

POLICY BRIEF

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GENDER ANALYSIS REPORT

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ENTRANCES PROJECT

ENTRANCES (ENergy TRANSitions from Coal and Carbon: Effects on Societies) is a three-year project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program. The project addresses the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) aspects of the Clean Energy Transition (CET) through the development of a theoretically based and empirically grounded understanding of cross-cutting issues related to social aspects of the transition in European coal and carbon-intensive regions and the formulation of a set of recommendations able to tackle these issues. To that end, 13 coal and carbon-intensive transition regions in Europe were studied using the same Multidimensional Analytical Framework (MAF), resulting in 13 case studies and an equal set of recommendations that reveal the complexity of the transition process and the impact in the daily life of local communities in its various dimensions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This policy brief was developed under the Entrances Project and focused on the results of the gender-based analysis conducted for the 13 coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition. In Entrances, gender is seen as a cross-cutting issue and essential variable contributing to a better understanding of the principal socio-economic, socio-ecological and technical, socio-cultural, socio-political, and socio-psychological challenges that coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition face.

Although there is a growing conviction about the need to systematically include a gender perspective in policies and gender mainstreaming in general, there is still little evidence on gender-sensitive transition policies. In addition, there is a persistent societal interpretation of transition as a technical and economic process with little relation to social aspects, especially gender, which implies a risk of neglecting aspects of social justice, inclusion, and gender equality. In order to address this gap, the entrances project carried out an analysis of the main emerging challenges in transition regions from a gender perspective, which is reviewed in this policy brief.

Overall, the results of the gender component make evident the need for gender-specific research in the analysis and planning of the clean energy transition, primarily to overcome gender neutrality. Collecting gender-disaggregated data with an intersectional perspective is crucial to understanding the specific gender impacts of decarbonisation processes. However, data alone is insufficient to ensure the gender-responsiveness of research and policies. Gained knowledge must be translated into truly inclusive responses and targeted transformative interventions to address gaps and encourage women's participation in decision-making and leadership.



INTRODUCTION: CHALLENGES & COPING STRATEGIES WITH A GENDER LENS

The 13 coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition investigated in the ENTRANCES project face diverse challenges involving socio-economic, socio-technical, socio-political, socio-cultural, and socio-psychological issues. These challenges and the resulting policies and strategies to address them are not neutral but have different impacts on women and men. Therefore, gender is crucial to understanding and addressing the uneven impacts of decarbonisation processes on people and ensuring that inequalities are not (re)produced.

As a cross-cutting element to all the analysed components, the gender component in ENTRANCES sheds light on the potential gender inequalities and gaps that emerge or persist in the context of decarbonisation and territorial transition and how they can be addressed. Thus, a set of common challenges in coal and carbon-intensive regions was reviewed and analysed with a gender lens to identify potential (un)intended differential impacts and to assess the gender-responsiveness of existing policies and strategies. While the challenges and coping strategies are understood to be context-specific and occurring at the territorial level, there are certain common issues of concern in all or most regions. These include, for example, a growing concern about demographic changes associated with outmigration and ageing populations or questions about the future of the economy and employment in the regions.

With this policy brief, we aim to draw attention to the urgency of recognising the gender dimension in the clean energy transition and thus addressing the challenges with a perspective responsive to the differential needs and priorities of women and men.

Key questions

Key Question1. Which gender-related challenges are coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition facing?

Key Question2. Are women and men developing different coping strategies?

Key Question3. What are the regional transitional trajectories regarding gender?

Key Question4. What kind of gender strategies and policies are needed in order to achieve success in terms of re-territorialisation?



METHODOLOGICAL INTEGRATION OF THE GENDER DIMENSION

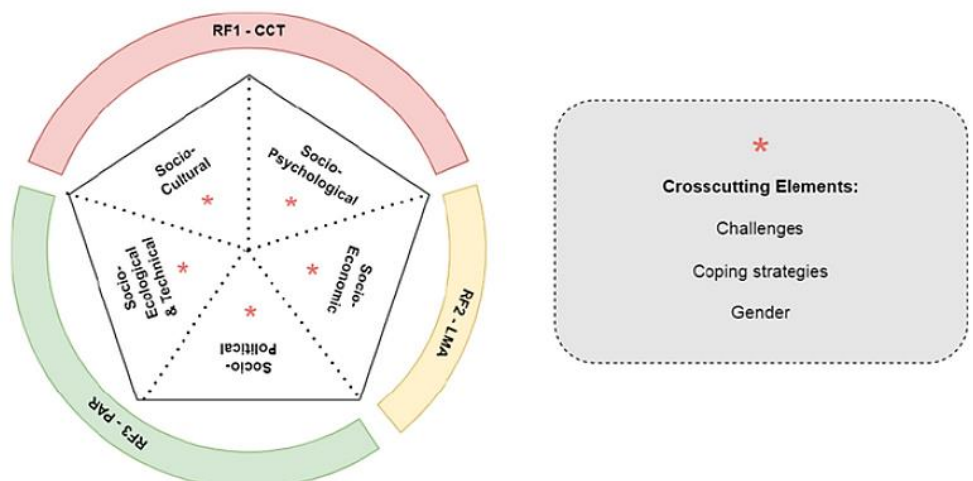


ENTRANCES foresaw that the gender dimension should be investigated by adopting a gender mainstreaming approach, i.e. through integrating gender as a cross-cutting element in each of the five analytical components of the Multidimensional Analytic Framework (MAF); the socio-cultural component, the socio-psychological component, the socio-economic component, the socio-political component and the socio-ecological and technical component. However, from the early stage of the project, it appeared clear that gender mainstreaming – while providing interesting information – alone could not be enough to grasp the gender dimension in the transition of coal and carbon-intensive regions. Three main limitations were identified: scientific approaches were not initially conceived for gender research, the dominance of gender neutrality in societal interpretations and the lack of available sources of gender-related knowledge. Those limitations became even more evident during the application of the MAF, with the implementation of the 13 ENTRANCES case studies.

To overcome these difficulties, five methodologies were combined in the gender analysis, namely a gender-based literature review; a gender context analysis of the investigated regions; gender mainstreaming in the project components; a gender-based analysis of challenges and coping strategies; and finally, a collective data analysis.



Overview of the Multidimensional Analysis Framework: Research foci, components and crosscutting elements





CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES

CHALLENGE 1



Population-related challenges

1

Outmigration and Population decline

Regions in transition have experienced or are facing a substantial reduction in their population due to outward mobility flows and declining job opportunities in their region. Outmigration occurs predominantly among the young and economically active population as well as among families formerly linked to the coal or carbon-intensive sector. Outmigration and the resulting population decline may result in a scarcity of skilled workforce in the regions and deepen economic and social marginalisation.

2

Ageing population

The regions are concerned about the increase in the population's average age, mainly due to the decrease in the young population due to outmigration. Regions with marked shrinking ratios of workers to pensioners face significant pressures on their labour markets and health, pension and care systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Collecting and using gender-disaggregated data (including intersecting factors such as the socio-economic position) of the older population at the regional level.
- Adopting a gender-responsive perspective in redistribution and support policies for older individuals.
- Addressing gendered economic inequalities that lead to the pay and pension gap.

DISCUSSION

Both migration and an ageing population are gendered issues. Patterns and reasons for migration vary between men and women and intersect with other personal characteristics. In the case of transition regions, two divergent trends can be observed: 1) Young women leave the region in search of educational or employment opportunities, leading to a masculinisation of local communities and a labour shortage in sectors such as education, care and services; and 2) Former employees of the coal or carbon-intensive industry – predominantly men – migrate to find similar jobs while their families stay in the region and rely on their remittances.

An ageing population is a highly gendered challenge as, in general, the life expectancy of women is higher than for men; thus, most older people are women. Nonetheless, greater longevity does not imply a better quality of life: older women are more likely to suffer from a disability, live alone, and have worse health. Moreover, as women take on a more significant share of unpaid work, they are more likely to take breaks from employment or work part-time, which implies reduced pensions connected to poverty in old age. In the context of the energy crisis and rising energy prices, it is also essential to bear in mind that older people, especially women, are more exposed to energy poverty and its associated health consequences.



CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES

CHALLENGE 2



Challenges related to peripheralisation

1

Digital peripheralisation

Adopting digital and technological solutions is generally seen as crucial to developing new economic sectors in the investigated regions. However, poor communication infrastructure and services pose significant challenges to some regions in transition. In addition, there are concerns about a gap between the profiles required for automation and innovation and those available in the regions, which might discourage new firms from setting up in the regions.

2

Economic decline and infrastructural peripheralisation

In some of the regions in transition, outmigration and economic processes associated with deindustrialisation have been accompanied by a decline in transport and public service infrastructure. This leaves the region with few options to compete with better-connected regions and has led to a decline in economic activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Collecting gender-disaggregated data linked to digitalisation to inform the policy about creating equal opportunities and closing the access gap.
- Promoting gender diversity and women's leadership in the technology sector.
- Implementing targeted digital literacy and skills training programmes for women and girls to enhance their digital competence.
- Investing in gender-responsive infrastructure and urban development to improve accessibility and safety for women in post-coal phase-out regions, including better public transportation.

DISCUSSION

While digitalisation can offer significant economic and societal development opportunities, access to information and communication technologies is unequal among genders. This is captured, for example, by the “digital gender gap”, which shows that women and girls’ access to and use of digital tools is limited compared to men and boys. Thus, policies aimed at strengthening digitalisation and communication technologies as drivers of employment and new economic sectors in transition regions should include a gender approach that recognises and addresses these barriers.

Regarding infrastructural peripheralisation, infrastructural cutbacks have intersectional impacts on women in their roles as workers and caregivers as well as on low-income groups and marginalised communities regarding mobility, access to amenities and care and participation in social life. Moreover, men represent most car owners and users, while women represent most public transportation travellers, whilst commuting patterns differ because of assigned care roles. Therefore, women might be disproportionately affected by a limited public transport supply.



CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES

CHALLENGE 3



Energy sector-related challenges

1

Relaunching/saving the energy sector

Three types of challenges that involve rethinking the energy sector were observed in the regions in transitions:

- Implement renewable energy systems that allow for the renewal and reconversion of important local industries, such as the aluminium or steel industries.
- Development of new activities related to energy production to maintain a competitive position as an energy region, sustained mainly on research and development.
- Pressure to either reactivate the fossil energy sector temporarily or accelerate the transition to reduce dependence on Russian gas.

Any of the three scenarios implies considerable technical and infrastructural changes, and, in some cases, there is uncertainty about the region's ability to make substantial progress in the short to medium term.

2

Economic diversification

Shifting the economy away from just one income source (the coal and carbon-intensive industry) towards several income sources by entering, expanding and strengthening different economic sectors and markets is considered a key challenge in most investigated regions. Sectors such as tourism, chemical industry, or research and development (R&D) intensive industries are emerging as alternative sectors in the regions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Combating gender stereotypes at all levels, including education, to increase the number of women enrolled in STEM programmes.
- Integrating criteria to increase the share of women in emerging industries, such as establishing a gender quota in training and jobs related to renovation and renewables.
- Restructuring local employment opportunities and actively promoting the diversification of the workforce to allow women to join new sectors and thereby increase the productivity of the given sector.
- Promoting equality, enabling policies related to better work-life balance, zero-tolerance policies towards harassment, and improving working, safety and health conditions.

DISCUSSION

Transforming the energy sector has a direct relationship with gender. The energy sector has been traditionally male-dominated, yet the energy transition is an opportunity to address low women's participation. Indeed, with a 32% female share, the renewables sector already employs significantly more women than the conventional energy sector (IRENA, 2019). However, the sector is still far from reaching gender equality as gender pay gaps prevail and women continue to perceive entry barriers mainly related to the perception of gender roles and social norms that erode girls' and women's confidence, interest and willingness to engage in STEM subjects.

Although women's opportunities to participate in the labour market may increase with economic diversification, care responsibilities and unpaid work remain undertaken mainly by women. Therefore, when talking about structural change as an opportunity to redress gender segregation in sectoral employment, it is key to consider barriers to entering different sectors. To ensure equal access to created job opportunities, girls and women need more targeted support mechanisms to enter traditionally male-dominated fields through education, an equal recruitment process and enabling workplace policies.



CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES

CHALLENGE 4



Environmental challenges

1

Ecological damage remediation and land rehabilitation

The history of coal mining and carbon industry has shaped the landscape and environment of the territories investigated (leaving environmental scars, pollution, etc.). In a post-mining scenario, the policies and strategies for remediation and land rehabilitation are an essential concern for environmental activists, policymakers and the local population.

2

Climate change adaptation

Water management, land use planning and balance of green-and-blue spaces in urban settings are of increasing concern in the investigated regions, in particular drought leading to decreased water supply and jeopardising sustainable and regenerative land use (forestry, fisheries and farming) as well as creating potential tensions in water management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensuring the participation and meaningful involvement of women on all levels in climate governance.
- Promoting active participation of women in land use and remediation planning as well as considering the needs and preferences of women in determining land use options.
- Conducting gender-differentiated climate risk assessment.
- Supporting and promoting women's leadership in community-based adaptation initiatives.

DISCUSSION

An analysis of the climate-gender nexus sheds light on differentiated emission patterns, vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change, perceptions and attitudes towards climate change, and capabilities to adapt (depending on access to and control over assets). Women play an essential role in environmental conservation by, e.g., engaging in more environmentally friendly behaviours than men. However, while women are highly present in civil society and are leading agents of change in the youth climate movement, they remain underrepresented in international climate negotiation, policymaking, and corporate decision-making around the transition to carbon neutrality.



CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES

CHALLENGE 5



Political and governance challenges

1

Participatory governance

Weaknesses in coordination and cooperation across governance levels and gaps in transition policies and schemes were identified in several regions in transition. Two situations were mainly highlighted: first, the lack of a clear and collectively constructed vision for the transition and regional trajectories and second, prevailing tensions among stakeholders, accompanied by limited involvement of affected groups.

2

Rising populism

Rising right-wing populism poses challenges in some of the investigated regions, a development likely to reinforce intolerance and roll back existing rights and equality measures. Populist movements exploit the uncertainty generated by the decarbonisation process as a trigger for nostalgia and remembrance of the prosperous past associated with mining, also based on re-establishing traditional (gendered) roles and power dynamics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Promoting women as active drivers of change by involving women and marginalised groups in consultation, planning and transition policy design.
- Strengthening social dialogue and putting decision-making mechanisms in place to ensure that a broad range of stakeholders actively participate in the governance process.
- Describing detailed measures for a just transition in policies and strategies to avoid reinforcing existing inequalities.
- Adopting specific measures to tackle the underrepresentation of women in key decision-making positions.

DISCUSSION

The governance of the transition appears usually gender neutral at first sight, especially regarding discursive approaches. In general, designs of participatory mechanisms have not considered and addressed gender inequalities and power asymmetry and the resulting plans and strategies are formulated with a gender-neutral approach. Moreover, women are underrepresented in key decision-making positions in most regions. This is especially detrimental as broad participation is essential for a successful transition strategy.

In parallel, the narrative of the right-wing movements is fundamentally laden with references to gender (and its intersection with race and class). In general terms, the concept of gender and feminist policies are used in the public debate as a threat to the traditional family and values. As a result, rising right-wing populism is generally associated with restrictions on women's and girls' rights and stigmatisation of members of the LGBTQIA+ community.





CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES

CHALLENGE 6



Challenges related to increasing vulnerabilities

1

Increasing risk of poverty and social exclusion

The costs and benefits of the structural transformations that the transition regions undergo are not evenly distributed across the population, but certain groups and communities are disproportionately negatively affected. Some regions are still dealing with the adverse socio-economic effects of the previous decline of the coal sector. The main concerns are the loss of employment and income, increased cost of living, and low purchasing power.



2

Health concerns

There are well-established concerns about the effects of mining on human and environmental health in the regions, especially related to the long-term effects of exposure to hazardous materials and air pollution for both miners and surrounding communities. Moreover, the regions studied have increasing pressures on their public health systems because of reductions in health infrastructure investment (and related to peripheralisation) and increasing needs for healthcare for an ageing population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Collecting gender-disaggregated data to identify and address specific vulnerabilities.
- Improving health care and support for women and older persons.
- Reinforcing measures to close the gender pay and pension gap and programmes supporting unskilled and young workers entering the workforce.
- Ensuring more gender-equal and fair access to energy services at both technical and financial levels, safeguarding vulnerable households regarding energy poverty.

DISCUSSION

An intersectional approach is crucial for the recognition of specific vulnerabilities of those directly affected by the closure of the industry, such as employees in the coal sector; those indirectly affected by changes in the local economy, e.g., employees in the retail sector and in companies along the coal value chains; and (3) those disproportionately affected by shifts in energy costs or provision, e.g., low-income households. Evidence shows that the effects of unemployment can be particularly adverse for unskilled workers from the producing industries, migrants, and young people under the age of 25. However, they remain not explicitly recognised as affected stakeholders in the transition process. Likewise, women and women-led households financial shocks more intensely than men, as they earn less and endure more financial barriers. Moreover, they are also disproportionately affected by energy poverty.

Downsizing health systems might impact women and men differently as they have differential exposures and vulnerabilities to diseases and different mortality and morbidity outcomes. Stress and uncertainty connected to the transition negatively and differently impact women's and men's mental health, as they face different levels and forms of societal stigmatisation of mental health issues. Thus, it is crucial to examine which services are being provided and how they impact the response to specific gender needs.



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