



MEP Alicia Homs Ginel, President of Young European Socialists (YES)
Ana Pirtskhalava, Secretary General of Young European Socialists (YES)

Young Women in the Green and Digital Economy

Green

“The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house” said Audre Lorde,¹ and for us this quote also applies to the situation we are facing today. We have seen that the already existing economic order does not work for the majority of the population, nor for the environment. Therefore, we need to change it, but changing it can only happen by proposing alternative radical models that are not “business as usual” but that take into consideration the effect they have on people and on our environment. The green economy is such a model.

The green economy has implications for women not only across economic sectors but also in both urban and rural settings, with an effect on employment opportunities in labour- and technology intensive areas. **Poor and young women are expected to risk the most while gaining the least from the policy reforms and the financial instruments presently being formed in efforts to grow the green economy.**

While we are mentioning the green economy, it would be unfair not to mention the role of young people (millennials and Generation Z) and especially the leading role of young women* in initiating and moving forward the processes (for example Greta Thunberg, Isra Hirsi, Autumn Peltier, Helena Gualinga). **We have to make sure that the initiatives that young women propose and push will not go on without them**, as has happened many times in history when, after important historical events where women played a key role, women were pushed aside or left behind when it came to the composition of decision-making bodies.

In order to ensure this, we would need to create bottom-up initiatives like Green Youth Councils where young people can be engaged in decision-making. These can be established by governments at all levels. We also need to implement impact assessment testing for future-proofing policies and introduce a guardian for future generations, that will ensure that every decision made will be sustainable, future proof and will assess the impact of it on young people and the generations to come. Creating such kinds of bodies will ensure that young people are not only listened to but also participate institutionally in designing the future of our common planet. But it needs to be ensured that such Councils will be accessible for underrepresented groups like youth and women* in all their diversity.

To conclude, of course young women are not the only ones who are and will be affected from the lack of sustainable, green policies but they definitely are the ones

¹ Lorde, Audre (1984), *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*

MEP Alicia Homs Ginel, President of Young European Socialists (YES)
Ana Pirtskhalava, Secretary General of Young European Socialists (YES)

who will be affected the most. Therefore, we need to ensure that, as in other areas of policy, when we are talking about the green economy young women's voices, opinions and proposals are not only heard but properly implemented in practice. Only with inclusion of all affected groups and only by adopting policies that can be relatable and applicable for such groups will we achieve real political changes.

Digital

Green and digital transitions have an immense potential to boost productivity and improve well-being for all, but they also represent a significant challenge for our societies, and more particularly for the labour markets across the European Union, affecting sectors and firms differently and exacerbating qualification gaps and inequalities between workers in sectors and firms.

According to the European Commission, **it is estimated that 30% of jobs in the EU will disappear over the next 25 years to be replaced by jobs requiring advanced digital skills.**² In this context, the development of digital skills through education, training and life-long-learning will play a key role with regard to the just transition to the digital economy.

Nevertheless, we should not forget that the level of digital proficiency has specific socio-economic, age, geographic, accessibility, and more specifically, gender aspects, which must be addressed.

The gender gap in digital qualifications is unacceptably high. It still persists and it is expected to widen. Figures leave no doubt in this regard: despite a share of 54% female students in tertiary education only 17% of tech sector jobs are held by women.³ Additionally, according to Eurostat only one in three Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) graduates are women and this gender gap is particularly evident in the Artificial Intelligence (AI) sector. While AI has become an area of strategic importance and a key driver of economic progress, only 22% of AI professionals globally are female, thereby solidifying a male-biased trajectory for the digital sector in the foreseeable future.⁴

The low participation of women in the digital economy has complex and multifaceted roots. The main obstacles are gender bias and socio-cultural constructs, which at different life stages dissuade girls and women from taking up STEM studies and careers. However,

² 'Digitalization, jobs and convergence in Europe', European Commission, 2016 - http://eskills-scale.eu/fileadmin/eskills_scale/all_final_deliverables/scale_digitalisation_report.pdf

³ Eurostat (2019). Tertiary education statistics. Available on https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Tertiary_education_statistics&oldid=473425#Fields_of_education

⁴ World Economic Forum (2019). Assessing Gender Gaps in Artificial Intelligence. On the topic, see also LinkedIn (2019). AI Talent in the European Labour Market. Available on <https://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2018/assessing-gender-gaps-in-artificial-intelligence/>



MEP Alicia Homs Ginel, President of Young European Socialists (YES)
Ana Pirtskhalava, Secretary General of Young European Socialists (YES)

in contrast to older generations, today's young girls outperform boys in Information and Computer Literacy and STEM, which clearly constitutes an opportunity for a stronger role of women.⁵

Strong measures need to be taken to encourage women's participation in the digital economy at public and private level in order to deal with the digital gender-related stereotypes, promote role models, motivate young girls early to enroll in STEM studies and stimulate the re-skilling and up-skilling of women.

However, the levels of digital illiteracy not only have effects on the economy and the labour market, but they also show citizens' vulnerability to disinformation campaigns, including misleading or false information; identity and data thefts or cyberbullying. The latter is particularly worrying from a gender perspective, as online violence targeting women is one of the most important obstacles they face in participation in public life as well as in online activities.

Gender equality not only brings more quality jobs and higher productivity in a context of green and digital transitions, but is a fundamental right and a key principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights. We must live up to it, since talent is universal, but opportunities are still not.

⁵ Commission Staff Working Document, Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Digital Education action Plan 2021-2027. Resetting education and training for the digital age, SWD(2020) 209 final.