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News | 11.09.2012

Women in the Green Economy

A gender perspective for sustainable development

The Greens/EFA group welcomed today a report criticising the lack of integration of gender concerns in policies and programmes for sustainable development. The role of women in the green and sustainable economy is often underestimated or ignored completely in international and EU wide programmes. As a result, we risk exacerbating existing inequalities as we tackle the economic and climate crises.

A gender perspective is crucial to avoid making existing inequalities even worse. Green MEP Raul Romeva raised the issue of how women and men are affected differently in his report on gender aspects of the economic downturn and financial crisis. The second wave of the crisis hit the mostly female-dominated retail, services and tourism sectors in which jobs are likely to be less secure. As the move to a low-carbon economy will create a huge demand for skilled workers, we must ensure that women have equal access to the sectors that will be crucial in this recovery.

In this new report, Member States are urged to develop action plans to encourage more women to choose careers within fields of engineering, natural science and IT. Women's entrepreneurship in the green economy must also be encouraged. Our group has worked hard on Greening the Labour Market, emphasising the importance of Green jobs for women and greening the economy in the context of the EU 2020 strategy. Green MEP Elisabeth Schroedter's report on the jobs potential of the sustainable economy put forward concrete recommendations to this end and emphasised the jobs potential overall. Our study on the Gender Dimensions of the Green New Deal also examined how this can be done across the economy as part of its move to a more sustainable path.

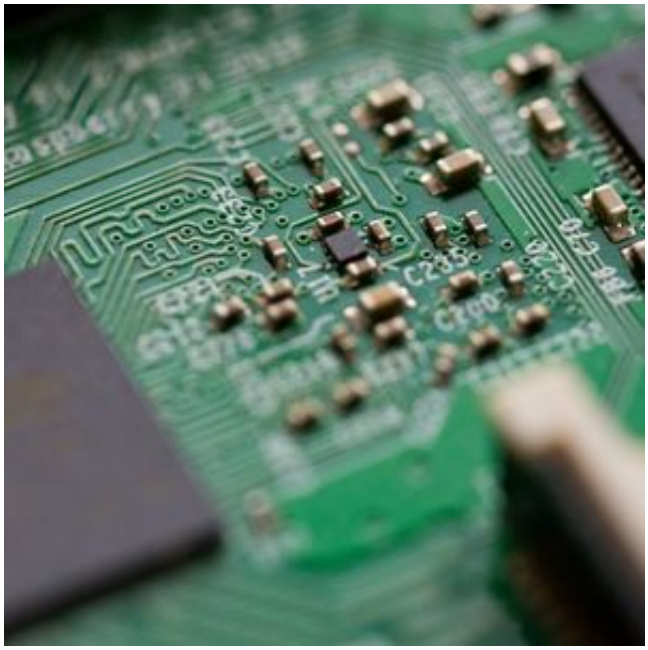
The report also calls on the Commission to systematically include gender-equality perspectives in environmental policies at all levels. The absence of such a perspective can only increase gender inequality. For example gender equality is a critical component of responses to climate change at all levels. At first glance, it might seem unintuitive to link climate change and gender issues. However, as the report by Green MEP Nicole Kiil-Nielsen and our essay contest on women and climate changed show, since societies still largely rely on gendered roles and responsibilities, both sexes are affected differently by it.

These three reports go some way towards gender mainstreaming and the creation of policy that actively fights inequality rather than exacerbating it. We will continue to push for this perspective to be included in the future so that the recovery is truly a green one.

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