



# Gender Mainstreaming in the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme

## Introduction

Issues and challenges regarding gender and transport have been discussed and researched for decades. Despite this, there has only been gradual progress regarding safety, ease of access, participation in decision making processes and several other issues regarding gender and transport. Additionally, the transport and mobility sector is a male dominated field and there is a lack of women undertaking education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines,<sup>1</sup> which provide an entry point to careers in the sector, as well as other subjects that commonly lead to careers in the sector. As such, the sector lacks a diversity of perspectives, knowledge and thinking, which has contributed to the challenges faced today.

As gender mainstreaming is increasingly becoming an imperative focus within the United Nations system, taking greater action on these matters in the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) is fundamental. Moreover, there have been few discussions which combine the transport, health and environmental aspects of gender mainstreaming in transport and mobility, which is a key gap that THE PEP could seek to fill.

## Background

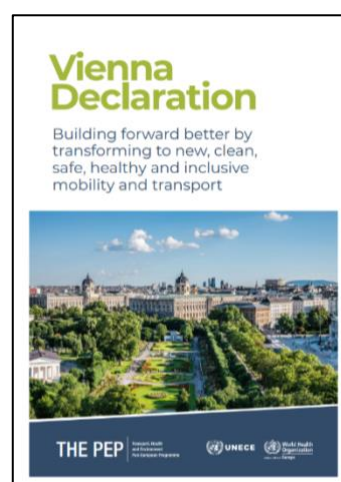
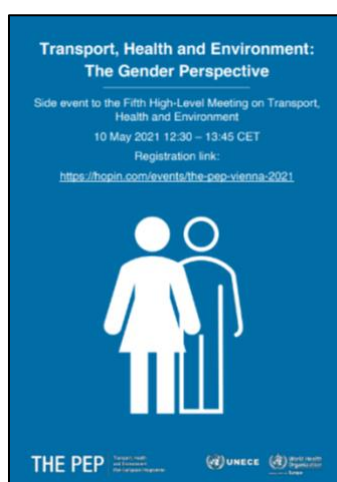
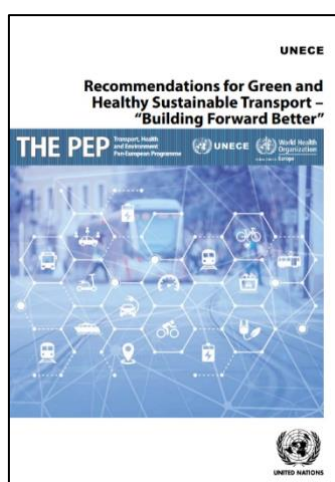
In April 2020, a task force was formed under THE PEP to discuss, analyse and identify challenges and outcomes of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic for transport, health and environment, which led to the publication of “Recommendations for Green and Healthy Sustainable Transport – Building Forward Better”,<sup>2</sup> adopted at the Fifth High-Level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment. The specific recommendations form one of the Annexes to the Vienna Declaration.<sup>3</sup> Theme and recommendation 7 of this publication focused on social disparities in the transport system and rebuilding in a fairer and more inclusive way.<sup>4</sup> Whilst looking at disadvantaged and vulnerable groups as a whole, largely building on SDG target 11.2,<sup>5</sup> women as a group were also considered, which initiated a conversation on taking greater action in integrating a gender perspective in transport policies within THE PEP.

Building on this, a series of side events were held in the run up to the Fifth High-Level Meeting on Transport, Health and Environment, one of which focused on gender in transport, health and environmental policies. Expert panellists discussed some of the issues and challenges that women face as users of transport services and as employees in the transport and mobility industry. A key outcome from the side event were discussions and suggestions for how (a) the current situation regarding gender in the transport and mobility sector could be improved and (b) also how THE PEP could move forward in

better incorporating a gender perspective in its work.

Now, with a new mandate given in the Vienna Declaration, emphasizing the “social inclusivity of access to mobility and transport”, repeating the need for social equity and reducing inequalities,<sup>6</sup> and containing a programme area on the social inclusivity of access to mobility and transport in THE PEP Workplan for the period 2021-2025, the present document is intended to continue the conversation and contribute to turning discussions into concrete actions within the framework of THE PEP.

***“Research shows that women are vital to transitioning to a low-carbon economy and a more sustainable, integrated mobility sector. Better connectivity for women is essential to solving many of the challenges we face today. Better participation of women in the mobility sector is key to reducing negative externalities and unlocking much of this potential”<sup>7</sup>***



# Gender Mainstreaming

Whilst sex refers to the biological differences between people, gender is, among other things, a social construct, whereby roles, attributes and behaviours are influenced by societal expectations which change over time. Gender can influence the generation of trips in several ways, from recreation to entertainment, social contact, political involvement, practices of personal and health care and employment.<sup>8</sup> However, male thinking and perspectives dominate society and are so ingrained that policies, programmes, and infrastructure, among other things, are considered as gender neutral even though they cater to men. As a result, when transport and mobility policies and plans are considered without gender, with the assumption that such actions will benefit both men and women, these in fact still cater to men.<sup>9</sup>

A deep transformation is necessary to change these entrenched perspectives,<sup>10</sup> not only through the policy-regulatory environment but also through the socio-cultural environment. Gender mainstreaming is key to achieving such changes, as the ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality by “assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels”.<sup>11</sup> In the transport and mobility sector, such an approach is key to achieving not only

gender equality, but also to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In this document, the two focus points will be: users of transport and working in the transport and mobility sector. Whilst there is a focus on women, primarily since the data that does exist only disaggregates data at the level of men and women, challenges also exist for people who identify outside of the gender binary and do not identify as either female or male. As such, both women and sexual and gender minorities face severe challenges as users of transport and for those employed in the transport and mobility sector.

## Sustainable Development Goals







## Users of Transport

### Understanding travel movements

In order to address the challenges faced by women as users of transport, it must first be understood how women travel. Broadly speaking, due to the differences of roles and learned behaviours, most responsibilities and tasks regarding caregiving, domestic work, eldercare, shopping, education and health services, entail women travelling with children, the elderly, people with disabilities, or goods. This is frequently the case even where both partners in a heterosexual relationship are working, with women undertaking the greater burden of these household and caregiving duties on top of their occupations.<sup>12</sup>

Women are more likely to undertake shorter, more complex patterns of movement and “trip chain”, which involves using multiple modes of transport and multi-stop journeys to balance these responsibilities. These types of trip-making

have multiple variances beyond simply getting from A to B and are more frequent than work-related trips.<sup>13</sup>

Women are also more likely to walk and use public transport because these modes are more convenient for shorter trips.<sup>14</sup> However, these modes of transport can be problematic from an infrastructural perspective and for considerations of security, affordability, accessibility and time availability, among others.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the car has become the “the dominant mode of travel”, which has meant that urban planning, sprawl and suburban development cater to male patterns of movement. Indeed, social and cultural depictions of masculinity often reference cars and, for some men, there is a connection between manhood and owning a car.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, transport planning has historically catered to men’s

commuting patterns, failing to recognise or take into consideration the needs of women.<sup>17</sup> As a result, where assumptions about gender reflect on the urban environment and transport infrastructure, this built environment further cements gender inequality and “reinforce(s) gender relations and travel patterns”.<sup>18</sup> Women bear the burden of bad transport planning, design and infrastructure that is unsuited to their needs and does not facilitate their patterns of movement.<sup>19</sup> Such limitations have huge repercussions on women’s lives, including their ability to access education and employment, and meet their daily needs.

## Health aspects

Safety concerns are a major issue for women and sexual and gender minorities, which is especially true in the case of sexual harassment. Women and sexual and gender minorities carry an extensive decision-making toll prior to, during and after making a journey.<sup>20</sup> This includes decisions not to go out alone, to travel before it gets dark, to travel in well-lit areas, to avoid public transport at certain times of the day and choose specific routes.<sup>21</sup> From small towns to large cities, in developed and developing nations, sexual violence, ranging from unwelcome sexual remarks, looks, gestures and touching, attempted rape, rape, and murder, occur when walking or cycling, on public transport and in spaces around transport infrastructure.<sup>22</sup> This severely limits their freedom and means to travel securely.<sup>23</sup> The International Labour Organization has estimated that safety concerns of transport are the biggest obstacle to women’s participation in the labour market in developing countries, “reducing their participation probability by 16.5 percentage points”.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, those identifying as LGBTQ+,\* the elderly and disabled people are more frequently targeted for discrimination.<sup>25</sup>

COVID-19 has also had a damaging effect on women’s and sexual and gender minorities’ use of transport. The pandemic has led to a significant reduction in the use and timetabling of public transport. This reduction in services affected women as more frequent users than men, though also added to safety and security concerns given the increase in waiting times with less bystander support. As such, sexual violence has continued throughout the pandemic and, in some cases, there has been a heightened risk of violence against women.<sup>26</sup> As well as this, women, alongside migrants or racial and ethnic minorities, are disproportionately represented in essential work settings or in the informal economy. Since they could not work from home during the pandemic, many of these individuals used public transport to get to their place of work, thus increasing their risk of contracting COVID-19.



Whilst women walk more often than men, this is often not out of choice but due to a lack of access to other options. However, where poor walking infrastructure exists, women may choose not to walk which severely restricts their movement and, when they do not have a choice, they are more vulnerable to a lack of personal security and road safety. Moreover, many women have the added burden of walking with heavy loads which also affects health and well-being.<sup>27</sup>

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\* Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and others.



In areas with high levels of air pollution, walking may also lead to a greater exposure to emissions and pollution which leads to several health issues. This may affect poor and marginalized women who live in low income and high deprivation neighbourhoods more severely since, in some parts of the world, these areas are more exposed to higher levels of air pollution.<sup>28</sup>

In bike-friendly countries and cities, the demographic characteristics of cyclists generally reflects the overall population, with men and women cycling as part of their daily life. However, in countries that are more car-oriented, most cyclists are young to middle-aged men and the number of women cyclists declines at a much faster rate than men from childhood to adolescence and from middle age to older age. Moreover, in these countries there are relatively higher rates of cyclist fatalities and serious injuries.<sup>29</sup>

## Environmental aspects

In many countries, traditional urban development is centred around carbon-intensive, single-use zoning, sprawl and car-centric planning. Not only does this limit the movement for those who have limited access to this mode of transport, but it also contributes to high emissions.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, land transportation is one of the sectors that contributes the most to global warming from fossil fuel combustion, primarily through emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>, and the sector is also a large emitter of ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) and particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>).<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the emissions of gaseous and particulate pollutants from transport modifies the composition of the atmosphere, degrading air quality and contributing further to climate change.<sup>32</sup>

This is a vicious cycle since the increasing frequency and intensity of climate-related disasters and extreme weather events severely disrupts transport systems which disrupts the lives of people. Given the role of transportation in

contributing to global warming, the business-as-usual scenario and traditional norms must be addressed in order to mitigate and adapt to climate change.<sup>33</sup>

Integrating a gender perspective in urban planning and mobility is a key way in which sustainable transport can be reached.

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***“This is fundamentally a social justice, labour and human rights issue. In order to create a public transport system that is safe, accessible and equitable, we need to ensure that women's voices – workers and passengers – are present during the planning, policy-making, research, development and operation of our systems”<sup>34</sup>***

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Conversely, the environmental benefits from transport policies may be unfairly distributed if not carried out through a gender lens. For instance, the broader use and distribution of electric cars, and subsidies for electric cars, may benefit men more than women since men are more likely to own cars and there is an imbalance in purchasing power given the high upfront cost of electric cars.<sup>35</sup>

## Economic aspects

Since women undertake multiple trips more often, if there is not an integrated system for ticketing to allow users to use multiple modes of transport in a certain time period, this leads to an unequal expense for journeys on public transport. Moreover, during off peak hours there are less options, and it often takes more time to travel, or it is more expensive to travel, which may lead to decisions not to undertake certain

employment or educational opportunities, thus limiting the way in which women can fully participate in society. transportation also improves access to opportunities.<sup>36</sup>

Women may settle for lower paid work if it is closer to home to balance their unequal gender-based allocation of domestic work. This further engenders an imbalance in pay between men and women. Furthermore, the double burden of these work activities leads some women to experiencing “time poverty”, resulting in less time for rest and discretionary time. Time poverty can be reduced through gender-sensitive transport infrastructure, whilst more accessible

## Good Practice Examples

- ✓ In Los Angeles, measures undertaken to increase the presence of transit and local police, cameras and train transit operators to de-escalate confrontations led to a 39 per cent decrease in total crime and a 60 per cent decrease in operator assaults in the METRO bus system between 2017 and 2018.<sup>37</sup>
- ✓ The Netherlands’ cycling friendly infrastructure dictates that it should be safe, direct, cohesive, attractive and comfortable. This is based on CROW’s Design Manual for Bicycle Traffic, which is now influential not only in the Netherlands but also globally too.<sup>38</sup> However, infrastructure alone does not have much effect on the number of cyclists. Indeed, the Netherlands’ flexible labour policies, traffic safety lessons at school alongside its cycling infrastructure leads to more security and confidence, which is a key concern for women cyclists.<sup>39</sup>
- ✓ A study conducted in Norway demonstrated that e-bikes were very attractive to women and, in their study, this group showed the greatest increase among e-bike trips per day.<sup>40</sup> E-bikes can also be a helpful, healthy, more environmentally friendly mode of transport for women who have more sedentary lifestyles. This is due to the fact that physical exertion on e-bikes is lower, but longer distances can be travelled in a shorter timeframe and the level of enjoyment can be higher on e-bikes.<sup>41</sup> E-bikes can also be useful even in challenging environments, such as cities, villages and rural areas with steep hills.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, e-bikes are a more expensive alternative to normal pushbikes, so this option is currently only available to those who can afford their high price tag. In Geneva, Switzerland, subsidies for testing e-bikes are offered for long-term rentals up to 250 Swiss francs (approximately \$265), for a maximum of 50 per cent of the price.<sup>43</sup>



## Working in the Transport and Mobility Sector

At the global level, the transport sector, alongside the construction, storage and communication sectors, usually have the highest concentration of male workers. Conversely, education, health, social work, wholesale and the retail trade are the sectors with the highest proportion of women workers.<sup>44</sup> In 2017, women only made up 17 per cent of the total global transportation workforce; and in the European Union this reached only 22 per cent.<sup>45</sup>

Several factors contribute to this low and

This may be due to “stereotypes, social norms and cultural practices, welfare policies, family backgrounds and the absence of women role models, and limited access to networks, information, funding or institutional support”.<sup>49</sup>

This limited participation in STEM subjects results in women entering the workforce lacking the required qualifications for many jobs in the transport and mobility sector. However, this has been referred to as a “chicken-and-egg” problem because there is a preference for male recruits

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