizations, community projects, initiatives and programs that are particularly meaningful, particularly effective, because they understand the context of their environment, their community and their families.

<sup>1</sup> As Ms. May Zanni mentioned later in the discussion, there was one study that had to do with 91 countries and national Parliaments, which showed that there is a strong positive relationship between the percentage of seats occupied by women in a Parliament and the climate change policy that is taken by it.

## SCALING IMPACT

Through an initiative called The Innovation Station, the U.S. State Department tries to identify women and girls who are developing local solutions that are effective and help them connect with new communities, whether that be in the United States or in other countries around the world where their solutions might be effective. Just because their community is facing wildfires, does not mean that other communities around the world are not facing wildfires. So, the solutions they generate in the Pacific Northwest of the United States might have applicability to places like Greece or elsewhere in the world.

This two-front approach intersects with a lot of policy priorities related to gender; it intersects with women's peace and security, with women's economic empowerment and with preventing and responding to gender-based violence. So, climate change is a truly cross-cutting issue when it comes to gender issues. Mr. Koutsoumbas also offered some ideas based on the perspective of someone who has been actively involved in community organizing in the past years and who can see the climate change to be one of the main challenges of their generation. He shared some context from his home city, Livadia, where most of the people work in the agricultural sector and when any new, bold and ambitious initiatives concerning, for example, climate change or digital transformation came to pass, one could observe the same pattern of fear and anxiety on their faces.

This anxiety and fear would sometimes turn to confrontation and upheaval, because business leaders, elected officials and maybe community organizers or NGOs did not take the time, in their zeal for progress, to explain how people's lives will change, how they will be impacted and how they will improve in the end.

Mr. Koutsoumbas also offered the example of Western Macedonia where there has been a firm commitment by the government to decarbonize by 2027. Despite the undisputed value of this policy, decision makers have still not taken the time to explain to people who built their lives around these plants, around this community, how this is going to help their lives and improve them in the future.

Based on these examples and on the WeFor campaign in Athens, Mr. Koutsoumbas stressed that we have to find a way to correlate our global way of thinking with a local way of acting: organize awareness seminars, open consultation proceedings with young people, small communities, and disenfranchised groups, gather those proposals and promote them in the municipality, in an effort to make local people true stakeholders in the policy making process concerning climate change.

On that, Ms. Paris stressed the importance of finding ways to speak to what matters to different populations within society, whether that be different demographic groups, different ages or different geographies, because ultimately we need everyone's contribution to tackle the climate crisis. We need all genders, all ages, all backgrounds. It is critical to make

sure that we have that suite of solutions that we need. Because as we all know, the climate crisis is affecting different people in different parts of the world in different ways.

So, we cannot take the one size fits all approach; it is one of the reasons going to the local, regional, national, and international level is so important.

Moreover, Ms. Paris mentioned that youth are some of the most compelling advocates when it comes to tackling the climate crisis all around the world. Plus, they ultimately want effective solutions. And women and girls are often developing some of the most effective solutions. That roots back to the fact that because of traditional roles and responsibilities within families and communities, women are the ones interfacing directly with natural resources that are becoming scarce as the result of the climate crisis. For all of these reasons, number one, they are often the ones who are noticing when there are natural resources degradation problems or other impacts of the climate crisis that need to be addressed. And because they are the ones that are faced with these natural resources in the first place, they are more likely to have ideas that will sustain those natural resources.

In their role of being at the center of the family or at the center of the community, women and girls both have a tremendous amount of knowledge about what would be effective in the specific contexts of the communities where they live and work. They know what is culturally effective, meaningful and has legs to really speak to their community members and their family members.

When women are part of negotiation processes and other environment related decisions, like natural resource management decisions, those decisions tend to be more effective and last longer. And there is a huge economic opportunity here. When we empower women in economic sphere we know that that trickles down to benefit the entire community and the society as a whole. Because when women and girls are empowered as leaders and change agents in the climate crisis, they are not just fixing the issue for them, they are fixing the issue for everyone.

Asked about how the care economy intersects with sustainability, Mr. Koutsoumbas noted that the pandemic made us realize that we need to rethink the welfare state top to bottom.

Issues of social policies, such as strengthening the social safety nets and focusing on caretakers in our society have come to the forefront of public debates; and when it comes to caretakers, there is low pay, there is no recognition of services and there is a gender bias towards that field of work. The arduous task that we all have is to de-gender work, to de-gender services and to get rid of the notion that a man's success is solely correlated with how much money he makes, the kind of car he drives, the people he sleeps with, and not with the love, affection, caring that he shows towards his work.

Existing literature shows that men often believe that they will be considered as feminine if they act in an eco-friendly manner. But caring for the environment is neither feminine, nor masculine either; caring for the environment is human, as Mr. Koutsoumbas pointed out.

Which means that future policy makers, community organizers, industry stakeholders, have to advocate for that agenda and make it clear to everyone that this is a matter that we all have to care about.

## SOME PRACTICAL STEPS TO TAKE

- ▶ Work on creating 50-50 teams
- ▶ Join forces with many different stakeholders<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Invest in education
- ▶ Invest in more research studies

<sup>2</sup> On the issue of collaboration, Ms. Katerina Sokou later added: "You need to connect civil society and regional governance and cities with a central government, big politics, and make the link so that they interact, because in climate change it is more important than any other arguably sector. We need to have a global mindset and to look beyond our region. We need to engage our partners in the European Union, across the Atlantic and the U.S. to solve the specific problems of the Mediterranean. We need to engage with these stakeholders on the regional scale and on the global scale by also bringing in the gender aspect of the equation. I also think we should be engaging a new generation of journalists or public influencers on climate and supporting them to learn more about it and to provide a solution."





# Women in sustainability: Is gender equality the key to climate action?

**Manto Patsaoura**

Director of [kariera.gr](http://kariera.gr)

**May Zanni**

President and co-founder  
of Women Act

In conversation with **Pinelopi Theodorakakou**, Women On Top Co-Founder

## THE ISSUE

According to research by Women On Top and SustainableWE, 40% of women in Greece feel they have no role whatsoever in making environmental decision. However, for the women who feel they do, work and participation in local government seem to be the main platforms that allow them to have the power to affect decision-making. So, how are women represented in the field of sustainability in the corporate and political worlds?

According to Ms. Patsaoura, a recent study by PwC has highlighted the lack of awareness on the part of women about the green jobs that the growing green economy is generating. As a result, women are still falling behind in what we call the “green roles” of the future.

Although green jobs are increasing and female talent is increasing as well, women still lag their male counterparts. Another report showed that in the last six years 66% of the transitions made towards green jobs were made by men.

Also in the world of politics, Ms. Zanni said, women are underrepresented in environmental decision making at all levels.

## THE GREEN PATH SO FAR

According to Ms. Patsaoura, sustainability-related roles used to be connected with specific sectors, such as renewable energy or organic agriculture. They were tied to specific job titles, such as Sustainability Manager or ESG Reporting Lead, and they were considered to be the subject matter for environmental policy makers, or scientists, or researchers in large organizations. As more sectors started adopting sustainability goals, the green economy itself started expanding to include more sectors, and the more sustainability goals were attained the more inroads were introduced or redesigned to make sure there were people who would actually be pursuing these goals. Essentially what was once considered a “green career” and a “green role” has gone beyond environmental scientists and sustainability managers to include other professionals from other sectors that were not or have not being up to date considered green, like fashion, or transportation, or even finance.

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

According to Ms. Zanni, women's leadership is key to climate action. The participation of women generates more effective climate outcomes, as they assess risk differently and they prioritize the welfare of families and communities a lot more. As research has shown, their legislative behavior suggests that women make a difference by voting for more environmental protection when it comes down to it.

## THE CAUSES OF UNDERREPRESENTATION

- ▶ Gender-differentiated tasks
- ▶ Unpaid household labor
- ▶ Unequal power relations in communities
- ▶ Lack of visibility in public fora
- ▶ Glass ceilings that prevent them from reaching the top position when it comes to environmental leadership

To overcome the related systemic barriers, Ms. Zanni mentioned, we need gender responsive policy measures like land tenure reforms, gender quotas for environmental agencies, and investment in social services. This kind of affirmative action would increase the representation of women in politics and would also result in more country commitments to address climate change.

Ms. Patsoura echoed the same belief as it relates to the corporate world: green jobs and skills alone cannot make sure that we are heading towards the sustainable future we want, if there are still gender imbalances around the world. Women make up over half of the world's population and there is a lot of untapped talent there that could further economic growth.

So, it is imperative that we rethink the green economy from a gender perspective; any failure to do so will just make sure that these inequalities remain, they perpetuate, and they just set a clear and continuous obstacle to our moving towards a more sustainable future.

Unfortunately, while there are companies that are taking the lead and have taken initiatives to make sure that they provide an inclusive environment for all, the vast majority even fail to acknowledge there is an issue. So, according to Ms. Patsoura, the first step towards fighting against this gender gap is acknowledging that there is one and then deciding to take a stand and do something about it. The third important step is looking at ourselves, because we all have unconscious biases as individuals and as organizations that we need to battle before we even introduce a formal corporate policy or initiatives. Then there are multiple things that organizations can do to just move towards a more inclusive environment or a more diverse workforce: they could try to open up their pipeline of talent to make sure it is more diverse, they could promote more the female talent, they could be more transparent about compensation between men and women and the initiatives they take in this field, and they could also try to make the job descriptions more inclusive.

## WHAT CAN WE DO TO SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY EVERY DAY?

**“IT IS LOOKING INSIDE TO SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR ORGANIZATION, BUT ALSO LOOKING OUTSIDE ABOUT HOW THINGS ARE DONE IN YOUR INDUSTRY, IN YOUR SCOPE OF WORK AND MAKING SURE YOU TAKE EVEN THE SMALLEST ACTION STEP BY STEP TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU CORRECT SOMETHING THAT IT IS NOT RIGHT”**

said Ms. Patsaoura.

**“BECAUSE ONLY THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION CAN WE ASPIRE TO SEE A DIFFERENT FUTURE FOR US”.**

Ms. Zanni stressed the need to fight against male-only panels in public fora and empower women through mentoring and role-modelling.

A similar roadmap was laid out by Ms. Zanni regarding the necessary steps to advance female representation in politics. First a government needs to realize that they have a problem, and then to look at the roots: what are the systemic, the visible and invisible barriers that are holding women back from getting their voices heard and getting themselves into top leadership positions. Once they analyze the roots of this, they should look into how action can bring about change. Could this be by extensive education programs? Could this be by allowing women to have more help where they should have had some? Because the ambition is there, there is no ambition gap: women do want these positions, both in environmental leadership positions or elsewhere. They just do not get to have the same opportunities to go for them.



## WOMEN CREATING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE: THE CASE OF GJENGE MAKERS

Founded by Nzambi Matee, a Kenyan woman who also spoke at the Lounge, Gjenge makers offer sustainable, affordable alternatives to traditional construction materials by turning plastic waste into paving tiles and drywall bricks, tackling two problems – plastic pollution and the Kenyan housing crisis – with one solution.

Gjenge Makers use plastic waste shredded into small pieces and mix it with sand. The mixture is then heated and molded into the final shapes. Gjenge plastic paving bricks are up to 7 times stronger than concrete blocks while only weighing half, thereby saving logistics costs and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Plastic waste is a worldwide problem with currently only 20% of all plastics going into recycling. In Nairobi alone, 500 metric tons of plastic waste are being generated every day.

Gjenge makers takes in free plastic waste that cannot be recycled any more from packaging factories, topped up by additional material from recycling plants.

Currently they have the capacity to produce 1500 paving bricks per day. With equity investment, they could scale their daily production up to 4500 bricks and move into the housing bricks sector.



# Gender-smart finance: unlocking an inclusive and sustainable future

## Elena Pefkianaki

Project Manager, General  
Secretariat for Family Policy  
and Gender Equality, Ministry  
of Labour and Social Affairs

## Jessica Espinoza

2X Collaborative CEO

## Alice Korovessi

Managing Director, INZEB

## Adenike Oladosu

Nigerian climate activist

In conversation with **Marianna Skylakaki**, CEO Athinea

## THE ISSUE(S)

Systems of finance can shape the world we live in. So, if we want to rebuild a more inclusive and credible, sustainable post-pandemic world, inclusive finance plays a crucial role; how we allocate capital, how we invest, how we make financial decisions has a huge impact on economies and societies and communities. The COVID pandemic has also really put a spotlight on existing inequalities and has further exacerbated inequalities as well. It is not that these inequality crises have not been present before, but they have been really made visible by the crisis and have also been further exacerbated by the effect of the crisis.

The pandemic has also put a spotlight on the care economy and women's unequal care burden, as well as on the finance and support gaps for women and businesses. For example, women have lost their jobs at a greater rate than men during the pandemic, while gender-based balance has been skyrocketing after such a multidimensional crisis.

According to Ms. Espinoza, the post-pandemic recovery must look very differently from business as usual. Again, systems of finance play a key role in unlocking the potential of climate smart investing to rebuild more equitable, inclusive, and more resilient economies going forward.

## WHAT IS “INCLUSIVE FINANCE”?

Inclusive finance means looking at what are the barriers and the biases that are inherent in the traditional financial system and often in our economic systems and our economic models too, and how can we collectively use the power of finance and of the private sector to overcome those barriers. It means looking into who has traditionally been overlooked and under-represented and has not benefited to the same extent as others from financial systems and how we can then leverage the power of finance and the positive contribution that investing with a gender lens, a climate lens, and an SDG focus, can have to build a better post-pandemic world.

## WHAT IS “GENDER-SMART” FINANCE?

According to Ms. Pefkianaki, gender-smart finance involves learning how to better integrate gender into investment and finance processes, to make smarter choices that enhance returns, gender equality and women’s economic empowerment. However, integrating gender insights into finance processes is also just smart, since the most gender diverse teams exhibit stronger returns, higher profitability, innovation, value, sustainable growth and lower risk.



## IS ENERGY POVERTY AFFECTING WOMEN MORE?

According to Ms. Korovessi, the rates of energy poverty have been increasing, not only in Greece but in Europe, and everywhere in the world. Again, women are the ones that are most affected.

In the European Union approximately 55 million citizens are being affected by energy poverty; considering that we have a population of 500 million at EU level, 10% of citizens are affected by that. On the other hand, we have more than 100 citizens at the EU level that are affected by energy poverty during the hot months, and we see that many deaths are happening not only in the south part of Europe but also in the north. Women, however, are the ones that are most affected, and this is because women are actually the ones that are paid less.

Statistically, in 2017 women were paid 17% less than men, and women pensioners over 65 were receiving 30% less pensions and money in comparison with men. On the other hand, 98% of the single-family houses are depending on women and 48% of them

are under the risk of poverty, meaning they are also under the risk of energy poverty. And because women are managing the families, they are working for less money, and they work less hours than men. That is why we have increased rates of citizens who are affected by energy poverty that are women.

At the same time, in the almost 1,000 energy communities that exist today in Greece, less than 3% of board members are women. 3% are also the women who are part of the energy communities as members. This is something that needs to be examined: why is it happening and why are women not part of that? On the other hand, the same situation exists at the EU level.

That is why REScoop, the EU federation for energy communities and energy democracy, is actually examining why and how we can engage more women in the energy sector, not necessarily as engineers or scientists, but as citizens who need to be active in initiatives that are related to energy as a social good.

## THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND THE RISE IN GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

According to Ms. Oladosu, behind many acts of violence against women and girls, there is an environmental issue. For example, women and girls globally spend 200 million hours in collecting water; and water is a natural resource that is being depleted. So, women have to trek as far as 20 kilometers a day to be able to get cooking water, to support their family. At the same time, they try to look for firewood, which is also being depleted. All of these environmental issues are affecting women's ability to contribute towards the economic resilience of their families, but also their ability to contribute towards environmental stability conservation. Moreover, they are affecting their ability to get educated, because at some point the girls have to either drop out of school or to walk around the streets to get money for the parents.

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Ms. Pefkianaki brought up the strategy followed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, that integrates gender-based factors throughout the financing process to inform decisions.

For example, the Greek national action plan for gender equality aims at a holistic approach of gender equality policies, including actions on a gender mainstreaming, which is undoubtedly necessary and is fully in line with crisis management strategies, in the sense that inclusion, and the integration of diversity always brings better results.

The plan focuses on enhancing the equal participation of women in decision making processes and in the labor market, as well as on combatting gender-based violence -all prerequisites for a fuller female participation in climate change and policies and programs.

It includes the planning and implementation of policies aiming at closing the gender gap in the labor market, the pay gap and the pension gap, supporting families and the work-life balance of employees, enhancing childcare facilities, combating violence, supporting female entrepreneurship and promoting the education and training of women and girls in ICT.

One of the proposed programs of the Ministry within the RRF has been a Green Jobs initiative, which aims to support the transition to a green economy by subsidizing the creation of 5,000 new jobs in businesses with an emphasis on unemployed women. Another related initiative is the Innovation Lab For Women, which has been based on the UN model for sustainable development aiming at supporting and promoting female research, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Ms. Espinoza offered some background on the 2X Collaborative and on how gender-lens investing has been developed both for the private, but now increasingly for the public sector too. The 2X Collaborative started with a giant commitment at the G7 Summit in 2018. Its core challenge was to look at core business through a gender lens and allocate at least 3 billion by the end of 2020, so in a little bit less than three years.

The Collaborative then had to define a framework; so, they developed the 2X criteria, which define Gender Lens Investing as looking at one of five criteria -ideally all- at the starting point of any investment.





## THE 5 GENDER LENS INVESTING CRITERIA

### 1 Entrepreneurship

Looking at women as business owners and founders; this one is by itself sufficient to satisfy the definition of GLI

### 2 Leadership

Looking at the representation of women in senior management and on boards.

### 3 Equal employment

The share of women among employees, but also the existence of workplace policies and practices and the extent to which these promote gender equality and women's career advancement.

### 4 Products and services

How products and services are designed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> According to M.s Espinoza, traditionally products were often developed based on male prototypes. If you think about cars, for example, the reason why women are much more likely to die in car accidents is because cars are traditionally designed based on a male prototype. Or we can think about time-saving devices or gender-smart infrastructure that can reduce the drudgery of women: that would be a gender-smart product or a service.

### 5 Investments through financial intermediaries

Gender equality both at the institution itself and also at the portfolio level.

These criteria have since been integrated into existing standards and frameworks. For example, the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker has been aligned with the 2X criteria as well as with other international frameworks. And the reason it has been adopted widely was that it was integrated with standards that the private sector had already been using.

What the 2X Collaborative aims to achieve is to transform systems of finance. The idea is not to promote Gender Lens Investing as a new niche, but to make it the new normal, so that whenever we make an investment decision, whether we are in private equity or in private debt or in public markets, we will add this gender lens and look at how our investment affects gender equality, how it affects men and women differently and what we can do to structure the project in such a way that it has a positive effect on gender equality.

The 2X Collaborative also pursues a strong intersectional lens with climate. At COP26 in Glasgow, the 2X Collaborative launched a gender-smart climate finance toolkit that showed the connection between gender equality and the climate crisis. It has also developed a toolkit to show investors very practically, across different sectors, how they can make their climate finance more gender-smart, so that they can deliver on both goals and make the investment more effective.

Ms. Korovessi stressed the importance of education as a means to achieve the overarching goal of the EU to have a climate-neutral continent by 2050. This is not only about education at the policy or enterprise level. We need to go to the neighborhood level, the local level, and the regional level, because the context and the needs are totally different there. We cannot discuss the same things in the same way with women who live in a village somewhere in the north part of Greece and with career women who probably enjoy access to more information, while being based in Athens or Thessaloniki. So, everything that needs to be designed at policy level, needs to also be tailored according to the needs of each part.

At the same time governments, national, regional, local, and civil society organizations, NGOs, academia, and whoever is a major stakeholder in sustainability, need to take action together, to work together, to identify the opportunities and to promote inclusion in energy-related issues.

On the issue of education, Ms. Pefkianaki stressed that it is a crucial part of the government's gender equality plan to 2025. The plan includes measures to support the education of young girls and women on entrepreneurship, new skills, ICT, management -on every skill that they will need to be as competitive as men and to have the opportunities they deserve. Education programs need also revolve around concepts of equal human rights, equal rights for men and women, because without this kind of foundation and without boys and girls knowing that they have the exact the same rights, we cannot move on as a society, we cannot put women in decision-making processes, we cannot put women in leadership positions and we cannot integrate women's vision in all crisis management processes.

According to Ms. Oladosu, women have the knowledge and the solutions, but what they need is a platform. Due to the fact that there is environmental instability, they are finding it hard to contribute towards environmental conservation, towards including the indigenous knowledge. So, to help women to connect we need to provide them with the resources to access land ownership, for a start. Without the right to own land, women cannot access other resources such as education, or fertilizers, or seeds to ensure productivity.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, women produce 60% to 80% of food. But if women are not given total access to own land, they can't become a game changer or a solution multiplier. When they get access to land, they will be able to step up the action, promote climate-smart agriculture, grow more trees, grow more long-term crops, increase their financial strength and build their bargaining power. To that, Ms. Espinoza added that, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, if women farmers today had the same access to resources and agricultural land that men already have, 150 million people worldwide would be led out of hunger.



**inclusivity**  
LOUNGE @ TIF 2022

*“It is a great privilege for me to be at this forum, because I recognize the importance of it. Inclusivity, even on itself, even without this specific context is very important, because the opposite of that is exclusivity, and in no world should we seek to have exclusivity. The world works better, it is more just, it is fairer, it speaks to our common values when we seek inclusivity, fairness, equity. And equity is especially important when we are talking about 50% of the world’s population, 50% of the world’s capital. When I say “capital”, I mean brain capital, which is incredibly important. We are going to have to meet unprecedented challenges in the world today. We live in very consequential times, and we are going to need the full force of our resources to meet them, and that means that 50% of our population, 50% of our human capital, has to be included in any construct that we engage with. I hope that we will be able to meet at a future TIF without having to have this particular forum, because the issues of gender equity will be something in the past. I think that day is coming; unfortunately it is not today, but in the meantime I am privileged and proud to participate in this forum that advances these important goals, and I want to acknowledge the people that convened us today and salute their leadership.”*

**George J. Tsunis**  
U.S. Ambassador to Greece

September 11th, 2022

*“Greece has succeeded in being among the 12 countries worldwide that have achieved legal equality between men and women, but unfortunately we all understand that this is still not possible in practice. There is still discrimination against girls and women. Within the National Action Plan for gender equality, drawn up by the General Secretariat of which I have had the honor for a few months now to have the responsibility as General Secretary, we have included all the necessary actions to ensure a horizontal integration of a gender perspective. This means that the gender perspective can actually be established in the budgets as well as in individual actions. As an example, I will refer to issues of education, where we see the need to strengthen women’s access to new technologies, to innovation, to research, where they still have a very small presence. It is a great responsibility to be Secretary General at a time when we are called to implement all that we are planning. And it is very important, as the Ambassador rightly said and emphasized, to function, act, and plan together, because otherwise we will not be able to achieve social balance. At the end of the day if we do not achieve equal participation, all other results will be lacking.”*

**Kalypso Goula**  
General Secretary  
for Demographic and Family Policy  
and Gender Equality

# Endangered gender: How natural disasters and extreme weather conditions are affecting women everywhere

## Zefi Dimadama

Senior Research Fellow  
of the Department  
of International, European  
and Area Studies  
at Panteion University

## Jessie Catherine Thomson

Head of Delegation at  
the International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red  
Crescent Societies

## Maria Sitzoglou

Urban Designer and  
Participatory Planning Expert

## Bruce Bekkar

MD, Women's Health  
Physician, Fellow at Climate  
for Health ecoAmerica and  
Member of the Editorial Board  
of the Journal of Climate  
Change and Health

In conversation with **Pinelopi Theodorakakou**, Co-Founder Women On Top

## THE ISSUE(S)

Disasters affect men, women, boys and girls differently. We all have different needs, we have different capacities and crisis affects us all differently, and very often communities are impacted by disasters differently according to their power, their social status, their roles, their caregiving roles, even, you know, whether or not they have a seat at the table when it comes to decision making. And so, women and girls are all too often finding themselves with increased vulnerability in disasters, because of social norms, because of the roles that they play in society, and because of their access to resources and power. According to data shared by Ms. Thomson, when a disaster strikes, women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die. Out of the 230,000 people who were killed in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, 70% were women.

Ms. Thomson also noted that when we think about the gender-specific needs of women and girls in disasters, we tend to focus on things like menstrual hygiene and reproductive needs. What is maybe more invisible is the increase in gender-based violence that often accompanies a disaster -and that is not just the

sexual violence in the form of assault or sexual abuse or exploitation, but it is also domestic violence, as intimate partner violence increases in disasters.

The Red Cross conducted a study on gender-based violence in 2015, in a number of natural disaster responses, looking at incidence of GBV, and indeed there was fairly consistent evidence of increasing gender-based violence. The data is really weak for all the same reasons that data on gender-based violence is complicated: because of sensitivities around reporting, and stigma. This is further complicated in disasters, because law enforcement is disrupted, police are focused on civil protection duties, and on doing the basics from a disaster response perspective, and very often are not available or able to cope with issues linked to intimate partner violence or domestic violence or sexual assault or exploitation.

The conditions of disasters also just make everything ripe for violence: camps are overcrowded, shelters are overcrowded, bathrooms might not have locks on the doors or have inappropriate lighting, people are either with strangers, without the usual protec-

tive mechanisms that would be in place to keep them safe, or they are trapped with their violent partner in inappropriate housing.

Ms. Dimadama also stressed that the climate crisis affects women's health differently and that a reason why women are more vulnerable is the higher poverty levels amongst the female population. She also mentioned that women often internalize the idea that they do not know a lot of things about sustainability, and that maybe men have to be the leaders in issues of the environment and the climate crisis.

The health aspect was also emphasized by Mr. Bekkar, whose research has focused on pregnant women and birth outcomes, in relation to the climate change. In 2015, the American Academy of Pediatrics put out a very important technical report about the vulnerability of children to the impacts of climate change. It was a big picture analysis about vulnerability and within that paper there was a quote from the World Health Organization saying that over 85% of the disease burden of climate change would fall on children under the age of five.

Mr. Bekkar's subsequent research focused on reviewing over 1,800 studies from all over the world and it ended up focusing on very common exposures tied to climate change -air pollution and heat. It found a very strong association between those common exposures and the adverse birth outcomes of premature birth, low birth weight and stillbirth. With heat, there were nine out of ten studies showing that association, with air pollution coming up second with 48 studies out of 57 confirming correlation.

This was a review paper and it did not establish that climate change was causing the birth impacts, because that is a difficult step to get to. But the researchers feel like it is very likely that this is a cause-and-effect relationship, because first of all, there has been a number of mechanisms that have been identified for how certain exposures, like heat or air pollution, could trigger a premature birth and those other outcomes. What's more, there was a large variety of research approaches used to look at the same question, which basically all came to the same conclusion.

Another of our key findings of that research was that outcomes were generally worse for minority mothers in the U.S., and that Black women -even more so than Latinas- were more likely to have premature births or low birth weight babies or even stillbirths. This was

primarily tied to air pollution exposure and is also consistent with something researchers have known for a long time, which is that Black women in America are three times more likely to die during pregnancy than white women are.

It is important to point out that lots of other studies have come out since that paper was published in June of 2020. The paper itself has been cited more than 130 times, but what those papers have done by and large is to reinforce the initial findings, to give more weight to them, and to cover other countries that also seemed to be struggling with the same sorts of associations.

Last but not least, Ms. Sitzoglou brought up the fact that our cities are not resilient to the climate change and that they are not designed around the needs of women. The climate change is only here to exacerbate this inequality, and to make it more tangible, more personal, in the sense that any disruption that might be caused by the climate change impacts women who have specific responsibilities in different ways than men.

Ms. Sitzoglou brought up the example of disruptions in utility networks: when a city experiences electricity cuts or water scarcity, the schedule of most women, who tend to be the main "managers" of the household, also gets disrupted. Research also shows that women are using public transport more than men do and public transportation is strongly affected by any disruptions that might be caused in the urban environment.

So, from the urban perspective women are way more affected than men by the climate crisis, because women use the city in many different ways, and they use the city a lot more. Unfortunately, most of the urban facilities and services in Greece have been built around the needs of the average man, working in a 9-5 job. Women, on the other hand, have completely different needs.



## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

A good practice shared by Ms. Thomson is that, in times of disaster, the Red Cross try to collect data that is disaggregated by sex and by age, because if we do not have the numbers, if we do not know the needs of the people that we serve, it is pretty hard to ensure that we meet those needs as part of the response.

Another good practice by the Red Cross is to have a gender-balanced team to collect that information, because if you send in a team of men to a community and they only talk to the men in the community, you can be pretty sure that the picture of the needs that you will have will be very different. Ms. Thomson shared an example from when the Red Cross were responding to a cyclone that had hit a community. The team were there talking to the elected community elders, who were all men, about specific needs. They asked them, “please tell us a little bit about how women are part of the response”, and they said, “oh, they are not involved in this reconstruction effort”, while right behind them there were four women on a ladder patching a house.

Ms. Thomson stressed that all too often humanitarian responses bring a gender-blind response that leaves out those specific needs and vulnerabilities and leaves women behind. This is particularly true for the most vulnerable women, who might also be excluded in terms of race, ethnicity, age, or religion.

That said, according to Ms. Thomson, there is lots that can be done to tackle gender-based violence in disasters: to be better prepared for it, as a consequence of disasters, and to make sure that the supports are in place, so that women can get help, can seek justice, can get care, as well as psychosocial support. In any case, we cannot take a gender-blind approach, we cannot assume that there are no gender-specific needs, and hope that that is going to happen.

Mr. Bekkar also echoed that the protection of women has to be prioritized, both individually and also across society. As individuals, it is important to become aware of the specific risks of where we live. In some places heat is a bigger problem, but in general fires, droughts, extreme storms, and infectious disease, are all risks that are going to continue to grow. So, it is important to have plans in place about how to deal with them. We can make changes to our homes;

we can find out where cooling centers are and make sure that we are near one of them if we need to be. There are also air quality monitoring apps that people can download on their phones, that can send them alerts. This is really important not only for women, and especially vulnerable groups like pregnant women, but also for children, who are more vulnerable than average people, particularly if they have asthma.

But there is only so much that we can do individually. We also need to start talking more about pregnant bellies and less about polar bears. Sharing this information, sharing the data that has been coming out from studies, is a way of getting people’s attention. And it is not just to protect women: we know that if women are doing well in society, it impacts us all. Certainly, elected officials at all levels must start dealing with this issue more aggressively and they need to hear it from us. Elected officials are very interested to hear from their constituents, and talking about the needs of pregnant women and their babies is a very compelling message.

Mr. Bekkar stressed the importance of community organizing and of joining local environmental groups or climate change groups. These groups need to advocate for more renewable energy and more plans to deal with extreme heat. And then, Mr. Bekkar noted, there’s the issue of voting: it really should be a test of people’s fitness for office whether or not they see climate change as an urgent issue and are willing to act on it aggressively, he said.

Last but not least, Ms. Sitzoglou emphasized the importance of developing climate adaptation solutions for urban planning: we have come up with different solutions, but in order to apply them to urban contexts, that are so different from place to place, not only in terms of environmental differences but also of social and economical ones, and in order to implement a solution that can be effective and sustainable in the long-term, we need to establish participation processes. For example, if we are a local authority or if we are the coordinator of any type of solution, we need to keep in mind that to have a sustainable investment, we need to hear from the actual users: women, children and other minorities who are usually excluded from this process.

## THE EXAMPLE OF BARCELONA

**ACCORDING TO A GOOD PRACTICE  
MR. BEKKAR SHARED,**

**IN BARCELONA  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN  
MAKING THE NETWORK OF COOLING CENTERS  
AVAILABLE TO EVERYBODY, SO THAT NO ONE  
IS MORE THAN FIVE MINUTES AWAY  
FROM A COOLING CENTER,  
REGARDLESS OF WHERE THEY ARE  
WITHIN THE CITY.**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN ALSO HELP  
WITH RETROFITS  
AND WITH GETTING PEOPLE  
TO SWITCH GAS APPLIANCES  
TO ELECTRIC APPLIANCES  
IN THEIR HOME.**





# Climate and feminist diplomacy: what foreign policy has to do with sustainability and change?

## Dr. Aubrey Paris

Policy Advisor on Gender, Climate Change and Innovation  
at the Secretary of State's Office of Global Women's Issues

In conversation with **Elizabeth Lee**, U.S. Consul General in Thessaloniki

## THE ISSUE

While many people understand the importance of feminism and many also purport to understand the importance of climate change, most people do not see the connection or nexus between the two.

### What is the importance of the gender-climate nexus?

According to Dr. Paris, the gender-climate nexus is a combination of three different categories.

On the one hand, we see intersections with food and water security, and we see conflict drivers, migration, displacement, all of which have distinct disproportionate impacts on women and girls.

The second category is in the health and human rights space; the loss of livelihoods, loss of educational opportunities, as well as those health services etc., and the increase rates of gender-based violence.

The third bucket is opportunities-based, and that is the relationship between gender, climate change and economic empowerment, and the green and blue economies that are providing opportunities for new jobs for women, and really in any sector that is undergoing a green transition.

The U.S. government has adopted a two-pronged approach to the gender-climate nexus in policy, programming, and outreach. On the one hand, these disproportioned impacts of climate change on women and girls, and marginalized communities at large, must be addressed but at the same time and equally importantly women and girls must be empowered as leaders and agents of change as we seek to combat the climate crisis.

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Dr. Paris shared some good practices to tackle the issues emanating from the gender-climate nexus, such as:



# 1

Eliminating the silo that exists in so many spheres between climate policy and programming and gender policy and programming. Dr. Paris conjured the image of a Venn diagram, where you have two circles that should be interconnected because of overlapping themes. Too often, she said, for a long time now we have the gender and climate circles not overlapping at all. Breaking down those silos and making sure these conversations are happening at every level of government, as well as in the private sector, as well as in non-profit organizations, grassroots organizations etc., is a critical first step.

# 2

Women and girls and marginalized communities at large must be involved in conversations about climate policy and climate action from the get-go. They must be incorporated from the start, because that is the only way we can even attempt to make sure their perspectives are reflected throughout our policies and our programs and our actions. We also need to ensure that we are communicating with those groups from the get-go about what the challenges or barriers there exist to their participation and leadership in climate actions, that we can collaboratively work with them to then hopefully overcome.

# 3

Recognizing that women and girls are not a monolith and that there are various societal factors -identity factors ranging from racial and ethnic identity to LG-BTQI+ status, to indigenous status or rural location etc., that might compound the challenges that certain women and girls face. In that way we make sure that we are not trying to create a silver bullet to fix one problem without recognizing these niche areas that they require treatment.

# 4

Developing networks of women and girls around the world to share the solutions that they are generating in their communities that are effective and, therefore, might be translatable to other communities around the world. Climate change does not respect boundaries or borders, so a wildfire situation in Greece is going to be a similar challenge posed to folks in California, USA, who are facing wildfires, or the flooding that happened in Thessaloniki is reflective of challenges faced by the U.S. Gulf Coast community, as well as many other locations around the world. So, if women and girls are developing solutions to these challenges on the ground in one location, sharing those best practices or even collaborating to amplify the efforts of these women is going to be a really powerful solution.

## **SOME ARGUMENTS TO HELP MAKE THE CASE FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GENDER-CLIMATE NEXUS**

**AS DR. PARIS NOTED,  
THE FACT THAT EQUITY AND EQUALITY  
ARE ON THE TABLE SHOULD BE REASON ENOUGH,  
BUT WE KNOW THAT THAT IS NOT ENOUGH MOTIVATION  
FOR SOME COMMUNITIES.**

**THANKFULLY, AT THE SAME TIME,  
THE ECONOMIC BOTTOM LINE IS VERY CLEAR:  
INCLUDING WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE TRAINING  
AND THE RESOURCING AND THE FINANCING,  
AND IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS  
THROUGHOUT ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY,  
INCLUDING THE GREEN AND BLUE ECONOMIES,  
MAKES A LOT OF FINANCIAL SENSE.**

**ALSO, IF WOMEN AND GIRLS HAVE THE MOST EFFECTIVE  
SOLUTIONS IN A PARTICULAR INSTANCE,  
IF THEY ARE STOPPING FLOODING,  
THEY ARE NOT JUST STOPPING FLOODING FOR WOMEN  
AND GIRLS, THEY ARE STOPPING FLOODING  
FOR THEIR ENTIRE COMMUNITY, AND WOMEN AND GIRLS  
JUST HAPPEN TO BE INCLUDED.**

**SO, THE STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE AS TO WHY WE WANT  
TO HAVE WOMEN AND GIRLS REALLY AT THE TABLE  
AND LEADING THE WAY,  
IS THAT BECAUSE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS  
WITH THEIR FAMILIES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES  
AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT,  
HEY ARE OFTEN THE FIRST ONES TO SEE  
WHEN A NATURAL RESOURCE DEGRADATION IS HAPPENING,  
SO THEY ALSO MIGHT BE ABLE TO COME UP  
WITH THE SOLUTIONS NEEDED TO FIX IT.**

# The power to change: energy transition, green jobs and women's future in sustainability

## Kostas Hatzidakis

Minister for Labor  
and Social Affairs

## Katerina Notopoulou

Member of Parliament  
Thessaloniki A

## Margarita Maniati

Special Advisor  
To The President & CEO  
at PPC S.A.

## Effie Lazaridou

Chief Executive Officer,  
New Agriculture  
New Generation

In conversation with **Stella Kasdagli**, Co-Founder Women On Top

## THE ISSUE

As Ms. Notopoulou highlighted, at the beginning of this discussion, when we talk about development, green development, and a fair transition, we must not forget the gender dimension. We cannot talk about gender equality today if we do not also look at it from the perspective of the energy transition, and vice versa, we cannot talk about green development or fair development if we do not see it from the perspective of gender equality.

This is a very broad field, but extremely uncharted. There are important surveys, e.g by the OECD, and there is the National Action Plan for gender equality. There is also the commitment of the European Union to gender equality as a primary goal. At the same time, however, there is also criticism that the European Green Agreement has not included the dimension of gender equality to the extent it should.

So the question is, has energy today turned from a social good into a stock market product?

And what does this mean for women's lives?



## 5 TAKEAWAYS FROM A DISCUSSION WITH KOSTAS HATZIDAKIS, MINISTER FOR LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

1 It is a delusion to think that climate change does not exist and an even greater delusion that it can be treated with magic recipes. On the other hand, despite the steps that have been taken on the issue of gender equality, it is clear that much more needs to be done and the government is extremely aware of this issue.

2 Due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, things have changed in relation to the energy transition due, in every country. We are witnessing a return to lignite and coal and Greece cannot be an island that will move in one direction when the whole of Europe and the whole world is going backwards and forwards, because the cost of energy produced by natural gas has skyrocketed. As a result, lignite, which was very expensive anyway, due to carbon dioxide emissions and how much they cost power producers, has become, within imports, much cheaper than natural gas. While these issues are bound to last for some time, we will then move again in the direction of de-lignitization, the energy transition, the spread of green energy.

3 It is clear from the data available that women face the highest unemployment rates in Greece. Unemployment among women is 3-4 points higher than unemployment among men. For this reason, the Ministry gives special priority to addressing this problem through OAED (now DYPA) programs. One of the four priorities of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality concerns gender mainstreaming, precisely to integrate the gender dimension in public policy given the energy transition. Among the programs implemented in the context of the transition for the post- lignite era in western Macedonia and the Peloponnese, there is an emphasis on women among other sensitive social groups.

4 When we talk about female workers, we are definitely talking about upskilling them in order to adapt to the new era, because one cannot simply get a degree at some point in time and think that with it he can advance his entire professional path, adjustments are needed.

5 Renewable energy sources have spread enough in Greece, they will spread even more. This is a positive message for the future as well, not only for environmental reasons, but also for reasons related to the economy because the energy produced from renewable sources is much, much cheaper.

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

As Ms. Notopoulou emphasized, when we talk about gender equality, we talk about are two pillars: the first is the inclusion of gender equality and the second is the equal participation of women. This is why the empowerment of women is of particular value, precisely so that they can be included in the formulation of policies.

According to Ms. Notopoulou, the energy transition can be a great opportunity to create sustainable jobs and development in local communities, but it can also leave a lot of people behind. There is the phenomenon of energy poverty and the exclusion of women from both renewable energy sources and from any form of energy or social good.

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### The role of the PPC

According to Ms. Maniati, de-lignitization is not something that started now, it has started for 10-12 years. It is a necessity, given everything that is happening due to climate change and more broadly all the geopolitical developments that we have. For many years, very important regions, such as Western Macedonia and Megalopolis in the Peloponnese, have born the burden power generation for decades. Essentially a monoculture of mining and power generation from lignite has been created and it is very, very reasonable for there to be fear, because many of the residents of those areas, including women, now see a dead end. So it is very important for all stakeholders– including the PPC, but also all state bodies at all decision levels – to take into account what should be done the next day, how we will create actions which will help the development of new economic activities.

Ms. Maniati stressed the importance of participatory interactive actions. In general, there is a tradition, especially in Greece, of having what we would call a “top-down approach”. That is, we decide at a central level and then essentially there is either a short consultation, or there is a briefing as to what these decisions are.

Here lies a very big opportunity to promote a greater participation and involvement of all stakeholders –especially of women and more broadly of local communities, so that they are there not only when we tell them what will be done, but that they are active members of the planning process of tomorrow, because they know the idiosyncrasy of their place better. That is what we call a “local-centric approach” which looks at all levels, at the environment, at society, but also at the economy.

That is why we should strive for the participation of entities from all branches of the economy and there should certainly be participation of the public sector, the private sector, civil society, the academic sector, etc. We need to create initiatives that build a better relationship with local communities, a two-way communication that is fostered over time.

The same sentiment was shared by Ms. Notopoulou, who stressed that we need to decide collectively whether we want to design policies together or to let the markets to design them for us. If local communities make the choice to let the markets decide for them, said Ms. Notopoulou, then they will very likely be exposed to poverty and unemployment. No change can be achieved without the participation of local communities and it is in the hands of all of us, especially the women who lead this effort, either as consumers, or even as influencers, as consumption models, or as scientists, to move towards that direction.

## THE ROLE OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

According to data shared by Ms. Lazaridou, the agri-food sector is the second employment sector in Greece, with a contribution of 9% to the GDP together with food processing.

Women participate in agri-food, in a percentage of about 27.5% as heads of agricultural holdings. This percentage is very close to the European average. However, women head farms that comprise 13.3% of the land under cultivation, which means that we are at the European average in terms of the number of women, but that these women work on just the smaller farms.

These women usually take much more calculated risks, and because of that they make better business moves. On the other hand, when you talk to them in the field and ask them, what do you do? They say, basically nothing, I don't do any work. Dealing with exploitation is so central to their lives, that this work-life balance notion that we talk about in the city does not exist for them. They will tell you that their life has always been like this, that they have always been mothers, they have always been producers, they have always had the role of taking care of the house, so this whole thing brings them much closer to the real needs and the changes that take place around them, without us realizing it. Sustainability and sustainable practices are not something outside of what they do and they themselves are much more open to change.



# Sustainable inclusion: the role of women in ESG

**Dr. Spyridoula Maltezos**  
Environmental Auditor

**Eleni Andreadis**  
Sani/Ikos Group ESG  
Executive Director

**Rania Filippakopoulou**  
Marketing  
& Trade Marketing Director,  
Henkel

**Fenya Sourla**  
Co-founder & COO  
at Dataphoria

In conversation with **Stella Kasdagli**, Co-Founder Women On Top

## THE ISSUE

According to research conducted by Women On Top, 40% of women in Greece feel that they have no opportunity to participate in environmental decision-making in Greece. Our speakers shared some of the reasons they attribute this finding to:

According to Ms. Sourla, the finding had to do with the lack of representation in local government bodies, which in Greece is very low. Women are mobilized to a large extent by other bodies -by civil society, for example. That said, it is reasonable for them to consider that they are largely excluded from decision-making.

As Ms. Sourla noted, environmental issues and policies usually start from the top -that is, there are the European policies, which we are obliged to follow, and from there on, they go down to the local government. But this top-down approach should perhaps be combined with a bottom-up one in order for people to meet somewhere in the center. Which means that our own habits, our consumption habits, professional or otherwise, can be a substantial contribution to the decisions that are made.

According to Ms. Andreadis, the average citizen in general does not feel that they participate or that they can influence environmental decisions. To add to that, the representation of women in research, in innovation, in many sectors that are at the forefront of environmental issues, still remains small. At this moment, and in a matter with such urgent needs, we as humanity are not utilizing half the potential of our planet as much as we should.

Ms. Philippakopoulou had to note that even through their daily lives and in their household, women do make decisions that affect the management of resources. There is a gap, however, between their everyday participation and the formulation of formal strategies around environmental issues, where they feel they are left behind. This could be attributed (as women themselves note) to the lack of time. This is an important root cause and a key way to eliminate it is to promote gender equality in everyday life: the balanced sharing of responsibilities both in the family and in the household can provide women with more opportunity to take part in decision-making processes outside the house.

On the other hand, according to Ms. Philippakopoulou, companies can play a very important role in educating consumers around the issue of sustainability, both through their products and through focused activations. They can also engage both individual women and local governments in voluntary actions, so that multiple stakeholders can become part of lasting sustainable change.



## THE ISSUE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

**MS. ANDREADIS SHARED SOME INTERESTING DATA FROM A STUDY ON GLOBAL TRENDS AND GOOD PRACTICES IN RELATION TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM.**

**THAT STUDY CONCLUDED THAT INTEREST IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM HAS GROWN RAPIDLY IN RECENT YEARS.**

**IN FACT, THE PANDEMIC SEEMS TO HAVE WORKED TO CULTIVATE A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL SENSIBILITY IN CONSUMERS, BOTH IN TERMS OF EATING HABITS AND TRANSPORTATION AND OF COURSE SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL.**

**THIS TREND HAS BEEN RECORDED WORLDWIDE, BUT IT SEEMS THAT IT DOES NOT REFLECT THE GREEK WOMEN IN THE WOT STUDY, WHICH MAY HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT AS A COUNTRY WE ARE EMERGING FROM SUCCESSIVE CRISES AND PERHAPS WE DID NOT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PUT SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL HIGHER ON OUR AGENDA.**

**HOWEVER, THE ROLE THAT THE TOURISM SECTOR HAS TO PLAY IN THE FIELD OF SUSTAINABILITY IS VERY IMPORTANT.**

**WHETHER SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL IS A TREND OR NOT, IT IS NOW THE WAY ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE TOURISM SECTOR HAVE TO OPERATE.**

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

According to Dr. Maltezou, involving everyone and consulting the public and local communities, is the beginning and the end, the cornerstone of decision-making. This has been recognized by the European Union and by the governments of the member states and by large companies and by many social organizations.

The basic – and fundamental – principle is to have equal opportunities to participate and consult with local communities and people. There are official channels to do this, legislation is provided. There are a lot of formal ways in which people are invited to participate in decision-making, whether it's new legislation, whether it's big projects that will have an environmental impact, whether it is a smaller scale project.

But this does not involve everyone, because some people stay outside of the decision-making and outside the participatory process because they are met too many obstacles. Costs are often high, or specialized knowledge may be required. This often leads people to exclude themselves from these procedures and not consider themselves competent and knowledgeable enough to participate in such important events.

But this is not a be-all and end-all. There are still ways to communicate and participate, and these are built by us: either in a neighborhood forum, or in a residents' forum, or on social media, internet petitions, activist actions, actions related to small or large problems that present themselves in our schools, in our society, in our neighborhood. These are indirect but essential ways, that's where our opinion is heard. And women also hold immense consumers' power, they educate their children, they decide to a large extent about their family's daily consumption, their eating habits.

In this way, they can lead to change, we can choose products that are properly designed according to the principles of the circular economy, with a longer life span. We can promote repairs, reuse. If we all do this, each in our own little world, companies will be forced to listen, governments will be forced to listen, agencies will pay attention to us, because we are many, we are not one. We are one and another one and another one, and we are all together, so we have power. We have power and we have many ways to express it.

Then our role is to highlight the problem, to educate one another.

Ms. Andreadis highlighted the importance of concerted and decisive actions to empower women in leadership positions, especially, in the environmental sectors, as women can be important agents of change in sustainability issues.



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