

G R E E C E

AUSTERITY, GENDER INEQUALITY AND FEMINISM

# Women's status in a struggling Greek economy: the terrifying fall of a society's progress

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In the March 2019 issue of the IMF's quarterly publication *Finance & Development*, Christine Lagarde, the president of the European Central Bank and former managing director of the IMF, characterises the empowerment of women status in the economy as "a global imperative".<sup>1</sup> However, this loud expression of commitment to the achievement of an inclusive and gender-equitable global economy contradicts the rather undoubtedly negative impact of the IMF's global financial policy on the future of gender equality. Gender remains a crucial factor for an individual's status in the economy in both developing and developed economies.

The structural adjustments imposed by austerity policies across Europe, Asia, Africa and South America have resulted in unemployment, the shrinking and privatisation of the welfare sector and, in many cases, deindustrialisation.<sup>2</sup> In this context, women and especially poor women bear the disproportionate burden of the neoliberal deficit-centred economic policies. According to the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) *World Employment Social Outlook*, "working women are more likely than men to be unemployed in large places in the world"<sup>3</sup> and "working poverty is widespread among both women and men".<sup>4</sup>

In Greece, a country severely traumatised by the IMF's lending policies, the employment crisis and the devaluation of labour have been major setbacks for the country's development. As stated by the United

1 Christine Lagarde, "A global imperative: Empowering women is critical for the world's economy and people," *Finance & Development* 56 (March 2019): 5

2 Gender Development Network, "Submission to the Independent Expert on foreign debt and human rights on the links and the impact of economic reforms and austerity measures on women's human rights," March 2018, p. 1

3 International Labour Office, *World Employment Social Outlook: Trends for Women* (Geneva: ILO, 2018), [https://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/trends-for-women2018/WCMS\\_619577/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/trends-for-women2018/WCMS_619577/lang--en/index.htm).

4 Ibid., p. 11

Nations Working Group on the Issue of Discrimination, notwithstanding the strong legal and institutional framework for advancing gender equality that Greece has established, “the loss of jobs and rise in precarious work because of the financial crisis continue to disproportionately affect women, rendering them more vulnerable to poverty”.<sup>5</sup>

In the light of the above, the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) should become an occasion for reflection and political strategising rather than an opportunity for an overwhelming celebration.<sup>6</sup> This brief study aims to investigate the chasms between international and national policies and legislation promoting gender equality and the social reality in Greece. It uses as its main points of reference and comparison the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women (1979), the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, all of which can be read as complementary documents.

The aim of this paper is not to robustly reject these documents and the policies, but to contribute with constructive criticism to a better understanding of the social background of the dominant uneven gender regime. The main focus is placed on “women’s status in the economy” (employment, access to economic resources, wages, etc.) since it is a representative measure of their social status. This paper could be considered a sequel to *Gendered Aspects of the Austerity Regime in Greece: 2010-2017*, a study also published by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (in Greek and English versions) in 2018.<sup>7</sup>

5 “Currently, Greece has one of the lowest rates of women’s employment in the European Union and is the lowest ranking country in the Gender Equality Index for EU countries. The situation for marginalized groups, such as migrant and Roma women, is even worse.” Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Greece must put gender equality at the heart of economic and social recovery, say UN independent experts,” Geneva/Athens, April 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24480>.

6 It is important to note that Greece has not yet submitted a comprehensive-level review regarding the progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action directives and goals.

7 This study was a part of the RLS project “When the belt can’t get any tighter: Mapping the impacts of austerity on women’s lives across Europe” (2018), <https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/38926/when-the-belt-cant-get-any-tighter-1/>. Some of the findings of the “austerity studies” were presented and discussed on the commission on the status of women (csw63) in 2019 at an official side event organized by the RLS NYC. A podcast of the discussion is available at <http://www.rosalux-nyc.org/rls-nyc-at-the-commission-on-the-status-of-women-csw63/>.

# 1

## After the “bitter” Greek experience

### 2.1 Is the Greek economy really recovering?

Although the narrative of the fiscal recovery of the Greek economy has become increasingly dominant within the circles of the so-called troika (European Commission, European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund) and of the right-wing (with extreme-right “overtones”) Greek government, the reality of everyday life in Greece disproves it. The country’s unemployment rate is still very high (16.6%) – although it is considered to have the lowest jobless rate since 2011<sup>8</sup> – more than 87,500 small and medium businesses have folded since the beginning of the fiscal crisis 11 years ago, and personal disposable income has shrunk by 14.5%.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, private banks – whose interests the 2010 “bailout” was designed to serve<sup>10</sup> – are now threatening to seize the homes of those who are unable to repay their loans.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the above, the risk of impoverishment is a significant aspect of the ongoing social crisis in Greece, almost one-and-a-half years since the Third Economic Adjustment Programme for Greece (20 August 2018).<sup>12</sup> According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority’s (El-stat) 2018 “Survey on Income and Living Conditions of Households” (EU-

8 “Greece unemployment rate,” Trading Economics, <https://tradingeconomics.com/greece/unemployment-rate>.

9 Antonis Galanopoulos and Sotiris Nikas, “What recovery? Distressed Greeks ask as banks seize their homes,” Bloomberg, 3 May 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-05-03/distressed-greeks-say-what-recovery-as-banks-seize-homes>.

10 Eric Toussaint, “Banks are responsible for the crisis in Greece: debts from Greece are odious,” 9 January 2017, Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt, <http://www.cadtm.org/Banks-are-responsible-for-the>.

11 Galanopoulos and Nikas, “What recovery?”

12 European Council. “Greece: The Third Economic Adjustment Programme,” <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/financial-assistance-eurozone-members/greece-programme/>.

SILC) (reference period 2017), 18.5% of the total population is *at risk of poverty*, something which amounts to “4,178 euros per person annually and to 9,908 euros for households with two adults and two dependent children under 14 years old”.<sup>13</sup> It is also important to mention that the rate of the *at-risk-of-poverty* population after all social transfers (including social benefits, allowances, etc.) is 20.02%.<sup>14</sup> While it used to be slightly higher for women, the at-risk-of-poverty rate has been almost equal for both genders since 2017.<sup>15</sup>

Another very important aspect indicated by the ESPN Thematic Report on “In-Work poverty in Greece for 2019” is that, on the one hand, the *in-work poverty* rate for both genders in Greece is one of the highest in the EU (12.8% in 2017)<sup>16</sup> and, on the other, that the slight decrease of the *in-work poverty* rate during the period (from 15.1% in 2012 to 12.8% in 2017) can be explained by the fact that many employed individuals went from *in-work poverty* to being unemployed.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.2 The economic status of Greek women: a brief overview

### WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS

According to Elstat, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in October 2019 was 16.6%, compared to the downward revised 18.5% in October 2018 and 16.8% in September 2019.<sup>18</sup> As stated in the 2019 *World Employment Social Outlook*, this drop in unemployment was “broad-based across all countries”. However, it “was most marked in Greece (-2.3 percentage points), Portugal (-2.0 percentage points) and Spain (-1.7 percentage points), all three of which had unemployment rates above the sub-regional average in 2017”.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, according to

13 Hellenic Statistical Authority. “Risk of poverty.” Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2018, 21 June 2019, <https://www.statistics.gr/en/statistics/-/publication/SFA10/2018>.

14 Ibid., 4.

15 Ibid., 5.

16 Dimitris Ziomas, Nikolaos Bouzas, Antoinetta Capella and Danai Konstantinidou, *In-work Poverty: Greece* (Brussels: European Social Policy Network, 2019), p. 7, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&furtherNews=yes&langId=en&newsId=9378>.

17 Ibid., 8.

18 Hellenic Statistical Authority, “Labour Force Survey: October 2019,” 9 January 2010, <https://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/a8c68f77-761f-f9f8-e474-02b610ef63a1>.

19 International Labour Office, *World Employment Social Outlook: Trends 2019* (Geneva: ILO, 2019), p. 49, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_670542.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_670542.pdf).

the Gender Equality Index 2019, Greece and Italy share the lowest employment rate for women (31%), while Greek women have poor access to financing.<sup>20</sup>

#### THE GENDER GAP IN EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES

According to Eurostat gender pay gap statistics, the unadjusted gender pay gap in Greece rate is 12.5%,<sup>21</sup> which is lower than the average gender pay gap in the European Union (16%). However, this rate should be also evaluated in the context of the wide job losses in traditionally male-dominated and higher-wage sectors such as construction and skilled trades.<sup>22</sup> It is noteworthy that since the beginning of the crisis, male-dominated sectors contributed a 54% to the overall contraction of employment in Greece.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, the most alarming conclusion of all is that any narrowing of the gender gap in employment and in wages does not necessarily mean that women's status in the workplace is upgraded, but it reflects the actual worsening of the working status of both women and men.

#### STATUS OF REFUGEE WOMEN

The living conditions in the Greek migrant hotspot in Moria, Lesbos – which has been described as the worst “rights issue”<sup>24</sup> in Greece and the EU – reflect the significance of the human rights crisis Greece has faced since the summer of 2015. According to Human Rights Watch, “women and girls face relentless insecurity in Greece’s overcrowded Moria ‘hotspot’ for asylum seekers and migrants”. Hillary Margolis, senior wom-

20 “Greece last in gender equality 2017, report finds,” Ekathimerini, 15 October 2019, <http://www.ekathimerini.com/245538/article/ekathimerini/news/greece-last-in-eu-in-gender-equality-in-2017-report-finds>.

21 Eurostat, “Gender pay gap statistics: the unadjusted gender pay gap, 2017 (the difference between average gross hourly of male and female employees as % of male gross earnings),” February 2019, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics).

22 European Federation of Public Service Unions, *The Gender Pay Gap in Public Services*, Brussels, 2013, 5, [https://www.epsu.org/sites/default/files/article/files/Gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_FINAL\\_report.pdf](https://www.epsu.org/sites/default/files/article/files/Gender_pay_gap_FINAL_report.pdf).

23 Maria Karamessini and Franciscos Kountentakis, “Labour Market Flows and Unemployment Dynamics by Sex in Greece During the Crisis,” *Revue de l’OFCE*, no. 133 (2014): 215–39.

24 Nikolaj Nielsen, “Greek migrant hotspot now EU’s worst right issue,” 7 November 2019, EUobserver, <https://euobserver.com/migration/146541>.

en's rights researcher at Human Rights Watch, states "just going to the bathroom feels too risky for women and girls in Moria ... Their lives are defined by fear, and that won't change unless the Greek government addresses the pervasive dangers they face."<sup>25</sup> Inevitably, these poor living conditions and the continuous abuse of refugee women's rights is the main cause of their social marginalisation.<sup>26</sup> In this regard, very little or almost zero progress has been made in the process of integrating refugee and asylum seekers women in the labour market.

### FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN GREECE

According to the 13th comprehensive e-bulletin of the Greek Observatory of the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) on female entrepreneurship (December 2017), "29.50% of [the] total [of] working women in Greece are self-employed, while the ratio of self-employed women to the total [of] working women in the EU-28 is only 11.80%".

Nevertheless, in the context of the permanent recession in Greece, the entrepreneurial motivations vary. From this perspective, in Greece the high unemployment rates, as well as the lack of permanent and full-time employment, have made entrepreneurship the ultimate survival option for many women and men. However, according to GSGE data, the "necessity-driven entrepreneurship" of women turns out to be only slightly higher than men (24% compared to 21%).<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, it is notable that female early-stage entrepreneurship levels remain very high (almost 42%) according to the *Annual Entrepreneurship Report, 2016–2017*, published by the Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research.<sup>28</sup>

Dating back the late 1950s, rural women cooperatives have a long history in Greece and have significantly contributed to the in-

25 Human Rights Watch, "Greece: camp conditions endanger women and girls. Asylum seekers lack access to food, water, health care," 4 December 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/04/greece-camp-conditions-endanger-women-girls>.

26 "The abuse of refugee women's rights is one of the basic underlying root causes of their marginalization and violence in their countries of asylum." Pearl K. Atuhaire and Sylvia Kaye, "Through the Lens of Forced Displacement: Refugee Women's Rights as Human Rights," *International Journal of Business, Human and Social Sciences* 10, no. 2 (2016): 454.

27 Ibid.

28 Aggelos Tsakanikas, Ioannis Giotopoulos, Sofia Stavraki, Evangelia Valavanioti, *Annual Entrepreneurship Report, 2016–2017: Early Stage Entrepreneurship Rates Decrease*, Athens: Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research, November 2017, 4.



crease in rural family incomes and rural women's social status.<sup>29</sup> However, in the context of the ongoing social crisis, due to bureaucracy, lack of training in new technologies and traditional structures – many of them operate as closed family businesses. As a result, small-scale production cooperatives have not emerged as major alternatives to female unemployment in rural areas.

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29 Aikaterini Lassithiotaki and Argiro Roubakou, "Rural Women Cooperatives at Greece: A Retrospective Study," *Open Journal of Business and Management* 2, no. 2 (2014): 127–37. doi:10.4236/ojbm.2014.22016.

## 2

## Addressing the social impact of a destructive economic model on human rights and gender equality in reference to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

### a. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women” (CEDAW)

Article 11 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) explicitly describes the measures that all state parties shall take to eliminate gender discrimination in the labour market and to ensure the equal access to employment as an inalienable human right.<sup>30</sup> The article refers, among others, to the right to equal employment opportunities, equal pay, health and safety in work, access to healthcare and social insurance, maternity leave and self-respect.

The majority of these directives were integrated in Greek labour legislation in the early 1980s (Law 1411/1984). However, the fiscal crisis functioned as a “convenient” excuse for major violations of the labour legislation, especially in the private sector. Furthermore, the introduction of forms of flexible and precarious employment in the public sector has enhanced the phenomenon of gender discrimination. All

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<sup>30</sup> Article 11, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 18 December 1979, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>.

measures introduced to increase the “so-called” flexibility of the labour market have undermined women’s employment status and challenged the principal core of women’s equal rights in employment (for example, measures enabling employers to unilaterally convert full-time contracts into contracts for reduced term rotation work and the abolition of maternity leave rights).<sup>31</sup>

Legislation reforms imposed by the economic adjustment agreements have abolished some of the most significant aspects of labour protection (for example, laws 3899/2010 and 4024/2011 amending collective bargaining). Furthermore, precarious employment has become a field for the reproduction of all forms of gender, racial and ableist discrimination and of the violence of employer, and the list goes on.

Furthermore, New Democracy’s return to government in July 2019 has seen legislative setbacks regarding equality and gender justice in Greece. The proposed amendments of article 5.2 (“free development of personality”)<sup>32</sup> of the Greek constitution to include gender, gender identity and sexual orientation to the list of groups vulnerable to discrimination and therefore worthy of constitutional protection<sup>33</sup> were rejected by the Greek parliament. Finally, the Greek parliament approved a government bill promoting a stricter asylum law, which includes the speeding up of asylum procedures.<sup>34</sup>

## b. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) + 25

In 1995 the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA) was introduced as a roadmap to the eradication of gender inequality globally. Twenty-five years later, this roadmap “remains undiminished”,<sup>35</sup> as ac-

<sup>31</sup> International Labour Office, *Report on the High-Level Mission to Greece (Athens, 19–23 September 2011)*, 47.

<sup>32</sup> Article 5.2 originally states that: “All persons living within the Greek territory shall enjoy the full protection of their life, honour and liberty irrespective of nationality, race or language and religious or political beliefs. Exceptions shall be permitted only in cases provided by international law.” Constitution of Greece, as revised by the parliamentary resolution of 27 May 2008 of the VIII Revisionary Parliament.

<sup>33</sup> “New Democracy Parliamentary Majority Prevents Anti-Discrimination Amendment From Inclusion in Greek Constitution,” Vouliwatch, 3 December 2019.

<sup>34</sup> “Greek parliament approves stricter asylum law,” 1 November 2019, Ekathimerini.com, <http://www.ekathimerini.com/246031/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-parliament-approves-stricter-asylum-law>.

<sup>35</sup> UN Women, *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Beijing+25 Political*

knowledge by Ban Ki-moon in his foreword to its 2014 edition. Following the declaration's adoption by 189 countries (Greece among them), progress has been very slow and unevenly distributed in all 12 critical areas of concern identified in it.<sup>36</sup>

In Greece, austerity policies have reversed the progress made in the field of gender equality and of policies promoting equality. Especially, in the field of labour affairs (BDPA critical area of concern 6, Women and the Economy) many of the gains for women were gradually abolished through the practices that prevailed in precarious and flexible forms employment. Likewise, the substantive role of the progressive legislation introduced in the first decade of this century – for example, the legal framework addressing forms of sexual harassment in the workplace (Law 3896/2010),<sup>37</sup> parental leave for both genders in the public sector (Law 4590/2019) etc. – was strongly undermined by the reality of working conditions.

Despite the high levels of women's integration in third-level education in Greece, the business sector in Greece remains male dominated and the labour market gender segregated. Gender stereotypes and the uneven distribution of caring duties continue to reproduce gender divisions in employment. Female entrepreneurship (for example, cooperatives and starts-up) has not emerged as a major trend or alternative to unemployment due to lack of capital, proper training and guidance (see section 2.2).

*\* The most recent national-level report on the progress on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Greece was published in 2014.<sup>38</sup>*

*Declaration and Outcome* (United Nations: New York, 2014), 1

<sup>36</sup> The six critical areas identified are: 1. Women and poverty; 2. Education and training of women; 3. Women and health; 4. Violence against women; 5. Women and armed conflict; 6. Women and the economy; 7. Women in power and decision-making; 8. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; 9. Human rights of women; 10. Women and the media; 11. Women and the environment; 12. The girl child.

<sup>37</sup> "Application of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation – Harmonisation of existing legislation with Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 and other related provisions (Act 3896/2010)," Greece, Sexual Harassment, EIGE, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/regulatory-and-legal-framework/legal-definitions-in-the-eu/greece-sexual-harassment>.

<sup>38</sup> National review on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Greece, 20 April 2014.

c. **2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (Goals 5 & 8)** The lack of opportunities for decent employment and the dominance of precariousness in the Greek labour market are major setbacks to the realisation of Goals 5 and 8 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda regarding “gender equality ... as a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world” and the promotion of “inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all”.<sup>39</sup> As outlined above in section 2.2, women in the workplace disproportionately bear the negative impact of austerity: the significant job loss in the public services sector – a sector that traditionally favoured women’s status in the Greek labour market – the major cuts in public spending, the legislative reforms on labour law and collective bargaining pushed many women to the margins of the labour market and labour force participation.

Moreover, major labour rights and human rights violations characterise the domestic services sector in Greece. According to the European Policy Brief (June 2016), domestic work in Greece is prevalent within Greece’s migrant population – almost one in two migrant women in Greece work in the domestic and care sector.<sup>40</sup> Despite the existence of a legislative framework which allows access to legal yet flexible employment, the private care labour market in Greece has developed as a shadowy sector, where uninsured work prevails.<sup>41</sup>

d. The interlinkages between the declarations and the overview of labour affairs and gender status in Greece could be also illustratively depicted in the following table:

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 39 Sustainable goal 8, Decent work and economic growth for all, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/>.

40 European Commission, “Trafficking in Domestic Work in Greece: A Demand-side Approach,” *European Policy Brief*, June 2016. 1, [https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy\\_briefs/demandat\\_policybrief\\_greece\\_dangeli.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy_briefs/demandat_policybrief_greece_dangeli.pdf).

41 Ibid., 2

BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION	CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN	2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA
<p><b>12. Women and the economy</b> <b>Strategic objectives</b></p> <p><b>F1.</b> Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources.</p> <p>(GR) <b>Unemployment is gendered in Greece. Women's unemployment rate is still considerably higher than that of men (20.2% in October 2019).</b></p>	<p><b>Article 14.</b> Governments should undertake to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas so that they may participate in and benefit from rural development.</p> <p>(GR) <b>The highest rate of women's unemployment in rural areas in the EU can be found in rural areas in Greece.<sup>42</sup></b></p> <p><b>Although women are the backbone of the rural economy in Greece, they still face many hardships and have poor access to decent income. Many of them work as contributing workers in informal employment (38%). On the other hand, the legal context promoting the founding of women cooperatives since the 1980s has contributed to the increase in rural family income and the empowerment of many women living and working in rural areas (women head farms or agritourism cooperatives)</b></p> <p><b>However, due to the peculiarities of this form of female entrepreneurship that emerged in rural Greece (family business type), it is difficult to define their role in a rural venture (for example, they can be named as head farmers or owners of 51% of a rural business but do not actually undertake managerial tasks).<sup>43</sup></b></p>	<p><b>Goal 8.</b> Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth full and productive employment and decent work for all.</p> <p>(GR) <b>The youth unemployment rate reached 35.6% in October 2019.</b></p> <p><b>Greece also has one of the highest unemployment rates of people with disabilities in the EU (approx. 37.2%).</b></p> <p><b>In the domestic care sector, uninsured work is prevalent (see section 2.2).</b></p>

42 European Parliament, "The professional status of rural women in Greece," study requested by the FEMM Committee, May 2019, 10.

43 Olga Iakovidou, Stavriani Koutsou, Maria Partalidou and Maria Emmanouilidou, "Women Entrepreneurs in Rural Greece: Do they come from the same 'neck of the woods'? Locals, Daughters-in-law and Urban-newcomers," *New Medit* 2 (2012): 58–64, here 58.

BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION	CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN	2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA
<p><b>F2.</b> Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets, and trade.</p> <p>(GR) Law 1414/1984 "applies the principle of sex equality in employment relations, abolishes all forms of discrimination against women and differentiation between male and female jobs".<sup>44</sup></p> <p>The business sector in Greece is gender segregated. Despite the high levels of integration of women in the business sector, women are still underrepresented in administrative boards and in the field of decision making (approx. 11.3% women are members of administrative boards and only 3.4% are chairwomen).<sup>45</sup></p> <p>Gender parity legislation regulates the participation of women in the administrative boards of public organisations.</p> <p>Also, new "substantive gender equality" legislation was introduced in 2019 by the former government, according to which:</p> <p>"Public and private enterprises are encouraged to draft and implement 'equality plans' with specific targets, strategies and practices and the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Interior can award 'equality labels' to them as a reward for their engagement in favour of equal treatment and equal opportunities for their male and female employees."<sup>46</sup></p>	<p><b>Article 11.</b> Women have an equal right to work with men, which includes pay, promotions, training, health, and safety.</p> <p>(GR) The gender-pay-gap rate in Greece is 12.5%.</p> <p>Healthcare and social security: access to social insurance and healthcare is connected to paid employment. Therefore, with the prevalence of precarious forms of employment, many women and men have become long-term uninsured.</p> <p>Consequently, precarious female employees are often deprived of access to social insurance and healthcare.</p>	<p><b>Goal 9.</b> Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.</p> <p>(GR) After the crisis "crash" in the construction sector in Greece – which was considered to be the pillar of the country's economic development – tourism, shipping, food and beverages have emerged as the major industrial sectors.</p> <p>In terms of contribution towards the GDP, agriculture accounts for 3.4%, industry 20.8% and services 75.8%.<sup>47</sup></p> <p>Employment in the tourism sector hit record numbers in August 2019 (10.6% of the total workforce in Greece was engaged in tourism-related jobs).<sup>48</sup></p> <p>The majority of the jobs offered in tourism are seasonal and precarious. Despite the existing labour legislation, a huge number of labour rights violations take place every year, including the severe exploitation of migrant workers.</p> <p>In 2018 Greece's labour inspection body "imposed fines worth over two million euros to businesses active in the tourism sector for violating the labour law".<sup>49</sup> Examples of very common violations in this formal and informal employment market are continuous overtime work and the seven-day working week.</p>

44 Davaki, *Policy of Gender Equality*, 6.

45 «Μόνο το ¼ των επιχειρήσεων στην Ελλάδα διοικούνται από γυναίκες» [Only a quarter of Greek businesses are run by women], 3point Magazine, 12 December 2019, <https://3pointmagazine.gr/mono-to-1-4-ton-epicheiriseon-stin-ellada-dioikoyntai-apo-gynaikes/>.

46 "A new legislation by the Greek government on substantive gender equality and SGBV," 1 April 2019, <https://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/posts/new-legislation-greek-government-substantive-gender-equality-and-sgbv-athens-march-2019>.

47 "EU-MERCI," Analysis of the industrial sectors in different countries. WP4: Picture of efficiency projects implemented by the industry sector-by-sector and process-by-process," 2017, 3.

48 Nick Kampouris, "Employment in tourism sector hits record numbers in Greece," Greek Reporter, 30 August 2019, <https://greece.greekreporter.com/2019/08/30/employment-in-tourism-sector-hits-record-numbers-in-greece/>.

49 "SEPE: Greek Tourism Businesses Fined Over €2m for Labor Violations," GTP, 6

BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION	CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN	2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA
<p><b>F3.</b> Provide business services, training, and access to markets, information, and technology, particularly to low-income women.</p> <p>(GR) The level of participation in education for both women and men in Greece is high. Approximately 30–35% obtain a third-level degree. Indeed, the field of knowledge is the only one in which Greece achieved an increased score (+8.5%) according to the 2019 Gender Equality Index.<sup>50</sup></p> <p>Third-level education remains highly valued in Greece and therefore vocational education is seen as a last resort, especially by youth.<sup>51</sup></p> <p>However, vocational education and training is offered in a) vocational training schools (secondary), b) vocational post-secondary institutions, c) tertiary vocational education and training programmes, and d) lifelong educational programmes, which are promoted through EU-funded programmes.<sup>52</sup> Continuous vocational training is also provided to public servants.</p>		
<p><b>F4.</b> Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks.</p> <p>(GR) The recession has rendered women more vulnerable to poverty. While it used to be slightly higher for women (see section 1.1), the at-risk-of-poverty rate has been almost equal for both genders since 2017.<sup>53</sup></p>		

August 2018, <https://news.gtp.gr/2018/08/06/sepe-greek-tourism-businesses-fined-over-e2m-labor-violations/>.

<sup>50</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender equality index 2019, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2019/EL>.

<sup>51</sup> CEDEFOP, *Vocational Education and Training in Greece* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2014), 17

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 27–28.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 5



BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION	CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN	2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA
<p><b>F5.</b> Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination.</p> <p>(GR) The social crisis has not challenged the gender-segregated structure of the labour market in Greece. Although the high participation of women in third-level education has created more opportunities for many to enter traditionally male-dominated sectors (for example, construction, marine, etc.), gender stereotypes and hierarchies still shape the labour market. The loss of jobs in the public sector during the recession (approx. 60%) has affected women's employment status (approx. 40% loss in women's jobs) (see section 1.2).</p>		
<p><b>F6.</b> Promote harmonisation of work and family responsibilities for women and men.</p> <p>(GR) With the dominance of precarious forms of employment, women – again – are assumed to undertake a disproportionate share of caring duties. Also, in instances where families see a reduction in the family income, women often take on increased amount of care duties in the family.<sup>54</sup></p>		

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<sup>54</sup> Konstantina Davaki, *The Policy of Gender Equality in Greece* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2013), 23.

# 3

## Analysis and recommendations

### a. Fiscal policies and structural inequalities

The Greek experience is not unique but has taught us some very important lessons. The sharp budget cuts in times of financial recession proved to be a very bad solution,<sup>42</sup> or even worse a self-destructive choice for an unstable economy. In Greece, the sovereign debt crisis was treated as a crisis of public spending. As adeptly described by Maria Karamessini, the implemented fiscal consolidation programme took the form of a “shock therapy” for Greece. The excessive cuts in public spending, the undervaluation of the welfare state and the over-taxation of wage-earners caused a depression in economic activity, dramatically increased unemployment and “fuelled a vicious circle of austerity–recession–more austerity”.<sup>43</sup>

This path of authoritarian fiscal regulation proved to be destructive for the economy and the people’s wellbeing. It is worth mentioning that during the crisis Greek society became extremely vulnerable to energy poverty – “56% households are energy poor” and 75% households reduced other expenses to enjoy warmth.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the phe-

42 This criticism against the authoritarian fiscal consolidation programmes implemented in Greece was common among various financial and political institutions since the beginning of the crisis: Ana Fuentes, “The US fear of Europe’s austericide,” *The Corner*, 22 November 2012, <http://thecorner.eu/world-economy/the-us-fear-europes-austericide/16642/>.

43 Maria Karamessini, “Structural Crisis and Adjustment in Greece: Social Regression and the Challenge to Gender Equality,” in *The Economic Crisis and the Future of Gender Equality*, ed. Maria Karamessini and Jill Rubbery (New York: Routledge, 2015), 166.

44 Lefkothea Papada and Dimitris Kaliambakos, “Measuring Energy Poverty in Greece.” *Energy Policy* 94 (July 2016): 157–65.

nomenon of emigration – the so-called “brain drain”<sup>45</sup> – of young highly skilled university graduates has increased dramatically during the period of the crisis (it is estimated that at the beginning of the crisis, 9–11% of Greek university graduates were working in foreign labour markets).<sup>46</sup> Massive youth emigration is caused by the lack of suitable jobs – or jobs in general – and it is considered to be a major obstacle to the development and the prosperity of the country’s economy.<sup>47</sup>

## b. A feminist-activist approach

We could convincingly argue that “it’s the neoliberalism, stupid!,” to paraphrase the famous quote.<sup>48</sup> And of course, neoliberalism is to blame for the structural class, gender and racial inequality and the exploitation of human labour and natural resources. Yet, the material background of poverty and gender injustice is acknowledged by the abovementioned institutional texts and many other international institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

However, the “adoption” of social justice notions in these documents has very little “material” impact on the content of global policies imposed and implemented by these institutions. It also partially explains the chasm that lies between the written word and reality. Structural gender inequality impedes the realisation of the visionary goals described in the abovementioned international texts. The radical ideas remain unfulfilled because of a lack of political strategising and, mainly, of political will. Despite the noteworthy engagement of the institutional discourses with equality, gender parity and sustainability, global politics remains a field of military competition as well as the exploitation of natural assets and of human labour.

45 The writer uses this term solely as a common reference.

46 Dimitris Theodoropoulos, Argyris Kyridis, Christos Zagkos and Zoe Konstantinidou, “Brain Drain’ Phenomenon in Greece: Young Greek Scientists on their Way to Immigration, in an Era of ‘Crisis’: Attitudes, Opinions and Beliefs towards the Prospect of Migration,” *Journal of Education and Human Development* December 3, no. 4 (2014): 231.

47 As quoted in famous Greek social song of the late 1970s, “migration is an answer to your personal frustration, a desperate measure, mending your needs temporarily, while your country is being damaged. It’s a solution on an individual level. «Η μετανάστευση» [Migration], composed by Loukianos Kilaidonis, lyrics: Giannis Negrepontis, “Principals of the Political Economy,” 1975.

48 “It’s the economy, stupid”: a quote originally coined by James Carville, a political strategist for Bill Clinton in 1992.

In the European countries affected by the financial policies of the European institutions, the fiscal recession was used as the most convenient excuse for the reactionary reform of the labour market framework and for an unequal redistribution of wealth. In Greece, the permanent austerity regime established since 2010 has literally destroyed the country's economy and radically transformed the legislative context. Significant labour rights were compromised or even abolished. Syriza's failure to fulfil popular expectations – expectations expressed in the most impressive majority of 63% in favour of a No vote in the 2015 Greek bailout referendum – had a destructive impact on both the political and social level. The return of the right-wing New Democracy party to government is one side of this hurtful story and the other is the total rejection of the anti-austerity movement's radical political demands. The societal frustration caused by these political developments and the actual impact of the permanence of austerity in Greece has shaped a future of insecurity for the majority of people in Greece, especially of those of 20–40 age group that were most significantly affected by the implemented fiscal policies and their impact on labour. The neo-liberal reforms have transformed or eradicated many of the privileges or welfare provisions that the former generation – the so-called "Greek boomers"<sup>49</sup> – in Greece enjoyed.<sup>50</sup> In this framework, many of the achievements of gender equality in Greece have been jeopardised.

However, even in this contradictory context, a new radical feminist and LGBTQI movement is rising in Greece to challenge many male-dominated aspects of leftist activism, left parties and political organisations in Greece. This positive impact of feminism on the political discourse of the left should be used as a medium to shape new social

49 The profile of the "Greek boomer" has its own peculiarities since she or he grew up in the post-civil war Greek society and also experienced a seven-year dictatorship; however, it could be said the "boomers" enjoyed some of the "privileges" of the uneven economic development of the Greek 1960s and 1970s, for example, massive access to third-level education and permanent employment.

50 Marine Moulineux refers to an international trend: "The world of young feminists is, however, one marked by a high degree of insecurity: the liberal reforms that have transformed labour markets and conditions, while removing many former securities and welfare supports that their parents enjoyed if they worked in formal employment." Marine Moulineux, "The New Feminist Activism, 1970–2019: Intergenerational Perspectives," background paper prepared for UN Women Expert Group Meeting, 25–26 September 2019. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020/preparations/expert-group-meeting>.

struggles against the prevailing austerity regime. Nevertheless, no reversal of the uneven labour status in Greece can be achieved without the restructuring of the “tired” and bureaucratised Greek tertiary trade union movement, that has failed to address the needs and express the demands of a large part of the workforce in both the private and public sectors.

Neoliberalism impedes the realisation of gender justice in all major sectors in the domestic sphere, in the economy and in politics. The slogan “You are burning our future”, which is one of the most popular mottos in the protests against climate change and global warmth, sounds realistic in a terrifying way, while the majority begins to acknowledge that the mere “supremacy of finance”<sup>51</sup> lies behind the current global social and environmental crises. Likewise, the references to social equity and sustainability in the official documents reflect attempts to manipulate and institutionalise the movements and their demands, which must be accompanied by strong commitments to change the political regime. Partial reform measures are insufficient and have failed to address the human impact of population displacements due to war, political prosecution, climate change, the jump in unemployment and of the abolition of social welfare in many countries.

Therefore, the chasms between reality and the documents could be better explained if the internal contradiction of the policies of development is readdressed. The radical feminist criticism of the 1990s of the policies of gender development focused on the persistent consensus-seeking<sup>52</sup> to build policies that partially alleviate gender inequalities. Eventually, this consensus and “mainstreaming” served the deradicalisation of feminist discourse, while ignoring the political background of gender injustice. Empowerment, as a common reference in policy documents, is perceived as an individual cause, whereas emancipation describes the true complexities and the social background of the struggles against patriarchy.

The new “face” of neoliberalism activates strategies to mitigate

51 The term “financial supremacy” was introduced Marina Durano and Nicole Bidegain Ponte, “A Feminist Perspective on the Follow-Up Process for Financing for Development,” *Development* 59, nos. 32–39 (2016).

52 Andrea Corwell, Jasmine Gideon and Calpana Wilson, “Introduction: Reclaiming Feminism: Gender and Neoliberalism,” *IDS Bulletin* 39, no. 6 (December 2008), 7.

the impact of the implemented policies while isolating all cores of social struggles through state repression and international supervisory mechanisms. This “new social consensus” emerges as a horrifying version of the postwar New Deal, establishing an uneven and rigid system of power relations.

To that end, leftists and feminists should not – again – abandon the idea of social transformation, which can only be achieved through collective resistance and political organisation. Acknowledging the distance between institutional documents and reality is one thing, the building of grassroots alliances and synergies challenging the dominant system of political power is another. And it is hugely important.

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