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**Climate Change, Gender, and Policy:**  
Gender Mainstreaming in EU Climate Adaptation Policies



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### **Abstract:**

As one of the greatest challenges of our time, climate change has significant impacts on various aspects of societies, ecosystems and economies. However, it is important to note that climate change has different impacts for different gender groups, which intersect with and amplify existing gender inequality. Focusing on the application of gender mainstreaming in EU climate adaptation policies (2007 to 2021), this study aims to assess the extent to which the EU has succeeded in mainstreaming gender within its climate adaptation-related policy and institutional framework. Several findings are revealed. First, there is a distinct lack of gender-related terminology in most of these policies, indicating a lack of explicit gender mainstreaming. Second, when gender is mentioned, the description tends to position women as vulnerable subjects rather than active participants in climate adaptation actions, further reinforcing traditional gender narratives and stereotypes. Third, while the existence of gender differences is recognized, there is a lack of comprehensive strategies and data to support the integration of gender perspectives into climate adaptation. Finally, gender tends to be narrowly defined as a women's issue, with its key points shifting depending on the thematic focus of the policy, and only in the case of people-centered, social themes, gender become more prominent. In conclusion, this paper emphasizes the importance of the need for greater gender integration in EU climate adaptation policy, and gender mainstreaming should be given a more central and prioritized place in EU climate policy. It is important not only to address already existing gender differences, but also to empower women and to further work on addressing systemic biases.

**Keywords:** Climate Change; Gender Mainstreaming; European Union; Climate Adaptation Policies; Gender Disparities

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

There is no doubt that climate change is becoming one of the most significant issues of the twenty-first century. Even if greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) are reduced, the earth will continue to suffer the consequences of the greenhouse gases that already been presented in the atmosphere for past several decades. The increasing frequency of observable changes in climatic phenomenon has been marked, and the need for stronger adaptation strategies is obvious now. However, climate change has long been viewed primarily from an efficiency, economic, and technological perspective, rather than from a human perspective (Hemmati and Röhr, 2009). Climate change adaptation must be a key component of climate policy been given an equal importance to the tasks of climate change mitigation and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It is significant to develop policies that actively adapt to climate change at the political, practical and economic levels.

The European Union has committed to achieving climate neutrality by 2050,, which is an imperative and laudable goal. However, assuming that this goal is achieved and global adherence to the Paris Agreement's Nationally Determined Contributions is maintained, projections indicate that global average temperatures by 2100 will rise by 2.4 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels (Climate Action Tracker, 2021). Climate change is already exerting substantial and measurable impacts on Europe. This phenomenon threatens Europe's natural environment, nearly every facet of society, and its economy. Over the past century, the region has experienced rapid temperature increases of nearly 1°C, outpacing global trends. Northern Europe experiences notable increases in rainfall and snowfall, while Southern Europe grapples with more frequent droughts. Urgent action is imperative to mitigate future costs. Taking proactive measures offers significant economic advantages by pre-empting potential damages and reducing risks to ecosystems, human health, economic growth, property, and critical infrastructure (European Commission, 2007). Therefore, the best time to start climate adaptation strategies and actions is now. It is necessary to give climate adaptation top priority to handle the serious and ongoing climatic challenges that are imminent.

Due to increasing climatic disruptions, European nations have intensified their commitment to climate adaptation policies. Although the regional disparities and varying intensities of climate impacts, often demand localized responses, measures for climate adaptation action at the EU level can benefit from a coordinated and integrated approach across the EU. In 2009, the EU declared to implement adaptation measures to address the ongoing impact of climate change for the next 50 years (European Commission, 2009c). Additionally, sectors including agriculture, water, biodiversity, fisheries, and energy networks that are connected by the single market and shared policies require coordinated EU action, where a coordinated approach, the EU's role in promoting cooperation and the exchange of best practices among Member States is clear (European Commission, 2009c).

Although climate change affects ecosystems, economies and communities globally, it is not equally affecting. Social inequality is one of the key factors affecting vulnerability to climate change, and gender plays an important role in this. Policies in any social context have an inherent gender dimension. Policies will inevitably have gendered outcomes within a framework shaped by entrenched gender dynamics. Ignoring this reality perpetuates existing inequalities. For example, a lack of gender analysis in adaptation policies can perpetuate a gendered division of labor in carbon-intensive sectors. This absence prioritizes alternative employment opportunities for men, while ignoring the important contribution of women in paid and unpaid care work within the same community (Allwood, 2023). Makina and Moyo (2016) explain how different genders are affected by climate change through the concept of ‘rights’: women are more vulnerable due to less control over resources, and climate change makes women more responsible for survival due to society. The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) also highlights the ways in which gender exacerbates vulnerability to climate change. The report emphasizes the need to examine power structures, processes and relationships between groups of women and men, as well as potential intersectionality with other social categories (IPCC, 2022). As a result of this gap and the lack of equal privileges or benefits for women, gender inequality will also increase under the impact of climate change. Therefore, integrating gender considerations into climate adaptation policies is not only because of social justice, but also of policy effectiveness.

However, despite the widely recognized importance of gender mainstreaming as a concept in the climate change discourse, the extent to which gender should be integrated into Europe’s climate adaptation plans, and how this integration should be facilitated, is not well understood. Despite clear differences in environmental behaviors and attitudes between the sexes, and growing evidence of the gendered impacts of climate change, EU climate change policies have largely ignored gender considerations. While current EU climate change policies are relevant to gender dynamics, especially in the broader context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), they lack a comprehensive gender perspective (Allwood, 2023). Governments, including the European Union (EU), are required to regularly update their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These NDCs outline their commitments to mitigation and adaptation efforts. While the EU submitted its formal NDCs in 2015 and an updated version in 2020, the focus remains largely on mitigation rather than adaptation. The report notes that little progress has been made on gender mainstreaming, with 24% of the 120 countries identifying NGIs as part of climate change governance and only 27% noting the importance of women’s participation in decision-making on climate action (United Nations Secretary General, 2022). Besides, the current EU environmental action program, which guides EU energy policy alongside environmental policy until 2020, fails to incorporate a gender perspective. Similarly, initiatives such as the 2015 Energy Union Strategy and the 2016’ Clean Energy for All Europeans policy framework, which aim to facilitate Europe’s transition to cleaner and more



efficient energy sources, also fail to incorporate gender considerations (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020). This knowledge gap may reduce the effectiveness of climate adaptation strategies, especially in addressing gender-specific vulnerabilities. Given the clear gender differences in many aspects of society, the integration of a gender perspective in climate policy is crucial. At the same time, given Europe's prominence on the international stage, the EU's stance on gender integration in climate policy could also serve as a model for the next phase of development in other regions.

## 1.2. Complicated gender and rationale of the study

Climate change does not impact populations uniformly. An individual's adaptive capacity is deeply influenced by their gender roles, responsibilities, resource accessibility, and decision-making agency. Compared with climate mitigation, climate adaptation is more a societal than a technical issue, seeking a more inclusive and equitable approach towards building resilience and addressing the impacts of climate change is important.

Many factors contribute to different vulnerability to climate change, such as poverty, inequality, insecure land rights, agricultural dependence, and limited education and information access, where often connected to gender roles. Women's vulnerability is compounded by a lack of assets, social marginalization, restricted mobility, and exclusion from disaster response decision-making processes (Yadav and Lal, 2018). Even in the developed world, females were also more susceptible to heat-related mortality. Studies conducted on the European heat waves from 2003 to 2006 revealed that women were more vulnerable than men, especially older women. The gender disparity was evident, with 93% of female victims being 70 years or older compared to 75% of male victims. Notably, women represented over 65% of the total fatalities (Toulemon and Barbieri, 2008, p43). According to heat wave studies conducted in nine Mediterranean cities between 1990 and 2004, women aged 75 to 84 had a considerably higher risk of dying in heat waves than men of a similar age (D'Ippoliti et al., 2010). Natural disasters tend to adversely affect women's life expectancy more than men's, but the negative effect of the gender disparity in life expectancy diminishes with the rise in women's socioeconomic status, which suggests that the ingrained gender-specific vulnerabilities in societal structures contribute to the heightened disaster mortality rates among women (Neumayer and Plümper, 2007).

However, there are two problems that exist in the gender consideration in climate change issues now. First, gender considerations are notably lacking in policy documents and research reports concerning climate change. There is a dearth of gender-specific research on climate change adaptation and mitigation, especially in industrialized countries. In Canada, despite the fact that the international framework on climate change acknowledges the necessity for gender-sensitive policies, there is a lack of gender considerations in Quebec and federal policy, and these gender-blind policies run the risk of escalating these inequities (Rochette, 2016). Second, due to the disproportionate effect on women, research focuses primarily on underdeveloped

countries (Rochette, 2016). Existing small efforts predominantly concentrate on the tangible effects of climate change on women in the Global South, argument for the inclusion of gender as a category of analysis in climate change research depends heavily on the use of quantitative, gender-disaggregated measures of climatic causes and impacts (e.g., who is more at fault, who is more hurt) (Macgregor, 2017). However, data reveals that gender features also exist in affluent countries as a result of gendered roles and inequities (Rochette, 2016). Emphasizing too much on vulnerable women groups in developing areas, creating a “gender equals women” issue and giving the misleading appearance that gender in climate change is just an issue that climate change affects women more severely than it does men, but resulting insufficiently addressing the gendered power dynamics and discourse framing that shape climate politics (Macgregor, 2017). In the meantime, the cultural-discursive (or ideational) aspects of climate change, or the ways in which gendered environmental discourses form dominant understandings of climate change, appear to have received insufficient attention in gender and climate change research (Macgregor, 2017).

The gender dimension in climate policy is both important and complex, and gender-neutral policies can place additional burdens on women and lead to ineffective outcomes, but at the same time misleading gender narratives can reinforce biases. The gender dimension in climate policy is both important and complex, and gender-neutral policies can place additional burdens on women and lead to ineffective outcomes, but at the same time misleading gender narratives can reinforce biases. For example, research has shown that by repeatedly emphasizing the vulnerability of women in the Global South and the environmental virtues of women in the Global North, these narratives reinforce biases between these regions. Moreover, such generalizations often lead to increased burdens on women without commensurate recognition or reward (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). Allwood (2023) calls for gender equality and climate change to be fully integrated into all internal and external EU activities. In this way, the systemic changes needed to promote gender equality and climate justice can be achieved, and the synergies between these two priorities can be fully exploited to maximize their impact (Allwood, 2023). Adaptation to climate change is fundamentally rooted in the society, therefore, the need for an approach that promotes inclusiveness and equity, can ultimately increase climate resilience and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Integrating gender perspectives into climate adaptation methodologies allows for a comprehensive understanding of the distinct challenges and vulnerabilities unique to each gender.

### **1.3. Research objectives and questions**

For the investigation of gender inequality in climate change, it is necessary to move beyond the traditionary idea that climate change impacts are limited to tangible, quantifiable effects felt by “empirical” and “vulnerable” women in the Global South, and a feminist constructivist methodology must be used in the analysis to delve deep into the discourses that underpin gender and environmental politics worldwide (Macgregor, 2010). Further investigation into the issue





of gendered presumptions in climate change rhetoric by feminist environmental academics as well as by everyone concerned with climate justice is needed (Macgregor, 2010). We still live in a world where gender equality has not been achieved. Patriarchy tends to make women more vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, while men have better adaptive capacity, especially in terms of mobility and flexibility in employment (Onwutuebe, 2019). Compared to men, women have limited capacity to manage risks and external shocks, for example, they tend to be less involved in decision-making and have less power over resources and household finances (Ongoro and Ogara, 2012). Patriarchal oppression often obscures the differential impacts of climate change on women and further excludes feminist voices from decision-making. In climate policy formulation, male voices typically dominate and determine the assessment and prioritization of issues.

As a result, policies that fail to integrate gender considerations tend to ignore the differential impacts of climate change, thereby exacerbating existing gender inequalities through systemic neglect. At the meantime, Macgregor (2017) criticized the emergence of a “vulnerability-resilience” dichotomy in climate policy, which labels resilient people as active and strong while categorizing victims as passive and in need. By portraying victims as helpless and dependent, this contradiction sustains hegemonic masculinist norms. These discourses and research are frequently been seen in academic construction. It’s crucial to challenge these hegemonic discourses, reveal their sexism-based roots, and contextualize gender norms and power dynamics (Macgregor, 2017).

The pursuit of gender sensitivity within climate policies is a multifaceted endeavour, demanding more than the mere inclusion of women in the decision-making processes. Mere numerical gender parity in climate change decision-making is insufficient; the key lies in integrating the perspectives and insights of women and men to formulate effective climate change responses (Kronsell, 2013). Traditionary gender bias often perpetuates victimizing perceptions of women in the climate change discourse, particularly those in the Global South and, by associating gender with women, which oversimplifies the issue and serves to reinforce negative stereotypes and oppressive power structures (Macgregor, 2017). In light of these complexities, it is essential to use a feminist “gender lens“, which in this paper refers to the need for gender mainstreaming in climate policy, as I detail in the next section.. This lens helps to examine how climate change has been constructed and framed in culture, thus enabling a better comprehension of gender in climate change adaptation issues. It also encourages an examination of the formation and enactment of gender identities with an emphasis on how societies divide power, labour, resources, knowledge, and information in accordance with gender divisions.

Gender mainstreaming, recognized as a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality, represents a methodology towards strategy, policy and planning that guarantees the consideration of gender points of view in all movements. It has been embraced as the major approach by significant organizations including the UN, EU, WTO, international NGOs, and



aid organizations to address gender equality issues (Wittman, 2010). As a universal strategy for achieving equality, gender mainstreaming aims to uncover and challenge institutionalized sexism, with the core of the recognition of androcentric practices within an organization's culture, policies, and practices (Rees, 2005). Integrating gender mainstreaming within climate change adaptation ensures a thorough consideration of the diverse needs and priorities of both women and men. Such an approach not only prevents the reinforcement of pre-existing inequalities but also guarantees that the adaptation measures reverberate effectively and sustainably across all societal segments.

In 1996, the European Union formally committed itself to promoting gender equality and mainstreaming gender equality in all its policies field (Commission of the European Communities, 1996), and gave a definition for the principle of “mainstreaming” – “It is necessary to promote equality between women and men in all activities and policies at all levels”. Notably, women in certain European nations have shown greater support than men for governmental climate protection efforts, and they also tend to favour more aggressive reduction objectives, aspiring for their countries and the European Union to spearhead these efforts (Hemmati and Röhr, 2009). Such advocacy is also crucial for international climate discussions. Hence, policies that disregard gender issues may unintentionally uphold or increase current inequities. It is important to acknowledge and resolve these inequities not only for reasons of justice but also to make sure that measures for coping with the effects of climate change are successful and inclusive.

My research focuses on the application of gender mainstreaming in EU climate adaptation policies, with the objective of assessing the extent to which the EU has successfully mainstreamed gender within its policy and institutional framework related to climate adaptation. Analysis of gender mainstreaming is critical to understanding and effectively addressing gender-sensitive climate challenges. Failure to do so, based on gender-neutral assumptions to face inherently unfair power relations, resource allocation and responses to climate disasters, risks further exacerbating gender inequality in the face of climate problems. In other words, the quality of policymaking will remain unacceptably low, if the discourse does not consider gender issues, including relevant differences between women's and men's experiences (Hemmati and Röhr, 2009).

Climate change provides the context and capacity to re-examine gender mainstreaming and how to think about its fundamental potential to revolutionize gender relations as new crises emerge. It is not just a theoretical exercise to incorporate gender considerations into climate adaptation measures. Rather, it delves into the practical application of these considerations, evaluating the effectiveness of existing strategies and pinpointing areas in need of improvement. As international organizations and agreements place an increasing emphasis on gender-responsive approaches, such an EU policy study can highlight policy framework gaps, pinpoint best practices globally, and promote information exchange. Understanding the status of gender integration in European climate policies is also crucial for ensuring that the continent's



adaptation efforts benefit all of its citizens and more people.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Gender Mainstreaming

#### 2.1.1 History of Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming as a strategy to achieve gender equality, stresses the need to consider gender-related issues in all standard political, economic, and social circles. Its main goal is to achieve gender equality by changing the way policies are made so that gender considerations are taken into account at every stage.

The first World Conference on Women (1975) and the declaration of the “United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985)” laid the foundation for gender mainstreaming<sup>1</sup>. The declaration mentioned that primary goals were to eliminate gender discrimination, integrate women into development (WID) strategies, and increase the contribution of women to world peace. While the WID approach yielded significant gains, it was criticized for treating women’s challenges as peripheral to development, rather than directly addressing the core issue of gender inequality, which consequently promoting the emergence of the Gender and Development (GAD) framework (Rathgeber, 1990). At the 1985 World Conference on Women in Nairobi, the GAD was introduced, which means a shift from the WID<sup>2</sup>. Rather than focusing just on women, it underscores the imperative nature of tackling gender relations and the wider social formation of gender norms. This modification recognized that in order to achieve actual gender equality, it was necessary to address the complex relationships between society norms, expectations, and power dynamics.

The concept of gender mainstreaming was first introduced during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995, by the United Nations. Gender mainstreaming, as defined by the Beijing Platform for Action, is “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels.”<sup>3</sup> It was created as a global strategy to deal with the issue of gender viewpoints being disregarded in the creation of laws and the carrying out of programs. As a result, following the Beijing United Nations Conference on Women in 1995, “gender mainstreaming” became widely publicized as a political strategy for achieving gender equality (Rees, 2005). This marked the inception of a concerted effort to incorporate a gendered perspective into all policies and programs (Alston, 2006).

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1 According to the United Nations (1975), World Conference of the International Women’s Year 19 June-2 July 1975, Mexico City, Mexico, accessed 10 June 2023, <<https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/mexico-city1975>>.

2 According to the United Nations (1985), World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women 15-26 July 1985, Nairobi, Kenya, accessed 10 June 2023, <<https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/nairobi1985>>.

3 According to the United Nations (1995), Fourth World Conference on Women, 4-15 September 1995, Beijing, China, accessed 10 June 2023, <<https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/beijing1995>>.

In 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) further emphasized the definition of the gender mainstreaming: “ *Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s, as well as men’s, concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality* <sup>4</sup> “. When developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating policies and programs, gender mainstreaming was a technique used to make sure that the interests and experiences of both men and women were taken into consideration in all political and financial contexts. However, when UN General Assembly Special Session reviewed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action’s implementation<sup>5</sup> in 2000, it revealed a lack of substantial progress in achieving gender equality in decision-making positions at national and international levels. The majority of countries still have low rates of female representation, and despite advancements in public sector roles, there are still few women serving on the boards of significant firms. The meeting recommended stepping up surveillance even more in order to draw attention to the difficulties facing gender equality today and to encourage women’s equal participation in positions of leadership.

### 2.1.2 The Definition of Gender Mainstreaming

However, the definition and implementation of “gender mainstreaming “is controversial and obscure for a long time. “The concept of gender mainstreaming is both a contentious idea and a method used inconsistently in many situations.” (Rees, 2005). Gender mainstreaming is not only a policy or practice, but a comprehensive approach to transform corporate governance.

Rees (2005) gave her definition of gender mainstreaming as :

*“Gender mainstreaming is the promotion of gender equality through its systematic integration into all systems and structures, into all policies, processes and procedures, into the organisation and its culture, into ways of seeing and doing.”*

By placing organizations as a whole in charge of maintaining gender equality rather than just individuals, gender mainstreaming enables the seamless incorporation of gender issues into an organization’s daily operations by altering standard operating procedures, policy processes, and cultural norms (Wittman, 2010). Gender mainstreaming fundamentally departs from the

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<sup>4</sup> Seen in United Nations Economic and Social Council (1997), E/1997/66 Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, accessed 10 June 2023, <<https://www.un.org/esa/documents/ecosoc/docs/1997/e1997-66.htm>>.

<sup>5</sup> Seen in the United Nations (2000), 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly, 5-9 June 2000, New York, United States, accessed 10 June 2023, <<https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/newyork2000>>.



acceptance of a dominant male norm and challenges systems privileging this norm by transforming systems and structures, and dismantling gender-based hierarchies and power dynamics (Rees, 2005).

Rees (2001) discussed the concept of “gender mainstreaming” from a historical approach by comparing it with two main approaches – “equal treatment” and “positive action” to achieve gender equality. Before the introduction of “gender mainstreaming,” one of the predominant approaches to gender equality was “equal treatment” where the legal framework was designed primarily around men’s experiences aimed to align women’s rights with those of men, addressing historical discrimination. However, the “equal treatment” had its limitations since it saw women’s differences as issues that required special consideration. These kinds of actions were frequently insufficient and of short duration to address systemic inequalities in practice and policy. Similarly, “positive action” attempted to overcome perceived gaps in knowledge or experience while upholding the idea that women’s needs were unique. These kinds of initiatives, however, mainly educated women to adapt to circumstances where men predominated, rather than addressing the underlying cultural difficulties. Even though they are required, these behaviours have the potential to inadvertently perpetuate a particular type of masculinity in workplace settings that restricts both men and women. Positive gender acts are crucial, but they can’t change the larger popular culture that perpetuates gender inequality (Rees, 2001).

Different from the individual-focused “equal treatment” and the group-oriented “positive action” approaches to achieve gender equality, gender mainstreaming represents a shift. This strategy focuses on addressing structural sexism, recognizing the institutionalized systemic factors that support gender inequality, and going beyond the more limited definitions of individual rights and the needs of certain groups (Rees, 2005). Gender mainstreaming, as framed by Rees ((Rees, 2005), functions under the fundamental assumption that gender differences exist in addition to shared similarities. It aims to ingrained gender equality within the basic structure of organizations, norms, and policies, while at the same time, power relations are to be dismantled by means of redistribution. Within this context, my research will adhere to the framework and understanding of “gender mainstreaming” outlined by Rees (2005), in order to conduct an analysis of the gender aspects within European Union (EU) climate adaptation policies.

### **2.1.3 Gender Mainstreaming in the EU**

The document from the Commission of the European Communities (1996) requires an active and deliberate consideration of the potential impacts of policies on both men and women from the outset. This entails a thorough assessment of measures and policies, ensuring that their implications on gender dynamics are acknowledged and addressed during both the design and execution phases. The document explained that “mainstreaming” is a holistic approach to achieving gender equality that goes beyond just implementing specific interventions for women. In 1997, gender mainstreaming was adopted as the official policy approach to gender equality

in the EU via the Amsterdam Treaty (1997), which required that new EU members adopt the gender mainstreaming approach when joining the EU since then. The European Parliament (EP) committed to implementing gender mainstreaming in its own work and organizational structure and has firmly backed gender mainstreaming at the supranational level (Elomäki and Ahrens, 2022). As mentioned before about gender mainstreaming development, the EU pursues gender equality through positive action and gender mainstreaming as a dual-track strategy (Rees, 2005).

In spite of the fact that EU policy texts stress the importance of gender equality and call for its inclusion throughout all policies, there is a discernible discrepancy between policy intentions and practical outcomes (Allwood, 2020). After almost ten years since the EU adopted gender mainstreaming in its policies, there are very few instances of a gender mainstreaming strategy (agenda setting) where advancing gender equality is the primary policy goal. More frequently than not, gender mainstreaming as an approach is frequently used to integrate gender equality within broader agendas like economic development or poverty reduction, effectively serving as a tool to deliver policy on diverse issues (integration), rather than as the central target (Rees, 2005). In recent years, the emergence of interlinked issues like migration, security, and climate change that are systematically framed as crises within the EU development policy framework has strengthened this situation that gender mainstreaming is not the primary policy goal. Development policy's response to crises extended its focus beyond poverty alleviation to encompass these global challenges and EU priorities, including migration, security, and climate change. However, aside from brief mentions of gender mainstreaming, gender considerations are frequently absent from policy documents. Although gender issues between various crises play a crucial role in shaping development strategy, these relationships exhibit startling gender blindness (Allwood, 2020). Even in cases where development policy is largely gender-sensitive, the introduction of another intersecting problem, like climate change, might push gender considerations to the background. Intricate cross-cutting policy concerns don't seem to be adequately addressed by the gender mainstreaming structures and processes now in place, which seem to be limited to tackling gender within certain policy domains (Allwood, 2014). Interviews with gender experts who work for NGOs in Brussels emphasize this issue. They claim that the EU's predominant focus on security and migration has a negative influence on attempts to advance gender equality. Migration management receives a lot of resources and attention, which overshadows gender-related issues. While some EU citizens may support gender equality, the current emphasis on security and migration makes it difficult to implement significant changes that emphasize (Allwood, 2020).

Seen from inside of the EU system, the inclusion of a gender perspective varies noticeably in policy texts from the European Parliament and the Commission. The European Parliament, particularly through its Committee for Women's Rights and Gender Equality, conducts thorough gender analysis of climate-related issues while the Commission frequently ignores gender (Allwood, 2014). Besides, gender mainstreaming in topics of broad applicability, such as climate change, is hampered by the EU's distinctively sectoral policy-making frameworks.



(Allwood, 2014). Similarly, Elomäki and Ahrens (2022) also mentioned that obstacles stem from formal and informal regulations governing committee responsibilities and the EU sectors' reluctance to address matters outside committee domains. Therefore, gender is frequently marginalized as a result of this interconnectivity.

Elomäki and Ahrens (2022) look into how micropolitical strategies affect the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament and discovered that political groups' ideologies have an impact on efforts to mainstream gender. Prospects for meaningful gender mainstreaming are slim given the European Parliament's propensity for consensus-seeking policy formation. For instance, committees like the European Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs exhibit resistance due to entrenched informal patriarchal norms that especially marginalize gender perspectives (Elomäki and Ahrens, 2022). In addition, gender mainstreaming processes can become routine operations, similar to many "environment proofing" techniques if the people in charge of carrying out the gender impact study are not trained and gender aware. The technical form of gender mainstreaming's effectiveness also depends on people utilizing the tools' proficiency and politicians' commitment to making sure the exercise goes beyond checking boxes (Rees, 2005).

## **2.2 Gender in European Climate Adaptation Policies**

### **2.2.1 Review of European Climate Adaptation Policies**

Over the past three decades, the European Union (EU) has exhibited a steadfast commitment to addressing climate change, with a predominant focus on climate mitigation. However, climate adaptation has historically taken a more cautious approach within the EU's climate adaptation. There are various causes for this hesitation. First, decision-makers were afraid that putting adaptation first may diminish the EU's reputation as a leader in mitigation measures. Second, the issue of legal competence is a major worry within the EU: as a result of the EU's limited authority in areas like land-use planning, which the Member States closely guard as a mark of sovereignty, made things much more difficult (Tyndall and Tyndall, 2016).

Besides, While understanding climate change impacts and vulnerabilities is essential, the complexity of adaptation makes efficient policy decisions challenging, especially on a national level. The uncertainty surrounding climate change, along with limited short-term guidance due to its long-term nature and evolving research, hinders prompt action. Financial aspects of adaptation, including costs and funding, establishing institutions and ensuring policy continuity, often remain unaddressed in National Adaptation Strategies (NASs), leading to postponed decisions (Biesbroek et al., 2010). Adaptation, the endeavour to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change on human and natural systems in the EU, primarily manifests as a regional and local concern (Biesbroek et al., 2010). In recent years, climate change has exacerbated existing tensions within the EU. For example, climate-induced shifts affect sectors like viticulture and winemaking. The socioeconomic and environmental sustainability of Europe's esteemed viticulture industry is now contingent on its capacity to effectively adapt to climate



change (Santos et al., 2020).

Only around the turn of the century, as the effects of climate change became more apparent, did adaptation become a priority for policymakers, and EU Member States began to develop National Adaptation Strategies (Biesbroek et al., 2010). The EU is increasingly engaged in this aspect as well (Tagliapietra, Wolff and Lenaerts, 2022). Adaptation policies are being adopted at a quick speed in Europe. There was a 635% increase in the number of adaptation policies recorded in the EU from 2005 to 2010 (Massey et al., 2014). In 2007, the EU published a Green Paper about Adapting to Climate Change in Europe (CEC, 2007), highlighting the primary effects of climate change in Europe and developing an adaptation plan. The paper (CEC, 2007) defines ‘adaptation’ as an approach that aims to reduce the risks and damage from current and future harmful impacts cost-effectively, encompassing national or regional strategies as well as community-level or individual steps, both anticipatory and reactive. In its White Paper (European Commission, 2009c), the EU stressed that adaptation needs to be mainstreamed into EU policies. To facilitate adaptation, it is important to review how policies can be re-focused or amended to each policy area. The number of Local Adaptation Strategies (LAS) saw a remarkable threefold increase between 2011 and 2016 driven by political dynamics, catalytic research initiatives, and climate-induced extreme events, such as heatwaves, droughts, storms, and increased precipitation, within the European context (Aguar et al., 2018).

Although there are many barriers existing to launching and implementing adaptation plans and strategies from the EU level, and the primary responsibility for climate change adaptation lies with regional and local actions, there exist compelling reasons for the European Union (EU) to be involved and take the leadership. These reasons include the advantages of scale, the potential territorial spillovers, and impacts that intersect with the EU’s other competencies, including the maintenance of a functional single market (Lenaerts et al., 2022). The Green Paper on Adapting to Climate Change in Europe (CEC, 2007) articulates the rationale for a cross-boundary approach in the EU to climate adaptation, emphasizing that climate impacts transcend administrative boundaries and the need for coordinated efforts. Certain sectors, such as agriculture, water, biodiversity, fisheries, and energy networks, are deeply integrated at the EU level through the single market and common policies, making it sensible to directly incorporate adaptation goals into these sectors. The EU has the necessary technical know-how, people capacity, and financial resources to take on a significant leadership role. Political coherence, proactive planning, and constant and coordinated action are primarily required for adaptation. In the face of this global challenge, the EU is in a prime position to show how adaptation can be successfully included in all pertinent EU policies and to step up international collaboration.

### **2.2.2 Gender in EU Climate Adaptation Policies**

A comprehensive analysis of EU climate policy documents underscores the historically limited references to women, gender equality, or gender until 2012, and such references remained scarce thereafter (Allwood, 2014). Alston’s examination of EU climate change policy





documents, which mostly come from the Commission, reveals a predominant framing of climate change as a matter of markets, technology, and security, with a heavier emphasis on technological and market-based solutions rather than the human dimension and the role of gender. Gender factors are glaringly lacking when the dominant narrative frames climate change as a market- or technology-centred issue (Allwood, 2014).

The paucity of research dedicated to gender issues in EU climate policies is a notable gap. Western feminist scholars (Macgregor, 2010) have often shied away from discussing environmental issues. Women affiliated with UN organizations like UNIFEM and UNEP as well as gender, environment, and development (GED) experts are the main researchers on gender and climate change. However, researchers from the UN frequently depict women in the Global South as victims - especially those in the Global South like India, Bangladesh, and Tanzania, are the main focus, while addressing these women's pressing needs is crucial, perpetuating a victim stereotype will reinforce notions of powerless women. These discussions overly depend on quantitative approaches, simplify gender dynamics by concentrating only on women, and lack a normative stance on environmental exploitation (Macgregor, 2010).

The EU's declared commitment to gender equality and its actual implementation are very different. Although gender equality is a generally recognised issue, it has been challenging to incorporate it into more comprehensive EU policies since it is challenging to coordinate programs horizontally. As the effectiveness of development policy falls, it is projected that the emphasis on and integration of gender equality will diminish. In addition, the mainstreaming of gender concerns faces formidable challenges like a lack of funds, institutional resistance, and power struggles (Allwood, 2020).

Despite being widely acknowledged as a technique for furthering gender equality, gender mainstreaming's actual application frequently falls short of fulfilling its transformative promise. Alston (2014) discussed that gender mainstreaming frequently takes a bureaucratic approach in order to fit into current organizations without questioning conventions, but often ignores the main importance of gender power dynamics and the underlying goal of establishing gender equality. Furthermore, the term "mainstreaming" itself might possibly dilute resources devoted to gender mainstreaming and reduce it to one of many cross-cutting concerns. When integrating environmental sustainability and gender equality into development policy sometimes, it often takes place in parallel processes rather than taking into account their inherently interrelated nature. Consequently, gender mainstreaming processes are frequently circumvented in the context of climate change as a cross-cutting issue (Allwood, 2014). The EU's ambitions for gender equality and development have been neglected, which represents a backwards trend that affects not only the EU but also those who want to emulate its policies. It is crucial to integrate gender perspectives and coordinate strategies across several policy domains (Allwood, 2020).

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Gender mainstreaming offers an invaluable lens through which to examine the degree to which gender ideas are incorporated into laws and practices, despite being widely employed as a tactic and tool. Gender mainstreaming lies in the recognition of androcentric practices within an organization's culture, policies, and practices, which aims to expose and challenge institutionalized sexism (Rees, 2005). Mainstreaming fosters a holistic transformation by directing the power dynamics that exist across departments and organizations (Alston, 2006).

Gender mainstreaming provides a theoretical framework for this study that directs the analysis of the climate adaptation policy of the European Union. It challenges the conventional categorization of gender as a distinct issue and highlights how vital it is to successfully integrate gender characteristics into policy at all levels. Through its conceptual framework, gender mainstreaming initiates a transformation by concentrating scholarly attention on a complete understanding of how policies intrinsically consider the different needs, experiences, and contributions of people of all genders.

Rees (2005) identified three principles of gender mainstreaming as well as some of the tools for implementing them, which include “Regarding the Individual as a Whole Person”, “Democracy and Participation”, and “Justice, Fairness, and Equity”.

- Regarding the Individual as a Whole Person

This principle pushes beyond gender norms and presumptions to acknowledge people for their whole identities. It questions long-standing gender conventions and assumptions and acknowledges that individuals have a variety of roles, interests, and responsibilities that go beyond traditional stereotypes. Historically, the gender contract model has limited policy areas and impeded the progress of gender equality. It aims to demolish this model. This concept supports family-friendly policies that help all workers, not just women, and recognizes that caregivers can be of any gender.

- Democracy and Participation

Achieving gender parity in political involvement and decision-making, as well as equal representation, participation, and decision-making authority for men and women in various aspects of society, is emphasized by this principle. It is more comparable to a workable plan that supports policies that advance gender parity in bodies that make decisions and stimulate greater public participation, which eventually cultivates a more inclusive and democratic society. It emphasizes how important it is that women's opinions and viewpoints be fairly represented in all spheres of public life. Gender mainstreaming seeks to further state democratization and more inclusive and representative governance by including women in discussions and policy formulation.

- Justice, Fairness, and Equity

Gender mainstreaming is based on the principles of justice and social equity. It seeks to treat everyone fairly and give them equal access to opportunity. This idea emphasizes the necessity of eradicating gender-based discrimination and fostering equity in all spheres of public and private life.



Here I summarize three principles “ Equality”, “Democracy and Participation” and “Justice”, as well as related tools according to Rees’s research (Table 1) , to provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing gender mainstreaming in the context of EU climate adaptation policies. These principles will act as the standards for judging how well the European Union incorporates gender perspectives into its policies, ensuring that gender concerns are an essential part of the framework for climate adaptation. The evaluation of European Union policies will be guided by the application of these principles as we assess how closely they adhere to the aims and objectives of gender mainstreaming. This examination will address gender-specific vulnerabilities and support gender-equitable climate adaptation measures will be shown through this analysis.

**Table 1 Gender mainstreaming principle and tools**

Principles	Description	Tools
<b>Equality</b>	Valuing individuals beyond gender stereotypes, challenging traditional roles, advocating for family-friendly policies, promoting diversity, and encouraging the use of a “gender lens” to identify and rectify biases in policies and practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work/Life Balance Policies: Recognizing diverse roles outside work.</li> <li>• Dignity at Work Policies: Ensuring a respectful and inclusive workplace environment.</li> <li>• Modern HR Practices: Emphasizing transparency, fairness, and equal opportunities.</li> <li>• Equal Pay Reviews: Ensuring that work is valued appropriately, irrespective of gender.</li> <li>• Awareness and Training: Educating employees about the importance of this principle and how to implement it.</li> <li>• Using a ‘gender lens’: Identifying and rectifying biases in policies and practices.</li> </ul>
<b>Democracy and Participation</b>	Achieving equal representation in decision-making roles, supporting women’s advancement, enhancing democracy by including women’s issues and encouraging their participation in politics, overcoming political culture, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender Monitoring: Ensuring gender balance in decision-making bodies.</li> <li>• Gender-Disaggregated Statistics: Collecting and analyzing data separately for men and women.</li> <li>• Equality Indicators: Metrics measuring gender equality in various spheres.</li> <li>• Transparency in Government: Ensuring open and transparent government processes. Legislation on Gender</li> <li>• Balance: Mandating gender representation in decision-making bodies.</li> </ul>

	<p>encouraging wider participation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultative Procedures: Engaging the public and stakeholders for input on policies.</li> <li>• National Machineries for Women: Entities promoting women’s representation in decision-making processes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Justice</b></p> <p>Combating gender inequalities through social values of justice, reassessing resource allocation, identifying and rectifying gender biases in systems and structures, and fostering collaboration and political commitment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender Budgeting: Analyzing government budgets for gender-balanced resource allocation.</li> <li>• Gender Impact Assessments: Evaluating gender-specific impacts before policy implementation.</li> <li>• Gender Proofing: Ensuring policies don’t perpetuate gender biases or inequalities.</li> <li>• Women’s Studies/Gender Studies: Academic disciplines providing insights into gender dynamics and inequalities.</li> <li>• Visioning: Identifying and reimagining biased systems for more inclusivity and equity.</li> </ul>

## 4. Analysis of Gender Mainstreaming in EU Climate Adaptation Policies (2007-2021)

### 4.1 Introduction to Analysis

The study looks into how much gender mainstreaming there was in the European Union’s (EU) climate adaptation policies between 2007 and 2021. It emphasizes how these policies should take gender perspectives and equality into account by using a gender-sensitive framework that considers gender equality. The main goal of the research is to clarify the extent to which gender factors have been incorporated into the EU’s climate change adaptation strategy. The importance of gender awareness and the implementation of gender mainstreaming within EU climate adaptation policy is highlighted. Individuals of different genders have different roles and responsibilities, and have different access to resources. At the very least, in a society that has not yet achieved gender equality, it is critical to acknowledge the differential effects of climate change on gender-diverse populations. As such, this analysis seeks to reveal the level of gender integration within climate adaptation strategies to ensure that these policies comprehensively address the diverse vulnerabilities and needs of all individuals.

Furthermore, this investigation looks at climate adaptation going beyond merely examining gender. It has wider implications for the overarching framework of EU climate policy. The outcomes can contribute to future policy making and execution by adding to the discussion



about improving the effectiveness, fairness, and resilience of climate adaption initiatives.

This analysis section is organized as follows: Section 2 gives a summary of the particular policy papers examined in this study and provides an evaluation of how gender-related terminology (such as “gender,” “women,” “men,” and “equality”) have been included into the text of the policy documents. This part analyses the extent of gender integration in related policy documents and gives a basic picture of the gender dimension in EU climate adaptation policies. Qualitative analysis is conducted in Section 3 to identify the main characteristics of gender integration within the policy papers. It investigates how gender is considered in particular policy fields. Section 4 critically examines European climate adaptation policies through the lens of gender mainstreaming principles, which underscores the opportunity to align gender mainstreaming principles with the broader participation agenda in EU climate adaptation policies. It emphasizes that gender-related concerns should be integrated into decision-making processes. Although analysis reveals room for the inclusion of gender dimensions in these policies, it’s evident that gender mainstreaming has not been given the priority it deserves in the context of climate adaptation.

## 4.2 The Extent of Gender-Related Terms in the Policy Documents

In this section, I list the specific EU climate adaptation policy documents that were examined in this analysis and describe how much gender was integrated into them. These policy documents show the whole range of EU climate adaptation plans, ranging from foundational strategies to more recent legislative changes. They cover a crucial time period from 2007 to 2021 and represent how the European Union’s climate adaptation policies have changed over time. These documents were chosen based on their importance in establishing the EU’s climate adaptation agenda and their applicability to the main goals of this research. As part of the analysis, I investigate to which extent gender mainstreaming has been incorporated into EU climate adaptation policies through a comprehensive examination of these documents.

In this part, each policy document underwent a careful study in order to determine the prevalence of gender-related terms. I present an analysis (Table 2 ) of the extent to which gender-related terms, such as “gender,” “women,” “men,” and “equality,” appear in the EU climate adaptation policy documents for the period from 2007 to 2021 that was the subject of this study, with the goal of capturing even inconspicuous allusions to gender issues.

**Table 2 Gender integration in selected EU climate adaptation documents (2007 – 2021)**

Document	Year	Gender	Contextual information
SEC (2007) 849 - Green Paper on Adapting to climate	2007	no	Recognizes the importance of developing adaptation strategies, “the poorer segments of society will be more vulnerable to the changes”;

<b>change in Europe – options for EU action</b>			Acknowledges the need to pay attention to the social aspects of adaptation (young children and elderly are more vulnerable) but without gender dimensions.
<b>COM (2009) 147 - White Paper on Adapting to climate change</b>	2009	yes	Only recommends “social policy (including gender issues)” as a substantial contribution to climate adaptation.
<b>SEC (2009) 387 - Impact assessment on the White paper on adapting to climate change</b>	2009	no	Acknowledges the impacts of climate change are different, especially on the more vulnerable parts of society, take examples from “migrants”, and “low-income groups”, and recognizes the difference of “adaptive capacity” among different population, without any mention of gender perspectives.
<b>SEC/2009/0386 - Policy paper on Water, Coasts and Marine Issues</b>	2009	no	No mention of gender but encourages to provide for greater public involvement in key decisions on water management.
<b>Non-paper Guidelines for Project Managers: Making vulnerable investments climate resilient</b>	2013	no	No mention of gender; Presents seven modules which make up the climate resilience toolkit
<b>IP/13/329 - Strengthening Europe’s preparedness against natural and man-made disasters</b>	2013	no	No mention of gender
<b>MEMO/13/334 - Questions and Answers/ EU strategy on adaptation to climate change</b>	2013	no	No mention of gender



<b>MEMO/13/335 - EU strategy on adaptation to climate change - Media resource sheet</b>	2013	yes	Presents examples of adaptation projects in EU Member States, only in case of Hungary, mentions that heat waves cause health risks, especially for those most vulnerable, including older people, children and pregnant women.
<b>The EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change</b>	2013	no	Sets out a framework and mechanisms for taking the EU’s preparedness for current and future climate impacts to a new level, including three objectives and eight actions, without any mention of gender.
<b>SWD (2013) 299 - Principles and recommendations for integrating climate change adaptation considerations under the 2014-2020 European Maritime and Fisheries Fund operational programmes</b>	2013	no	Acknowledges the importance of “training” in implementation process, but without the mention of gender.
<b>COM (2013) 216 - An EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change</b>	2013	no	No mention of gender
<b>SWD (2013) 132 - Impact Assessment Part 1&amp;2</b>	2013	yes	Mentions the various capacity to face climate impacts, takes women as example that “ may be placed in a disadvantaged position when expensive adaptation measures are required” ; Acknowledges gaps in adaptation action at sub-EU level, including gender – sensitive; Recognizes fundamental rights are affected by climate change and climate change adaptation policies differently, “In particular, women are likely to be disproportionately affected by climate change as social exclusion has a strong



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				<p>gender bias that increases their vulnerability to climate change, as they have fewer means on average” ;</p> <p>Admits “Economic disparities lead to differences in adaptive capacity between man and women. Climate change should be used as a further argument to reduce these disparities and to reduce vulnerabilities in particular of women.”;</p> <p>Includes “implementation of gender equality and other human rights” as part of “ Other social issues”;</p> <p>Lists mainstreaming priorities of climate adaptation in EU policies, one of them is “Social issues” - “Particular focus should be spent on vulnerable groups (e.g. older people), but also on how to make use of gender issues for strengthening adaptation efforts.”</p>
<b>COM (2013) 213 - Green paper on the insurance of natural and man-made disasters</b>	2013	no		No mention of gender
<b>SWD (2013) 133 - Climate change adaptation, coastal and marine issues</b>	2013	no		No mention of gender
<b>SWD (2013) 136 - Adaptation to climate change impacts on human, animal and plant health</b>	2013	yes		<p>Acknowledges different health impacts from climate change, mental health disorders caused by flooding affects more females than males;</p> <p>Mentions that climate change leads to uneven distribution and additional burdens for lower income groups and certain vulnerable groups, such as children, those working outdoors, the elderly, and women.</p>
<b>SWD (2013) 137 - Adapting infrastructure to climate change</b>	2013	no		No mention of gender

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<b>SWD (2013) 138 - Climate change, environmental degradation and migration</b>	2013	no	Acknowledges migration in the context of environmental change is complex, and immigrant’s needs vary, depending on their age, health, gender and socio-economic status, but no mention of gender in climate adaptation context.
<b>SWD (2013) 135 - Technical guidance on integrating climate change adaptation in programmes and investments of Cohesion Policy</b>	2013	yes	Requires that programmes describe how to address the horizontal principles in Articles 7 (gender equality and non- discrimination).
<b>SWD (2013) 139 - Principles and recommendations for integrating climate change adaptation considerations under the 2014-2020 rural development programmes</b>	2013	no	No mention of gender
<b>SWD (2013) 134 - Guidelines on developing adaptation strategies</b>	2013	no	No mention of gender
<b>Evaluation support study report</b>	2018	no	Mentions social justice issues – “with poorer neighbourhoods being less resilient to climate change; social co-benefits could be an additional driver for adapted infrastructure development, strengthening the political case for investment.” but no mention of gender specifically.
<b>SWD(2018) 460 - Adaptation preparedness scoreboard –</b>	2018	no	An adaptation preparedness scoreboard to identify key indicators for measuring Member States’ level of readiness to climate adaption, no gender related score.

<b>Country Fiches</b>			
<b>SWD(2018) 461 - Evaluation of the EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change</b>			
	2018	no	No mention of gender
<b>COM(2018) 738 - Report on the implementation of the EU Adaptation Strategy</b>			
	2018	no	No mention of gender
<b>COM(2021) 82 - EU Climate Adaptation Strategy</b>	2021	yes	Acknowledges that the impacts of climate change are not neutral. Men and women, older people, persons with disabilities, displaced persons, or socially marginalised have different adaptive capabilities. Adaptation measures need to consider their situation.
<b>SWD(2021) 123 - Closing the climate protection gap – Scoping policy and data gaps</b>			
	2021	no	No mention of gender
<b>SWD(2021) 25 - Impact Assessment</b>	2021	yes	Mentions the varying effects of climate change on women and men and how climate impacts internationally may amplify gender inequalities (e.g. social responsibilities, practices) are essential to any adaptation effort; Sets 4 objectives that is to be achieved in the future, and mentions that Objective 4 (O4) – Strengthen global action for climate change adaptation and resilience is to contribute to gender-responsive planning, and implementation; Mentions that the current focus on social adaptation is insufficient, particularly for women and workers, in particular among civil society representatives; Discusses gender as one topic that should be



addressed in the new Strategy: “reinforcing multi-level governance and prioritising initiatives with co-benefits; accounting for differing social vulnerabilities, including gender-specific vulnerabilities”;

Discusses the integration of gender issues into policymaking, including how and why it should be mainstreamed in the new EU Adaptation Strategy;

Mentions needs to address broader questions of equity, such as gender, in distributional impacts of climate change.

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**SWD(2021) 26 -**

<b>Impact Assessment</b>	2021	no	No mention of gender
<b>Executive Summary</b>			

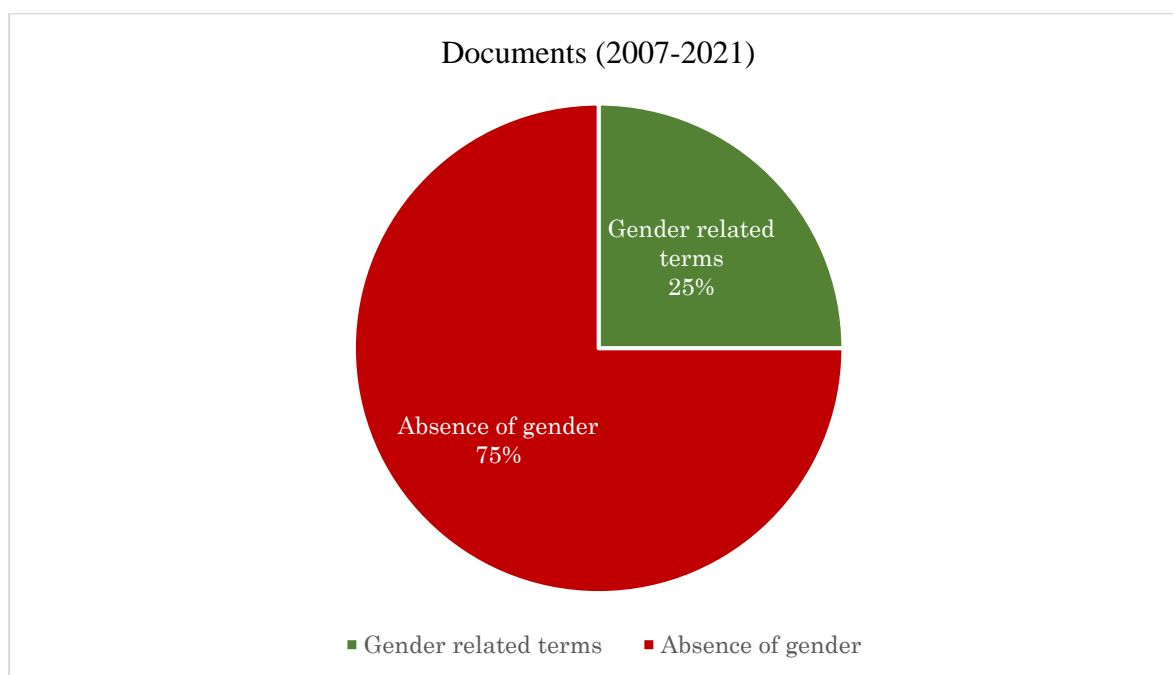
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Out of the 28 examined EU climate adaptation strategy documents from 2007 to 2021, a mere 7 (25%) explicitly incorporated language that acknowledged the importance of gender considerations in the context of climate adaptation. Within this subset, some publications articulated an understanding of the interaction between gender and climate adaptation, while others merely used the term “gender” without substantial discourse. In striking contrast, a majority of the policy texts, constituting 21 out of the 28 (75%), were devoid of any mentions of gender-related terminology. According to the concept of gender mainstreaming, as defined by the Beijing Platform for Action, underscores the need to assess the implications of any planned action on both women and men. It emphasizes the importance of integrating gender considerations into all standard political, economic, and social spheres, with the overarching goal of achieving gender equality by ensuring that gender issues are systematically addressed at every stage of policy development and implementation. It serves as a global strategy aimed at rectifying the historical oversight of gender perspectives in policy formulation and implementation. Mainstreaming gender in climate policy, as committed by the EU, necessitates the inclusion of gender perspectives in policy deliberations. Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize that gender is not synonymous with “female,” and equating gender issues solely with women overlooks the broader goals of systemic change and equality that gender mainstreaming aims to achieve. As detailed in the analytical section of the article, the focus on gender in climate policy should extend beyond mere representation of women and instead encompass a comprehensive approach that addresses the diverse vulnerabilities and capacities of individuals of all genders. However, these documents lacked explicit gender commentary, emphasizing climate adaptation through a lens that ignored gender factors, which is a problem.

A pie chart (Figure 1) was made as a graphic depiction of the distribution of gender-related terminology throughout the EU climate adaptation policy in order to visually incorporate these findings. The graphic shows that, during the course of the study period, a sizable majority of EU climate adaptation policy documents showed a lack of explicit references to gender, with only a small percentage of texts showing progress in addressing gender-specific issues.

This observed variation highlights the necessity of enhancing gender mainstreaming efforts within EU climate adaptation policies, as well as the necessity of igniting more research and advocacy projects in this area. The importance of this issue cannot be overstated because a gender-sensitive strategy is necessary for the equitable and thorough management of climate adaptation, ensuring that the distinct vulnerabilities and advantages of various gender groups are appropriately handled.

**Figure 1 The distribution of gender-related language in EU climate adaptation policies (2007-2021)**



This study, which offers a clear overview of the state of gender integration within EU climate adaptation measures within the indicated timeframe, serves as the analytical starting point. In the parts that follow, I go into greater depth using a qualitative study to comprehend gender mainstreaming in the fraction of papers that specifically reference gender. However, The analytical approach used in this section has both strengths and limitations in assessing gender integration in EU climate adaptation policies. On the one hand, a comprehensive assessment of the inclusion of gender-related terms was possible through the systematic evaluation of specific policy documents. This structured approach allows researchers to analyse the extent to which gender perspectives are included in policy documents. By focusing on terms such as ‘gender’, ‘female’, ‘male’ and ‘equality’, the methodology provides a quantifiable measure of gender



integration in policy documents. By analysing gender-related terms, it is possible to identify trends in the integration of gender perspectives over time. This long-term perspective helps to track progress or stagnation of gender mainstreaming in EU climate adaptation policies. The results of this analysis can provide information on the current state of gender integration in climate adaptation policies and thus inform policy discussions. It provides policy makers with empirical evidence to support the need for increased gender mainstreaming efforts in EU climate policy. On the other hand, while the methodology focuses on specific gender-related terms, it may miss the deeper nuances and complexities of gender mainstreaming. It may not capture the subtleties of gender dynamics and power relations embedded in policy documents. These require a more qualitative and contextual analysis. In addition, the limited scope of the methodology, which limits the analysis to the presence or absence of gender-related terminology in policy documents, may overlook other aspects of gender mainstreaming, such as the quality of gender analysis or the effectiveness of policies in promoting gender equality. A broader approach that includes qualitative evaluation could provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender mainstreaming. In addition, the interpretation of gender-related terms in policy documents can vary. This can lead to subjective judgments about the extent of gender mainstreaming. Different analysts may perceive and categorise terms in different ways, introducing potential biases and inconsistencies into the analysis. The methodology focuses primarily on textual analysis and does not consider the broader socio-political context. As such, the analysis may overlook external factors that influence the inclusion or exclusion of gender perspectives in policy development. Thus, while the methodology provides a structured approach to assessing gender integration, it has inherent limitations that need to be recognised. A more nuanced analysis of gender mainstreaming efforts in climate policy needs to be complemented by qualitative methods and contextual insights in future research.

### **4.3 Qualitative Analysis of Gender Integration in EU Policy**

In order to comprehend how gender is taken into account within these policies, and explore the extent and kind of gender integration in EU climate adaptation strategies, I dig into a qualitative analysis of EU climate adaptation policy texts in this part.

#### **4.3.1 Absence of Gender Consideration**

Among the array of EU climate adaptation policy documents scrutinized, a glaring finding is that there is a conspicuous absence of gender-related terms. My analysis underscores that the discourse on gender, or the integration of gender considerations, is noticeably absent from the majority of these policies. It becomes clear that explicit gender mainstreaming is not a substantial part of EU climate adaptation efforts. These policies neither give concrete activities aimed at addressing gender-related issues nor expressly reference gender mainstreaming. This finding is consistent with the conclusion made in Allwood's (2014) research, which noted that the absence of gender considerations from many climate change policy documents shows that they emanate from policy-making processes apparently untouched by the EU's frequently

reiterated commitment to gender mainstreaming policy in all areas.

For instance, one of the most pivotal documents in this analysis, “The EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change,<sup>6</sup>” adopted by the European Commission in April 2013, sets forth a comprehensive framework and mechanisms aimed at elevating the EU’s preparedness for current and future climate impacts to a new step. However, there is a complete absence of gender issues from its purview. Within its three overarching objectives and eight detailed implementation actions, none of them make any reference to gender considerations or the imperative of mainstreaming gender perspectives. This omission underscores a glaring gap in the gender responsiveness of EU climate adaptation policies. This absence raises pivotal questions about the extent to which climate adaptation policies align with the EU’s professed commitment to gender mainstreaming across all policy areas. It suggests that gender perspectives need to be more thoroughly incorporated and that the commitment to promoting gender equity within climate adaptation measures needs to be re-evaluated.

#### 4.3.2 Limited gender consideration in policies

In examining EU climate adaptation policy documents from 2007 to 2021, it becomes evident that very limited documents mentioned gender in the texts. I found these policies have the following characteristics:

- **Focus on Gendered Impacts**

Gender-specific language appears in the body of EU climate adaptation strategy documents from 2007 to 2021, with a particular focus on the ways in which the effects of climate change varies for different genders of people. It is important to note, nevertheless, that these records usually mix women with children and older persons, depicting women as vulnerable groups in need of support rather than as agents capable of actively engaging in efforts to adapt to climate change. In this context, while these policy texts emphasize the gendered dimensions of climate change impacts, they inadvertently continue to reinforce gender stereotypes that portray women as passive victims. This stereotype obscures women’s agency and potential role as leaders and innovators in climate adaptation initiatives. This is consistent with the ‘vulnerability-resilience’ dichotomy in climate policy critiqued by Macgregor (2017). .By portraying victims as helpless and dependent, this contradiction continues to perpetuate hegemonic norms of masculinity, and these discourses and studies are commonplace in academic constructions. This pattern is reflected in the use of gender-related terminology in EU policies. It underlines the need to

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6 Seen in the European Commission(2013), The EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change, accessed 21 August 2023, <[https://climate.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-11/eu\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-11/eu_strategy_en.pdf)>: The EU Adaptation Strategy has three objectives: 1. Promoting action by Member States; 2. Promoting better-informed decision-making; 3. Promoting adaptation in key vulnerable sectors and implementation of the EU Adaptation Strategy is based on eight actions: 1. Encourage all Member States to adopt comprehensive adaptation strategies; 2. Provide LIFE funding to support capacity building and step up adaptation action in Europe (2014-2020) ; 3. Introduce adaptation in the Covenant of Mayors framework (2013/2014); 4. Bridge the knowledge gap; Further develop Climate-ADAPT as the ‘one-stop-shop’ for adaptation information in Europe; 5. Facilitate the climate-proofing of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), 6. The Cohesion Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP); 7. Ensuring more resilient infrastructure; 8. Promote insurance and other financial products for resilient investment and business decisions.





challenge these entrenched discourses and to contextualize gender dynamics within policy frameworks. Given the persistence of patriarchy and the ongoing struggle to achieve gender equality globally, climate policy has a responsibility to promote a more equitable realization of climate justice. This is not only to make climate adaptation policies truly inclusive, but also to increase their effectiveness. It is important to move beyond this narrow portrayal of women and see them as active contributors and decision-makers in adapting to climate change. Women do not need to be empowered by outsiders, but existing gender inequalities are barriers to their full realization of agency. This underlines the ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming: to bring about genuine equality in power dynamics through systemic change. Gender mainstreaming serves as a multifaceted approach to achieving holistic gender equality, with gender mainstreaming in policy being only one facet of this broader objective. Actively involving women in adaptation in climate policy not only strengthens their resilience, but also enriches the decision-making process and ultimately contributes to societal resilience. Consequently, there is a need for a shift in policy imperatives from the perpetuation of gender stereotypes to a paradigm that empowers and mobilizes women as key stakeholders and leaders in climate resilience initiatives. In this way, policymakers can promote gender equality, social justice and sustainable development in the face of climate change challenges.

For instance, the document titled “ Impact Assessment Part 1&2” (European Commission, 2013c) features a conspicuous passage that illuminates this perspective: “Generally speaking, population groups with lower incomes and fewer assets are more exposed to the adverse impacts of climate change but possess fewer resources to mitigate them. To illustrate, women may find themselves in a disadvantaged position when costly adaptation measures are necessitated.” Additionally, the same document underscores that “ In particular, women are likely to be disproportionately affected by climate change as social exclusion has a strong gender bias that increases their vulnerability to climate change, as they have fewer means on average. Elderly people and children are disadvantaged also in terms of health (greater exposition to injury, death and destitution as a result of extreme weather events) or ability to migrate (restrictions on mobility)”. Similarly, within the document “Adaptation to climate change impacts on human, animal, and plant health (European Commission, 2013a)“, women are subsumed within the category of “vulnerable groups.” The document explicitly categorizes these vulnerable groups, and the text contends, “ The overall health consequences of climate change will exhibit non-uniform distribution across Europe’s regions. This non-uniform distribution is inextricably linked to socio-economic determinants, including income, housing, employment, education, gender, and lifestyle. Consequently, the ramifications of climate change are poised to reshape health disparities within and between nations, engendering unequal allocations and additional burdens for marginalized segments, including children, outdoor workers, the elderly, women, the homeless, and individuals grappling with pre-existing illnesses or disabilities.”

In sum, these policy texts underline the gendered elements of climate change impacts. But it’s clear that they usually portray women as weaker parties, which potentially obscuring their

potential roles as active contributors to climate resilience initiatives. To build truly fair and successful climate adaptation policies, acknowledging gender differences is important, but it is not enough. Strategies that empower women and remove systemic gender prejudices must also be included.

- **Lack of Comprehensive Data and Strategies**

The recognition of gender disparities in the impacts of climate change was recognized in analyzed policy publications. However, what is noticeably lacking is comprehensive guidance on how to address gender-specific challenges or effectively integrate women into efforts to adapt to climate change. Moreover, these records offer scant data to support a more comprehensive comprehension of the complex interplay between gender and climate adaptation. This observation aligns with the findings of the Evaluation of the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change Report in 2018<sup>7</sup>, which noted that while the document acknowledged women as part of a vulnerable group affected by climate change, it lacked comprehensive information and strategies to address this concern. For instance, the evaluation report highlighted that areas such as disaster risk and agriculture were singled out for attention, while other sectors remained conspicuously absent from detailed strategies. Although the inclusion of a vulnerability assessment was acknowledged as potentially valuable, it had not been incorporated into the evaluation process. This observation aligns with the findings of Allwood's (2014) research on gender in EU climate change policy, which noted although an awareness existed regarding the association between climate change and gender in related policy, the depth of understanding of this relationship was found to be limited, and there was no discernible evidence of proactive efforts to incorporate gender considerations into the operations of the Unit's activities. A similar finding has also been found in Tanzania and Uganda, that the majority of national-level policies on climate change, agriculture, and natural resources acknowledge the imperative of gender equality. However, these policies often lack explicit strategies, actionable measures, or mechanisms for addressing the identified issues (Ampaire et al., 2020).

These chosen EU policy documents do not provide all-inclusive strategies for the smooth incorporation of a gender viewpoint into climate adaptation. The ultimate goal of these policies should be achieving institutional equality and rectifying deeply ingrained gender biases within climate adaptation systems and structures. The absence of such strategic guidance raises questions about the efficacy of achieving gender mainstreaming at all levels of EU Policies and translating gender considerations into tangible actions. This lack of strategic guidance not only prevents gender equality within climate adaptation activities but also represents a lost to utilize women's latent potential as crucial agents in climate resilience. In the sections that follow, I go into further detail about the effects of this omission and offer suggestions for enhancing the

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7 Seen in the European Commission (2018), Evaluation of the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change – Public consultation meeting: report, accessed 23 August 2023, <[https://climate.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2018-03/2018\\_01\\_23\\_report\\_en.pdf](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2018-03/2018_01_23_report_en.pdf)>



gender responsiveness of EU climate adaptation strategies.

- **Gender as a Subordinate Issue**

Within the realm of policy documents, it becomes evident that gender considerations often assume a subsidiary position, frequently encompassed within the broader ambit of social issues. A case in point is the document Impact Assessment Report (European Commission, 2021) where gender concerns find their place situated within the “Other” category, alongside topics such as cross-border cooperation and multi-level governance. This classification suggests that gender is integrated into the broader social framework rather than being granted the status of an independent and essential component of climate adaptation policy. Additionally, the integration of gender perspectives into policymaking is addressed under the umbrella of the “Other” category, which may inadvertently diminish its importance and relegate it to the margins of climate policy dialogues. Moreover, this subordinate positioning of gender can be exemplified by the mention of gender issues in the White Paper (European Commission, 2009c), where gender is included as part of the broader social policy supporting climate adaptation. Specifically, it highlights, “External EU policy should also make a substantial contribution to adaptation, via water management (the EU Water Initiative and the EU-ACP Water Facility), agriculture, biodiversity, forests, desertification energy, health, social policy (including gender issues), research, coastal erosion, and disaster risk reduction.” This places gender into the larger framework of social policy, strengthening the idea that it is merely one element among many rather than a crucial factor to be taken into account on its own.

Furthermore, the document Impact Assessment Part 1&2 (European Commission, 2013c) highlighted a list of mainstreaming priorities in EU policies. This initiative lays out a list of priority actions to be pursued until 2020 for mainstreaming and enhancing climate resilience. These actions span various domains, including transport, energy, construction of buildings, health, and social issues. Although it shows a good effort to include a variety of issues in climate adaptation strategies, it also highlights how complex these policies are, addressing not just gender but a wide range of other important issues. This complexity aligns with the findings from Allwood’s (2014) research, which posits that The intricacies of cross-cutting policy concerns appear to challenge the effectiveness of existing gender mainstreaming structures and processes, which primarily focus on gender within specific policy domains. This discovery highlights a major obstacle to the successful integration of gender and the attainment of gender mainstreaming in relation to climate challenges. Gender is implicitly placed as secondary in the overall social policy framework, which may obscure its crucial role in efforts to adapt to climate change. It draws attention to the difficulty of making gender considerations a priority in climate policy, rather than merely one of many challenges.

- **Narrow Framing: Gender as Women’s Issue**

Another obvious feature of the terms related to “gender” that are mentioned in these documents and policies is that most of them frame gender as a problem specific to women rather

than exploring the more complex dynamics of gender relations and systemic gender considerations. This leaves gender as a women's issue. This finding introduces a significant dimension to understanding implicit gender considerations within these policies. Among these documents, related terms often default narrative that "gender-means-women" (e.g. "the reduction of vulnerabilities in particular of women", "women may be placed in a disadvantaged position when expensive adaptation measures are required...", "Heat waves cause health risks, especially for those most vulnerable, including older people, children and pregnant women"). In the discourse of gender in climate change, the majority of analyses often fall into the well-worn trap that 'gender' signifies 'women instead of conceptualizing gender as a complex social and political relationship encompassing both masculine and feminine roles and identities (Macgregor, 2010). Not only EU policies but similar findings have also been found in research from both Uganda and Tanzania, the majority of policy documents tend to predominantly highlight women's issues, portraying gender primarily as a women's issue (Ampaire et al., 2020). Although these studies acknowledge gender disparities when discussing the effects of climate change, they mostly link these differences to females. This tendency, rather than acknowledging the complex gender relations and gender regimes that underlie these differences, oversimplifies complex gender dynamics and also reinforces the traditional narrative that women are primarily vulnerable to climate change and just in need of protection. It is difficult to address more general gender-related concerns when gender is viewed as a women's problem, and this inclination serves as an imperceptible barrier to gender mainstreaming.

- **Gender Prominent in Human-Centered Themes**

One another finding that emerges from the analysis of these policy documents is the discernible relationship between the prominence of gender considerations and the thematic focus of the policies. It is apparent that gender considerations start to become more visible when social aspects of climate adaptation policies are the focus, especially social welfare and well-being. Essentially, gender is mentioned more frequently in climate adaptation policy documents when they address issues that directly affect people as individuals and communities.

For instance, within policy sections addressing topics like health, disaster risk reduction, and social policy, gender considerations surface more prominently. These thematic areas inherently intersect with human well-being, and the gendered dimensions of vulnerability and resilience are more likely to be acknowledged in such contexts. Recognizing the differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women often becomes apparent when the policy discussions revolve around public health, safety, and social support systems.

Conversely, in thematic areas primarily concerned with infrastructure, technology, or ecological aspects, gender considerations tend to recede into the background. These policy sections often emphasize physical resilience measures and technological solutions, relegating gender perspectives to a secondary status. While gender may be mentioned in passing or within broader discussions of social impacts, it is notably less prominent in these contexts. Human-



related issues in climate change are not the main point for a long time.

#### **4.4 Unrealised Potential: Gender Mainstreaming Opportunities in European Climate Adaptation Policies**

As outlined in the Impact Assessment on the White Paper on Adapting to the Climate Change (European Commission, 2009a), the overarching objective of climate adaptation in Europe is “to cope with unavoidable climate change and reduce the cost of climate change by both decreasing the vulnerability and enhancing the resilience of society, economy and environment to climate change impacts”. It is evident that Europe is addressing a wide range of issues related to climate adaptation, with human factors accounting for a relatively small percentage of the total. Industry development, the need to adjust to changing conditions, and institutional advancements are given more active consideration. Within this narrow focus of persons and persons, gender makes up a lower percentage.

Nonetheless, it’s critical to acknowledge that these EU climate adaption strategies and protocols have more space for gender consideration and integration. Examining these policies reveals that there are many opportunities to include gender viewpoints. According to one of the gender mainstreaming principles listed in the above Table 1 - “Democracy and Participation,” it encourages greater participation from NGOs, community viewpoints, and a variety of voices. In fact, the necessity of including a wider range of viewpoints is also acknowledged in numerous EU climate adaption guidelines. For instance, in the Policy Paper on Water, Coasts, and Marine Issues (European Commission, 2009b), there is a notable emphasis on “providing for greater public involvement in key decisions on water management.” Similarly, Guidelines on Developing Adaptation Strategies (European Commission, 2013b) underscores the significance of cooperation and broader participation. It notes that cooperation with relevant stakeholders, including interest groups, NGOs, or those from the private sector, can take various forms, ranging from providing access to information and consulting on specific concerns to facilitating participatory involvement throughout the entire process. Guidelines (European Commission, 2013b) mentions that the level of involvement should also be adjusted during the adaptation process, depending on the stage, whether it’s defining objectives or working on an evaluation scheme. Similarly, in the Impact assessment on the White paper on adapting to the climate change (European Commission, 2009a), the document has already recognized that “Social and individual factors act as barriers to adaptation at both individual and collective decision-making levels”, it clarified that: “There are various cognitive barriers to adaptation including, for example, the observation that vulnerable individuals perceive themselves to be powerless to act in the face of risk.” Despite there is space to do better gender-sensitive consideration in policies, sadly, in the context of EU climate adaptation policies, gender mainstreaming hasn’t gotten the high attention it deserves.

At the policy level, adaptation policies, like many other areas of public policy, are constrained by inertia, cultures of risk denial, and other phenomena well-known in policy sciences. These

barriers are often not accounted for in programmes that advocate technologically feasible and apparently sustainable adaptation. For example, by involving more voices and participation of women to resolve cognitive barriers; and integrating the “Resource Allocation Reassessment: challenges traditional resource allocation patterns by questioning whether resources are distributed equally between genders” from the “Equality” principle to improve financial mechanisms and market failures. By integrating principles of gender mainstreaming, there are many executable and specific strategies for achieving gender mainstreaming in climate adaptation.

Surprisingly, none of these EU climate adaptation documents explicitly reference the gender dimension in the context of “wider participation.” Despite the acknowledgement of gender mainstreaming in all levels of strategies in the EU, and the emphasis on engaging diverse voices, gender considerations appear conspicuously absent. This gap underscores a missed opportunity to align gender mainstreaming principles with the broader participation agenda in EU climate adaptation policies. It suggests that while participation is encouraged, there’s a need to more explicitly incorporate gender perspectives into these mechanisms to ensure that gender-related concerns are not overlooked but actively integrated into decision-making processes.

## 5. Discussion

The examination of EU climate adaption strategies reveals how gender responsiveness functions in these frameworks. The numerous ramifications of these findings are explored in this discussion section, which also highlights the importance of these findings for the creation of EU climate adaption strategies. It also takes into account the findings’ wider implications for regional and international efforts to adapt to climate change, with an emphasis on the Global North. In doing so, it also considers how these policies that just partially take gender into consideration may have a negative impact on social justice and the efficacy of these programs.

The primary finding of my study is that gender is not taken into consideration in the majority of EU climate adaptation policies. Despite the EU’s declared commitment to gender mainstreaming in all policy domains, there is a conspicuous deficiency in the integration of gender perspectives into climate adaption measures. Most policy papers lack explicit gender mainstreaming measures as well as particular acts related to gender. For example, while defining objectives or carrying out implementation plans, gender concerns are ignored in significant publications such as “The EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change”, which was released in 2013. It suggests that gender issues in climate change themes are not given enough consideration when developing solutions for climate adaptation, which will exacerbate gender disparities that already exist. This further supported Macgregor’s (2010) finding that critical analysis of the unequal interpersonal dynamics that might have caused the crisis and the tools used to understand its effects and develop viable solutions are often overlooked as a





perceived luxury. And this can partly explain why gender cannot currently be prioritized in climate change. Evidently, discerning the gender politics inherent in the context of climate change does not command sufficient urgency to warrant inclusion on the agenda (Macgregor, 2010). It also raises concerns about how closely climate adaptation strategies adhere to the EU's larger commitment to gender equality. It is vitally critical to reevaluate the commitment to achieving gender equity within plans for climate adaptation, with a particular emphasis on full gender mainstreaming. The absence of gender within these policies raises concerns about their effectiveness in addressing gender disparities and vulnerabilities.

While some policies do recognize the gender-different effects of climate change, they often mention this by placing a disproportionate emphasis on the “vulnerability” of women. This limited perspective reinforces the perception that women are predominantly passive victims of climate change by oversimplifying the complex dynamics of gender. Besides, it ignores the more extensive systemic and relational dimensions of gender that actually are the root results in these inequalities. For a long time, mainstream discourse on gender and climate change has focused on highlighting the vulnerability of women, especially in the global South. By ignoring the roles of males and maintaining stereotypes, this exclusive focus simplifies the complex connections between gender and climate challenges (MacGregor, 2010). MacGregor emphasized that the study of power relationships between men and women should be a part of gender analysis and gender politics, acknowledge the complexity of gender and refrain from limiting it to women only. As part of this strategy, it is also important to investigate the discursive and cultural constructions of hegemonic masculinities and femininities, as these shape our understanding, expression, and response to a range of societal, environmental, and technological phenomena, such as conflict, financial crises, and climate change (MacGregor, 2010). Due to the EU's leading role in climate action, gender concerns must be strategically and proactively addressed in the context of climate adaptation. When the EU aims to integrate gender mainstreaming in its all policies and strategies, it should acknowledge the complex ways in which gender issues relate to climate adaptation. This interaction considers not just the effects of climate change that are unique to genders, but also the broader social dynamics, power structures, and cultural norms that shape how people view and deal with climate issues. Beyond the conventional focus on vulnerability, such an understanding should take into account the intricate relationships between power dynamics, cultural constructs of masculinity and gender, and the ways in which these elements interact with climate policy and practice.

The policy text's absence of explicit and comprehensive gender-different data and plans serves as another example of how little gender and gender discourse are taken into account. Although gender disparities in the effects of climate change have been acknowledged, there are surprisingly few workable approaches or plans to fully address them. Due to this lack, chances to fully utilize women's potential as significant change agents in efforts related to resilience and climate adaptation are missed. It emphasizes how important it is to have strategic frameworks that actively encourage participation and empowerment in addition to tackling injustice. The



critical need for comprehensive gender mainstreaming frameworks is highlighted by the lack of gender considerations in EU climate adaptation measures. Explicit directives, thorough guidelines, and capacity-building measures should be provided by such frameworks to ensure that gender views are routinely included into the whole policy creation spectrum.

Moreover, gender's inferior placement within these policies—where it is frequently classified under the more general heading of social issues—makes it difficult to prioritize and acknowledge gender issues. Gender problems must be given key and prioritized status in climate adaptation conversations, as this subordination unintentionally lowers the importance of gender in these debates. Action is required in response to the policies' subordinate placement of gender. Gender ought to be taken out of its social issue classification and given a more prominent and important role. Policies need to understand that gender is an important factor that affects and penetrates all aspect of climate adaptation, not just one issue among many. A more thoughtful and thorough approach is required to address the complicated dynamics of gender within the intricate framework of climate adaption methods. Such an approach guarantees that gender gets the proper attention and priority within the complex web of interconnected concerns, in addition to acknowledging it as a significant dimension.

The analysis also reveals how the regulations narrowly frame gender as a women's issue. While recognizing gender inequities, policies typically default to a narrative that equates gender with women, overlooking the larger social and political links covered by gender. This framing will obfuscate the complex web of gender connections and institutions and serve to further promote gender stereotypes. Just like Rees's (2001) explanation of "gender mainstreaming" through a historical perspective, by comparing it with two prevailing approaches before it to attain gender equality "equal treatment" and "positive action". The "equal treatment" approach, primarily sought to align women's rights with men's, addressing historical discrimination through legal frameworks. But it frequently saw women's differences as problems that needed special concessions, which led to short-term measures that weren't strong enough to address systematic prejudices in practice and policy. In a similar vein, "positive action" strategies sought to close perceived gaps in women's skills or experiences, equipping them for settings where males predominate without directly challenging ingrained cultural norms. But these actions might unintentionally promote a particular kind of masculinity in the workplace, which would limit both men and women. In contrast, gender mainstreaming targets structural sexism, setting it apart from approaches that emphasize "equal treatment" for individuals and "positive action" for groups. It focuses on the ways that institutional systems, rather than individual rights or needs peculiar to a group, sustain inequality. Gender mainstreaming tackles the structural causes of gender disparity and emphasizes the need to move past viewing gender issues as exclusively women's issues. When mentioning gender in climate adaptation, EU policies often portray women as the vulnerable group and often frame "gender" as equals to "women", which is far away from achieving "gender mainstreaming" in the EU. These terms in policies are more like the inheritance of the traditional ways of "equal treatment" in climate adaptation, strategies



insufficient to challenge systemic biases in policy and practice. It poses a challenge to achieving comprehensive gender mainstreaming and calls for a more inclusive approach that recognizes gender issues in a climate context. There is a need to shift from a narrow focus on women's vulnerabilities to a more comprehensive understanding of gender as a relational and systemic construct. Such an approach would consider the wider dynamics of power, privilege, and inequality that affect the experiences of men and women in the context of climate change, in addition to the unique challenges faced by women. This emphasizes how important it is to go past gender as a one-dimensional issue and adopt a more complex and inclusive strategy for gender mainstreaming in climate adaptation. Rather than restricting the conversation to women as a disadvantaged group, recognizing and challenging the institutionalized gender biases and systemic discrimination that sustain inequality is significant. To make sure not unintentionally perpetuating negative stereotypes, policies should be sensitive to cultural norms and gender perspectives.

Finally, the analysis demonstrates that gender is more prevalent in human-centered theme areas of policy related to climate adaptation. When social components are addressed in policies, gender considerations become more apparent. On the other hand, subjects that focus on infrastructure, technology, or ecological challenges tend to be less gendered. Gender factors are glaringly lacking when the dominant narrative frames climate change as a market- or technology-centered issue (Allwood, 2014). According to Allwood's (2014) analysis of EU climate change policy, the EU rarely depicts climate change as a problem that directly affects people and usually downplays the significance of incorporating people in mitigation and adaptation measures. It draws attention to the necessity of integrating gender views more thoroughly and consistently across all theme areas in order to guarantee that the gender aspects of climate change are handled comprehensively. To enable comprehensive gender mainstreaming, this insight highlights the need for a more consistent integration of gender perspectives across all policy sectors. Thus, there is a need for sustained political commitment to gender equality and recognition of gender as a fundamental aspect of climate change adaptation.

## 6. Conclusion

By utilizing a gender analysis of EU climate adaptation policy documents, the research reveals multiple aspects of current gender responses in related policy documents. The discussion section emphasizes the importance of considering gender perspectives for the formulation of EU climate adaptation strategies and their applicability, especially concerning the Global North. In addition, the study considers the potential negative consequences for social justice and policy effectiveness when gender is still only partially and superficially integrated into these adaptation strategies.

All things considered, the study's main conclusion is evident: the majority of EU climate adaption policies fall short of successfully incorporating a gender perspective. The majority of policy texts still seem to lack explicit gender mainstreaming efforts and targeted gender-related measures, despite the EU's broad commitment to gender mainstreaming across all policy areas. Notably, significant publications such as "The EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change," published in 2013, overlook gender concerns when setting objectives and implementing their plans. This omission indicates that gender issues are not given enough consideration when developing climate adaption solutions, which exacerbates already-existing gender disparities. This lack in gender consideration within EU climate adaption strategies raises questions about the consistency of these policies with the EU's overarching commitment to gender equality. There is an urgent need for a thorough reevaluation of the commitment to achieving gender equity within climate adaptation measures, with a particular emphasis on full gender mainstreaming.

While some policies do acknowledge the gendered impacts of climate change, they often do so by disproportionately emphasizing the vulnerability of women. This narrow approach fosters the misconception that women are mostly passive victims of climate change, oversimplifying the nuanced dynamics of gender. It's critical to go beyond these oversimplified depictions of gender and adopt a more thorough comprehension of gender as a complex and structural construct. The analysis also highlights that, by framing gender as largely a women's concern, these policies serve to perpetuate stereotypes and hide the complexity of gender relationships and processes. This needs to shift to a more inclusive perspective that sees gender as a relational and structural construct. Policies must address the larger dynamics of power, privilege, and inequality that impact the lives of all genders in the society in addition to the unique difficulties faced by women in order to be effective.

Lastly, the analysis demonstrates that gender is more prominent in human-centered thematic areas of climate adaptation policy, while it tends to recede into the background in subjects concentrating on ecological, technological, or infrastructure concerns. A more consistent integration of gender perspectives across all thematic areas is essential to holistically address the gender dimensions of climate change.

In conclusion, the absence of gender perspectives within EU climate adaptation policies mandates a comprehensive reevaluation and strategic reorientation. To fully embrace the commitment to gender mainstreaming and address the complex interactions between gender and climate, the EU must adopt a holistic approach. This approach should encompass nuanced examinations of power dynamics, cultural constructions of gender, and their intricate relationships with climate policies and practices. Only then can effectively navigate the multifaceted nature of gender within the climate adaptation landscape. This research reinforces the pressing need for the systematic integration of gender perspectives across all sectors of climate adaptation. To achieve comprehensive gender mainstreaming, sustained political commitment to gender equality is paramount. An fundamental element of adapting to climate



change is acknowledging gender. We can only hope to mitigate the gender gaps exacerbated by climate change and start a more just and resilient future by making such a commitment.

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