

G R E E C E

AUSTERITY, GENDER INEQUALITY AND FEMINISM AFTER THE CRISIS

The gendered aspects
of the austerity regime
in Greece: 2010 – 2017

Aliki Kosyfologou



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Introduction

*'My need flared up,
Change requires violence'*

Greece was irreversibly traumatised by the global financial crisis. In 2010, the sovereign debt crisis was followed by the implementation of severe austerity measures. The First Economic Adjustment Program for Greece was signed on 3 May 2010 bringing extensive cuts in the public sector: taxation, privatisations and institutionalised precariousness in the workplace, as well as major institutional reforms in some cases.

Furthermore, the implementation of austerity policies was combined with strong multifaceted propaganda on the part of the Greek government, European institutions, as well as several leading Greek and international media outlets. The stereotypical representations of the 'lazy European South' or 'those living above their means' became the ideological ground for the legitimisation of the fiscal 'punishment' of the Greeks. This manipulative approach towards the Greek fiscal reality aimed, and in some cases succeeded, at the moral incrimination of the society, spreading the feeling of collective frustration and guilt. Within this 'punitive' context, certain social categories have been targeted by police and the authorities. The spread of moral panic and disorientated fear in the society reinforced conservative social reflexes, while the Greek far-right party, Golden Dawn, entered the Greek Parliament for the first time.

In response to the austerity measures, the rising state authoritarianism and police brutality, a large, nationwide anti-austerity social movement emerged. National strikes, as well as numerous protests

¹ The Boy aka Voulgaris A. (2010) 'To koustoumaki', on the LP *To koustoumaki*, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-EXjzLTAY8>

and demonstrations, were organised. Furthermore, new forms of collective resistance and social solidarity emerged, building a new social movement 'legacy' in Greece. In this context, in the Greek parliamentary elections SYRIZA won in January 2015, becoming the first left-wing political party in government - after forming a coalition with the right-wing anti-memorandum party Independent Greeks - in Greek history. The rise of SYRIZA in government reflected the social transformations taking place during the austerity years as well as the collective expectations for the end of austerity in Greece. Those expectations were also massively expressed by a majority of 61 % to 39 %, rejecting the bailout conditions in the Greek referendum of July 5, 2015. Conversely, under the neoliberal European regime many of these expectations were dashed, when on 19 August 2015 the Third Adjustment Program for Greece was signed by the Greek government and the European institutions.

Besides the political developments, the grave consequences of austerity were reflected in the people's social status. In the case of societal relationships, new forms of discrimination emerged, while gender inequality worsened multiple aspects of the current living conditions in Greece. As far as working conditions and employment status are concerned, women in Greece still seem to be highly affected by the crisis with considerably greater unemployment rates.² There are three important aspects to the 'gender economy' of the Greek crisis: a. the downward levelling of gender gaps in employment, wages, working conditions and poverty; b. gender segregation in the labour market and elsewhere; and c. the disproportionate impact of austerity policies on women.³

Moreover, within the context of the social crisis in Greece provoked by the austerity policies, gender-based violence increased. Long-term unemployment, the lack of a stable job and the destruction of welfare services in many cases have reinforced a male-centred and discriminatory gender division, breeding different forms of violence against women: physical, mental and economic. Undeniably, gender-based violence is not a conjectural phenomenon as it has its roots

2 <http://www.statistics.gr/en/statistics/pop>

3 Tsiganou, I. (2016) *The Impact of Crisis on Gender Inequality: The Greek Case*, Institute of Social Research (EKKE), Athens.

in the dominant social relations system and in patriarchy. Women's participation in more traditional forms of political representation and collective action, such as anti-austerity and solidarity initiatives in the midst of the crisis, is another aspect to take into account.

This paper will explore the 'gendered' impact of austerity measures in Greece and especially their impact on the lives of women, focusing on labour relations, political participation, interpersonal and interfamilial relations, care, gender-based violence, as well as social and political rights. The project adopts the method of archival research, statistics adaptation (data provided by the Hellenic Statistical Authority and other European Statistical Authorities) and will also take into account the data and conclusions drawn from research that the author is conducting on the subject of the 'gendered aspects of the social movement in Greece 2010–2015'.⁴

4 The conclusions of this research will be included in a collective volume on the social movement in Greece 2010–2015 (pending publication in 2018).

An Overview of the Impact of Austerity Measures on Women. Labour, Social Insurance, Welfare

i. Labour

The undermining of labour has functioned as one of the central apparatuses of neoliberal regulation in all the countries that were greatly affected by the fiscal crisis. In particular, in Greece, the model implemented aimed to radically transform the wages and working hours in the private and public sector, also serving the purpose of undermining the role of trade unions and collective bargaining and legitimising flexible forms of employment. Undeclared and irregular labour increased (12.48%)¹ and especially in the tourist or catering sector, etc.

As far as women are concerned, the current crisis has literally reversed the trend of an increasing and continuous improvement of their status in wage labour.² Here it is important to underline that both women and men have suffered job loss, nevertheless unemployment rates for men have increased by almost 50 % in comparison to women's, which actually depicts the worse intertemporal position of women in wage labour.³ Nevertheless, the unemployment rates for women are still higher than men's. The current data available confirms these remarks. Table 1 illustrates unemployment rates by gender from 2012 to 2017:

1 January 2018, Hellenic Statistic Authority, available at: <http://www.statistics.gr/en/statistics/-/publication/SJO02/>

2 Karamesini, M. and Ruberry, J. (eds) (2015) *Women and Austerity: The Economic Crisis and the Future of Gender Equality*, Nisos, Athens, p. 241.

3 *ibid*, p. 241

Table 1: Unemployment Rates by Gender 2012-2017, Hellenic Statistical Authority, 5 October 2017

Gender	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Female	29.0	31.6	30.00	28.8	28.0	25.3
Male	22.4	25.1	23.5	21.7	19.6	17.5
Total	25.3	27.9	26.4	24.9	23.4	21.0

Furthermore, according to the Hellenic Statistical Authority data, the highest rates of unemployment can be found among the age groups of 15-24 and 25-34 at 43.2 % and 26.1 % respectively in July 2017.

According to article 22 of the Greek Constitution: 'All workers irrespective of gender or any other discrimination are entitled to equal pay for equal work.'⁴ Based on this principle and in harmonisation with the European directives general framework for equal treatment in employment (Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation, 2000/778/EC) was adapted, including equal pay, equal treatment by social security and equal access to employment and opportunities for professional development for men and women. Law 4097/2012 targets the application of equal treatment of women and men in self-employment in harmonisation with directive 2010/41/EU.⁵ Nevertheless, the legal context has failed to eradicate direct discrimination in the workplace, while the austerity measures and the promoted flexibility and flexicurity of working relations have increased the already existing gender inequalities at work. Working women in Greece are paid an average of 15 % less than men (the percentage at the EU level is 16).⁶ According to data provided by the Bank of Greece, between 2010 and 2014 the minimum wage in the private sector dropped 21.5 %, affecting women more than men. The latter was confirmed by the latest European Commission's Report on Gender Equality⁷ according to which the gender pay gap in Greece is still at an average of 15 %.⁸

4 The Constitution of Greece (2013), The Greek Parliament, Athens, p. 36

5 The Policy on Gender Equality in Greece, *ibid*, p.7

6 Zikakou, I. (2014) 'Greece, 15% Gender Pay Gap', in *The Greek Reporter*, 28 February 2014, Available at: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2014/02/28/greece-15-gender-pay-gap/>

7 2017 Report on Equality between Women and Men in the EU, European Commission, p.20, Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2017_report_equality_women_men_in_the_eu_en.pdf

8 Boll, C., Leppin, J., Rossen, A., and Wolf, A. (2016), 'Magnitude and impact factors of the gender pay gap in EU countries', report prepared for the European Commission.

Changes in the regulation of labour in the private sector such as the lessening of protection against individual or collective layoffs, the establishment of flexible working hours, the reduction of 20 % of the legal overtime, and the establishment of a part-time work status in public utility enterprises had a very negative effect on women's status at the workplace. Changes related to the undermining of workers' rights in flexible or informal employment have also affected women more than men due to their 'over-representation' in these jobs.⁹ Unemployment and flexible labour leave women more than men at an elevated risk of economic hardship. According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority's 2016 findings, the number of self-employed women at risk of poverty has increased 1.8 % (as a percentage of the total population), while for non-employed women it was 1.9 % and for other economically inactive women – excluding pensioners - it has increased by 2.57 percentage points.¹⁰

M. Karamesini and J. Rubbery also underline that austerity policies have had and continue to have a negative impact on all the crucial sectors that used to help women improve their social standing – in the workplace, at home, in politics - and, consequently, renegotiate their social role.¹¹ Therefore, there are also 'gendered' dimensions of the public service sector crisis, since it historically constituted a privileged field, establishing and strengthening the role of women as a social category in Greece. It is important to underline the fact that until 2000, 40 % of working women were employed in the service sector, representing 60 % of public employees¹². Therefore, women constituted the majority of public servants. However, according to the Greek Civil Service Confederation (ADEDY)'s Research and Training Institute (Koinoniko Polykentro), this has changed during the years of austerity:

9 Karamesini, M. and Ruberry, J. (eds) (2015) *Women and Austerity: The Economic Crisis and the Future of Gender Equality*, Nisos, Athens, p. 260

10 Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2016 Survey on Income and Living Conditions, press release, 23 July 2017, pp. 3-4. Available at: <http://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/1da6a9ae-6a72-460b-850c-c7e74fd1fca3>

11 *ibid.*, p. 18

12 Athanasiadou, C., Petropoulou S. and Mimikou, G. (2001) *The Conditions of Female Employment in Greece 1981- 2000*, Research Center for Gender Equality, p.15.

Table 2: Employees in the public sector by gender 2015/Registry of Wage Labourers in the Greek Public Sector

Gender	Number of Employees
Female	264,723
Male	302,190

Under austerity, undeclared work in Greece has clearly augmented from 29.7% before 2010 to 40.5% at the end of 2013, falling back to 25% at the end of 2014. There are three major categories of domestic work: unpaid-undeclared; paid-declared; and undeclared. Regardless of the importance of the first for the reproduction of labour power, there is no registered data available on it, because, on the one hand, the Greek labour law equates undeclared work with uninsured work, and, on the other hand, the 'domestic work' sphere is considered to be a non-accessible research field for Greek labour research and literature. A 2015 study by the GSEE Labour Institute classified domestic work as one of those sectors where undeclared work is 'overwhelming'.¹³

Paid domestic work is prevalent among Greece's migrant population and in particular migrant women. Many transformations have taken place in the field of paid domestic work in modern Greece as a consequence of the entry of Greek women into the formal labour market, the inadequacies of the Greek welfare state and the massive entry of migrants into the domestic profession.¹⁴ As underlined in the 2016 European Policy, 'It is estimated that one in two migrant women in Greece currently works in care and domestic services.'¹⁵

ii. Gender Equality Policies During the Crisis

The General Secretariat for Gender Equality under the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for planning and implementing gender equality policies. Its regular budget planned for 2017 is 2,331,000 euros in a total regular budget of 5,006,000,000 for the Ministry of the Interior (the

¹³ European Policy Brief, Trafficking in Domestic Work in Greece: a demand side approach, June 2016, available at: <https://bit.ly/2K2v29E>

¹⁴ Kapsalis, A. (2015) Undeclared Work in Greece: Evaluation of the Mitigation Measures Implemented for the Retrenchment of the Phenomenon, INE-GSEE, p. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 1-2.

total for all the ministries is 613,863,430,000),¹⁶ which represents only a tiny amount of the total ($\approx 0.37\%$). The current budget has decreased in comparison to the 2016 estimated budget, which was 2,343,000 euros for the General Secretariat for Gender Equality within a total of 5,246,117,000 for the Ministry of the Interior.¹⁷ The Research Centre for Gender Equality, which functions as a self-contained body under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior, has a planned total budget of 2,150,000 euros¹⁸ for 2017.

The latter represents the total of the regular budget of the Greek government for gender equality policies. In this context, there are plenty of programs promoting gender equality in the workplace, in entrepreneurship, in politics and policy-making run under the auspices of Greek ministries or other official bodies using exclusively European funding, and, in particular, resources from the National Strategic Reference Framework (ΕΣΠΑ). For example, the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government runs a program for the Affiliation of Professional and Family life for 2017-2018, encouraging applications from public kindergartens and other childcare structures.¹⁹

In a similar manner, a crucial pillar in the planning and implementation of policies regarding the reinforcement of employment is the Manpower Employment Organization (OAED), which is also a member of the European Network of Public Employment Services. OAED, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, plans Public Benefit Employment programs, which aim to create new jobs for the long-term unemployed, for young adults and to promote women's entrepreneurship.²⁰ In either case, these programs function as temporary solutions for unemployment and work flexicurity provoked by the austerity of Adjustment Programs and have no structural impact on current working conditions in Greece.

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 16 Greek Democracy, Ministry of Finance, National Budget 2017, available (in Greek) at: <https://bit.ly/2JT3xMs>

17 Greek Democracy, The Ministry of Interior, National Budget 2016, available (in Greek) at: <https://bit.ly/2SuzU5>

18 Greek Democracy, Newspaper of the Government, 30 December 2016, v. 4481.

19 Hellenic Company for Local Development and Local Government, Affiliation of Family and Professional life 2017 – 2018: https://www.eetaa.gr/index.php?tag=paidikoi_2017

20 Manpower Employment Organization, Public Benefit Employment, available at: <http://www.oaed.gr/programmata-koinophelous-charaktera>

Furthermore, the General Secretariat for Gender Equality has released a National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020 (NAPGE).²¹ In addition to this, the current administration of the General Secretariat, in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior, is working on the preparation of a National Gender Equality Law following the example of the Swedish Gender Equality Laws. For the moment, the latter remains a draft under revision due to technical deficiencies. The Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI), in collaboration with the National Centre for Social Research (EKKE), are planning to conduct research on gender-based violence on the national level in 2018. In both cases, the lack of public funding and the dependence on European backing has significantly limited the substantial contribution of these institutions to the policy-making process.

The General Secretariat for Gender Equality is also the coordinator of a national program for the elimination of gender-based violence, responsible for advisory centres operating in every Greek city, shelters offering temporary housing, and also the 24-hour hotline, 15900. Notwithstanding the valuable work done in the centres, their impact remains limited.

On the whole, it can be said that the low budget for gender equality policies is indicative of the overall shrinking of the total social policy budget in the context of the implementation of austerity policies. Hence, these are meagre examples of the deep, structural changes in Greek social policy that is completely deprived of its original distributive character.

LEGISLATION PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

In contrast to the revisions and legislative acts imposed by the Economic Adjustment Program affecting many sections of Greek national law, the Greek Family Law was not directly affected by these reforms. Moreover, on 22 December 2015 the Greek Parliament recognized same-sex unions by allowing same-sex couples to enter the cohabitation agreement (L.4356/2015). Likewise, another very important

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²¹ General Secretariat on Gender Equality, National Action Plan on Gender Equality, available at: <http://www.isotita.gr/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Greece-National-Action-Plan-on-Gender-Equality-2016-2020.pdf>

moment in the legislative history of human rights in Greece was the legal recognition of gender identity. The new law passed by the Greek Parliament on Monday 9 October 2017, with 178 votes in favour and 114 against (in a total of 258 deputies present), expressly states that transgender individuals can change their papers without the need for medical interventions or tests. Besides its limitations and deficiencies - the recognition procedure passes through the court of law encumbering individuals with a great deal of expenses and married individuals, migrants, intersex people cannot make use of this law -, the legal recognition of gender identity is groundbreaking in this period.

Overall, since 24 December 2015, Greece prohibits gender-based discrimination and hate crimes. On 2 December 2016, further anti-discrimination protections on the basis of sexual orientation, gender and religion in the workplace were passed by the Hellenic Parliament.

The institutional context regarding gender-based violence and domestic violence was reformed in 2006, when Law 3005/2006 was introduced, which charges spousal rape as a felony and prohibits it (including rape in a free union), prohibits corporal punishment of children, and provides for ex relatione prosecution (prosecution by force of law) for all domestic violence crimes²². Correspondingly, in 2010 an updated Law on Sexual Harassment in the workplace (L3896/2010) was introduced based on the principle of equal treatment for women and men. The above-mentioned laws together with the Law on Rape (L3500/2006) and the Law on Human Trafficking (L3216/2013) make up the national legislation on gender-based violence.

iii. Welfare and Social Insurance

The implemented austerity measures had a destructive impact on the welfare and social security sector in Greece, freezing pensions, abolishing the 13th and 14th wage payment, and shrinking health services. State-run hospitals were forced to radically slash their budgets - up to 50 % according to data from the Athens Medical Association - while the number of doctors and nurses is low due to the public sector's restriction on hiring.

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 22 The Policy on Gender Equality in Greece, p. 9, available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2013/493028/IPOL-FEMM_NT%282013%29493028_EN.pdf

The ongoing social services crisis also has a gender impact:

Maternity allowances, paid leaves, other allowances, access to reproductive health services remain closely attached to insured employment. Given the fact that the number of uninsured women and men increased highly during the austerity years many women are deprived from their right to access social insurance and care.

For example in the case of maternity allowances and paid leaves, the Greek Social Security Organization (IKA) only provides maternity assistance to directly insured (those who are employed) and indirectly insured (those covered through an insured, working spouse or parent for those under 25) women in Greece. The assistance takes the form of a paid maternity leave and a birth benefit²³.

The basic leave is funded by the Social Security Fund and the Manpower Employment Organization, which are financed on a tripartite basis (employers-employees-state) with employers paying 27.46 % of their earnings, and employees 16.5 %; these contributions constitute 46 % of the 2014 income of the Social Security Fund, which finances a wide range of benefits including pensions, medical expenses and long-term disability. The special leave is funded by the Manpower Employment Organization²⁴. Uninsured mothers are entitled to a Social Maternity Allowance paid out by Regional Social Services.

The reproductive health of women who are uninsured - as most of those without jobs are - is very much affected by the austerity policies: uninsured women are required to pay 600 to 1,200 euros for delivery in a public hospital. Uninsured migrant women who are not EU citizens are required to pay double²⁵. Gynaecological and ante-natal consultations are also charged, and the same goes for abortions. Furthermore, gynaecological consultations for women under 21 are not covered by social security, while some very important gynaecological tests, such as for HPV, are not included in the social coverage package either.

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 23 Maternity and Birth Benefits: Information about Registering for Birth Payments, available at: <https://www.angloinfo.com/how-to/greece/healthcare/pregnancy-birth/benefits>

24 Ibid.

25 Directorate General for internal policies, Policy Department: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, The Policy on Gender Equality in Greece, p. 15, available at: <https://bit.ly/1mgmfB5>

iv. Abortions

Abortion in Greece has been legal since 1984 and was further liberalised by Law. 1609/1986. However, abortion in Greece was common and officially tolerated. The Greek Orthodox Church and the right wing parties in Greece were strictly opposed to induced abortions, except for those carried out on medical grounds. The church continues to consider abortion a crime and condemns it, but this has a very low impact on society's perceptions of it.

The legalisation of abortion is considered to be one of the major feminist achievements in the history of modern Greece. Leftist and anarchist feminist organisations advocated for legal access to abortion and significantly contributed to promoting women's sexual and reproductive rights. Furthermore, they managed to radically transform the social discourse on women sexuality.

According to current legislation an abortion must be carried out in a public hospital or a private clinic. Written consent is required by the parents or the guardian of a minor. Termination of pregnancy on request is permitted until the 12th week. If the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, an abortion can be carried out until the 19th week. In the case of severe health risks for the pregnant woman, the limit for termination is 24 weeks.²⁶ Abortions carried out in public hospitals are covered by public health insurance. Nevertheless, uninsured women are required to pay for an abortion in a public hospital. An abortion for an uninsured woman may cost between 200 and 400 euros.

v. Legislative Changes

Amendments to law promoted in the context of the Economic Adjustment Program have an indirect but significant negative impact on human rights and in particular women's rights. By the same token, the legislative changes in the Labour Law and Pension Law have significantly affected the lives of women.

The most important development in legislation was the reform of the social security system and the rearrangement of contributions to the social security funds and pensions. The new Social Insurance

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²⁶ Termination of Pregnancy and Abortion in Greece, available at: <https://www.angloinfo.com/how-to/greece/healthcare/pregnancy-birth/termination-abortion>

Law voted on 8 May 2016 (L.4387/2016) has increased the pensionable age/retirement age for women and men by five years. The minimum pensionable age for a mother of a minor is 55. The calculation method for contributions paid by the self-employed and freelancers has undergone radical changes. The new calculation method links contributions to income.²⁷ Freelancers and the self-employed pay contributions according to pre-defined rates. The increase of the freelancers' social insurance contributions has forced many professionals, women and men, to close their books. Others, especially the younger ones, chose to stay uninsured and others bear the burden of a huge debt to their insurance fund. Young lawyers and engineers are very affected by these changes. For example, according to Technical Chamber of Greece data, there is a decline in registration rates every year since the beginning of the crisis, while the number of graduates remains stable.²⁸ Although there are not any relevant studies it is easy to assume that women freelance professionals are very affected by these changes.²⁹

vi. Gender-based Violence

The first epidemiological study on gender-based and domestic violence in Greece was published in 2003 under the auspices of the Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI). The results indicated that in a sample of 200 women, 56 % had been recipients of violent or abusive psychologically or physically violent behaviour by their husbands or companions while only 3.6 % of them reported that their husband or companion was abusing them on a regular basis and 3.5 % testified they had been forced to have sexual intercourse.

Since 2003 no other study or national-level research on the issue of gender-based violence has been conducted. Nevertheless, current studies in a variety of fields such as labour, migrant labour, undeclared labour, and trafficking reflect an alarming reality, indicating that gender-based violence, a term that includes domestic violence, rape, human trafficking and sexual harassment, has aggravated during the years of the Greek cri-

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²⁷ General Labour Market and Litigation Trends, available at: <https://www.globallegalinsights.com/practice-areas/employment-and-labour-law/global-legal-insights--employment-and-labour-law-2017-5th-ed./greece>

²⁸ http://portal.tee.gr/portal/page/portal/TEE/TEE_MEMBERS

²⁹ Ibid.

sis.³⁰ According to the Special Eurobarometer 2016 on gender-based violence, 33 % of participants in the survey were likely to know that a woman in their family, work environment, or community has been abused.³¹

vii. Racist and Sexist Discourse: Far-right Attempts to Challenge Women's Rights in Greece

The day that the neo-Nazi political leader and later Golden Dawn Parliament Member Ilias Kassidiaris attacked two left-wing female politicians on camera – throwing water at the face of one and slapping the other repeatedly – has inscribed itself as a significant part of the collective trauma that the rise of the Golden Dawn constitutes in the political history of the current Greek crisis. The assault constituted a political statement by the Golden Dawn, which refused to apologise for the incident claiming that both women politicians had initiated the assault. The brutal attack reflected GD's views and perceptions of gender and women's social position. In other words, it represented the way the GD envisages the role of women in society.

According to material available on GD's official website, women are meant to be child-bearers and wives dedicated to providing care and raising the members of a nationalist family. As Alexandra Koronaiou and Alexandros Sakellariou underline, women play a key role in the party's ideological edifice and this is evident in the party's concern with constructing a nationalist habitus for women, rooted in the ideas of anti-feminism, family and the primacy of the nation.³²

In this context, women's political involvement is considered to be contradictory to their so-called feminine 'nature'. However, there are women GD members but very few of them have political roles.³³ As mentioned in more detail above (see p. 16) the GD has launched many attacks against members of the LGBTQI community.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 10

³¹ European Union, Special Eurobarometer 449, Gender-based Violence, available at: https://data.europa.eu/euodp/data/dataset/S2115_85_3_449_ENG

³² Koronaiou A. and Sakellariou, A. (2017) 'Women and the Golden Dawn: Representing the Nationalist Habitus', Gender and Education, Nr. 29 (2), pp. 259.

³³ Most recognizable among them are Eleni Zaroulia the only female member of the GD parliamentary group, who is the wife of GD founder and political leader N. Michaloliakos and Ourania Michaloliakou, their daughter, who is considered to be a GD 'activist'. The latter was found among six masked party cadres charged with conducting a motorcycle raid against Pakistani migrants, although they were all later released (June 2012).

Social Rights under Austerity: an Intersectional Approach

The acute social impact of the economic crisis is felt by the most vulnerable. The combination of the recession, austerity measures, and the consequent shrinking of welfare services and of social security provisions has had a significant negative impact on the lives of the majority in Greek society. The unemployment rates quadrupled between 2007 and 2012, while the employed suffered extensive income cuts, leaving the average Greek wage far below the European average.¹ Moreover, extreme poverty rates spiked, meaning that a major proportion of the population became unable to meet basic needs. In this context, a disproportionate damage of increasing inequalities has affected the most vulnerable in society, lowering their standards of living and weakening their social status. Women, youth, migrants, people suffering from mental illnesses, drug addicts, the incarcerated and other minority communities like the Roms and the Muslims of Eastern Thrace (Pomaks) are bearing the burden of a social process of an 'upwards' redistribution of wealth.

i. Roma/Rom

It is estimated that about 300,000 Rom² are living in Greece, although these numbers are under continuous revision due to the lack of official registries of the moving population among them. According to the Interactional Map of Rom Settlements published by the Greek Om-

1 Clarke, J., Asteris, H., and Sotiropoulos, D. A. (2015) 'Introduction', in Clarke, J. Huliaras, A. and Sotiropoulos, D. A (eds), *Austerity and the Third Sector in Greece: Civil Society at the European Frontline*, Southeast European Studies 2015, Ashgate: UK, p 3.

2 Rinne, S. (2002) 'The Situation of Roma in Greece', *Dom Research Center*, Nr 6, Spring–Summer, available at: <http://www.domresearchcenter.com/journal/16/greece6.html>

budsman³, there are 39 settlements in Greece. The Rom represent one of the most segregated minority groups in Greece, being socially and institutionally excluded. The deeply-rooted social and institutional racism against the Rom and the lack of a planned integration strategy by the Greek state impede any potentially positive changes for the Rom communities' living conditions. Dominant racist mythologies continue to provide moral justification for discrimination against the Rom. For example, the opinion that the Rom enjoy their living conditions as 'unconventional' and that they themselves refuse the chance to be integrated.⁴ In this context, municipal authorities are very eager to get Roma out of their territories and in many cases people in the settlements live under the continuous threat of eviction. In the context of the austerity era, the extensive cuts to public funding have had a very negative impact on integration policies and, by extension, on integration policies regarding Rom communities in Greece. However, in 2015, Greece adopted a National Roma Integration Strategy using sources from the EU funding for Roma integration.⁵

ii. LGBTQI Community

Here there is a great contradiction to underline: on the one hand, there have been important developments in terms of institutional rights - the recognition of the right of same-sex couples to enter into cohabitation agreement voted by the Greek Parliament on 24 December 2015 and the Legal Recognition of Gender Identity passed by the Greek Parliament on 13 October 2017 - while, on the other hand, the social crisis provoked by the austerity policies implemented in Greece for the past seven years has had a very negative impact on the living conditions of many of the members of the LGBTQI community.

Historically, the LGBTQI community in Greece has suffered widespread abuse and discrimination. Notably, homosexuality was not de-

3 Interactional Map of Rom Settlements, The Greek Ombudsman, available at: <https://www.synigoros.gr/maps?i=maps.el.maps>

4 Lena, D. (2001) 'The Rom People in Greece', National Commission for the Human Rights in Greece, Nr. 6, September, pp. 2-4, available at:

https://eclass.uoa.gr/modules/document/file.php/ARCH258/Divani_Tsiganoi.doc

5 Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Labour, Social Insurance and Social Solidarity, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma-integration/greece/national-strategy/national_el.htm

classified as an illness in Greece until 1990. However, over the past 15 years some positive developments have taken place improving the role of LGBTQI in Greek society. The political engagement of the LGBTQI movement and its contact with the social rights movement in Greece have contributed to this change. Grassroots initiatives such as the Athens Pride Festival that took place for the first time in June 2005 – followed by Thessaloniki Pride in 2011 and other Pride Festivals in Crete or Patras - have had a huge positive impact on the public perception of LGBTQI issues.

Regardless of these positive events, the social crisis provoked by austerity in Greece has negatively affected LGBTQI's access to work and social insurance. Exclusion from work is one of the most important discriminations that LGBTQI are facing in Greece. Transgender people can be considered as those facing the harshest social discrimination of LGBTQI. In particular, transgender people are often excluded from work and, consequently, from social security. As Marina Galanou, President of the Greek Transgender Support Association, underlines, transgender people face multiple discriminations in employment because of their appearance. Yet the ones who are employed also face multiple discriminations on the job and are often forced to choose positions that allow them to stay invisible or to live under the constant threat of being fired.⁶ Moreover, transgender youth in school are still subjected to multiple discriminations and frequent abuse. The story of A., a transgender student who faced a life-threatening situation at her school when one of her classmates attempted to set her on fire in 2014, is indicative of the situation.

Equally importantly, since 2012, hundreds of members of the LGBTQI community have suffered violent attacks from the far-right and neo-Nazis. According to the Greek Ombudsman Report on Racist Violence in 2013, from the beginning of year 2012 until 30 April 2013, 281 cases of violent attacks for reasons of colour, sexual orientation and religion were reported (253 were reported in 2012, the year that the neo-Nazi party entered parliament), while members of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn were the alleged perpetrators of 71 of them.⁷

6 Galanou, M. (2014) *Identity and Expression of Identity: Typology, Discriminations, Stereotypes and Myths*, Transgender Association, Athens, p. 44.

7 The Greek Ombudsman (2013) 'The Phenomenon of Racist Violence in Greece and How it is Combated', *Special Report*, September, Athens, p. 6.

iii. Refugees

According to the Human Rights Watch 2017 report, Greece remains on the frontline of Europe asylum and migration challenges. It is estimated that almost 60,000 asylum seekers and migrants were stranded in Greece.⁸ Since 2015, thousands of political and economic refugees from Syria, Kurdistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, and Somalia (and others) have abandoned their homelands in search of a new, safer home. The signing of the agreement between the European Union and Turkey on 18 March with the purpose of 'managing refugee flows' and further securitising the European borders resulted in the current entrapment of thousands of them in Greece, in cramped detention centres and camps, away from the public eye.⁹

The administrative policies adopted by the Greek government regarding the refugee issue reflected an emblematic change in the field of social policy and welfare: a continuous withdrawal of the state and a transfer of responsibility to non-governmental organizations that undertook the responsibility of managing state-run camps. Hence, the refugee issue became the springboard for the emergence or reformation of institutional, or even informal, forms of political management of human life in conditions of social and economic crisis in today's Europe. The EU agreement with Turkey, the establishment of new procedures for granting asylum, as well as the process of reunification and relocation, but also the institutional policy adopted for housing refugees – open or closed reception and accommodation centres –, reflect some of the principal contemporary strategies for managing human life.

According to UN data, over half of the new arrivals have been women and children. Men were the first family members to flee to Europe in previous years, leaving women and children to follow.¹⁰ Women and children travel alone exposing themselves to multiple dangers.

8 Human Rights Watch, Greece, available at: <https://www.hrw.org/europe/central-asia/greece>

9 Kosyfolougou, A. and Giorgos, V. (2018) 'The Rise of Bottom-up Solidarity Alternatives in the Times of the Ongoing Societal Crisis in Greece: The City Plaza Immigrants Housing Project in Athens and the Social Solidarity Medical Centre of Thessaloniki', in (ed) Lang, M., König, C. D., Regelman, A.-C., *Alternatives in a World of a Crisis*, Global Working Group Beyond Development, in Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Nr. 9, April 2018, p. 224.

10 In Greece Refugee Women and Children in Limbo, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-refugee-day-greece-women/in-greece-refugee-women-and-children-live-in-limbo-idUSKBN19A1K>

According to risk assessments and reports on the living conditions in the camps, women there are exposed to the dangers of rape, sexual harassment, and abuse by the authorities. In a study published by the Refugee Rights Project in January 2017, 46 % of women told researchers that they did not feel safe living in the camps and 69 % said they lived in dwellings that did not have a secure lock.¹¹ Amnesty International in Greece also underlines the elevated concerns for refugee women and girls' safety in the camps¹². According to the Women Refugee Commission, women in Refugee and Detention Centres in Greece live under unsafe conditions facing increased risks of gender-based violence.¹³ They also lack access to sufficient health care or family planning services, pregnancy or birth support. Pregnant refugee women face hardships during pregnancy and labour and many of them are being traumatised by their experiences of giving birth in understaffed public hospitals.¹⁴

iv. Mental Illness

People with mental problems are often at more risk of economic hardship, unemployment, early retirement or low income.¹⁵ In the case of Greece, the recession has negatively affected the average health, worsening mental and physical health, and harming the population on the psychological level.¹⁶ In research conducted by the Hellenic Statistical Authority, 4.7% of the population have characterised their mental condition as depressed.¹⁷

11 Available at: <http://refugeerights.org.uk/reports/>

12 Greece: Refugee Women and Girls Coping with Fear and Violence in the Camps, available at: <https://www.amnesty.ie/greece-refugee-women-coping-fear-violence-camps/>

13 Stranded in Greece, Women Refugees Live with Fear and Hunger, available at: <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2017/03/17/stranded-in-greece-women-refugees-live-with-fear-and-hunger>

14 Greek Hospitals Deepen Trauma for Refugee Women Giving Birth, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/dec/19/greek-hospitals-deepen-trauma-for-refugee-women-giving-birth>

15 Knap, M. (2012) 'Mental Health in the Age of Austerity', in *EBMH Notebook*, 12 April 2012, available at: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn/depts/hspri/research/khe/latest/MHinausterity.pdf>

16 Chrysoschoou X., Papastamou S. and Prodromitis G., (2013) *Facing the Economic Crisis Greece: The effects of grievances, real and perceived vulnerabilities towards the crisis*, Journal of Social Sciences, p. 45

17 Health Research 2014, Hellenic Statistical Authority, available (in Greek) at: <https://bit.ly/2MoNcPy>

In 2015, public health expenses were no more than 5% of the GDP.¹⁸ The extensive cuts to the care sector have deteriorated the well-being and resilience of the majority of the mentally ill, depriving them of access to decent healthcare services and social support. Moreover, austerity has been a major backlash to the promotion of alternative approaches to mental therapy. Program Psychargos, part of the psychiatric reform that started in 1984 aiming at the deinstitutionalisation of patients, post-hospital observation and social support for the unemployed, has been underfinanced since 2009.

v. Disabilities

Though Greece has ratified all international conventions regarding the access of people with disabilities to health services, education and jobs, the recession and the austerity measures implemented have resulted in the worsening of their social position. The general undermining of public services and public infrastructures - accessibility is always at stake - during the recession has a significant negative impact on the quality of life for the disabled. Women with disabilities have also been more affected by increasing unemployment over the years, as their unemployment rate hit 45.3 % in 2014, while for disabled men unemployment was at 35.9 %.¹⁹ Financial help is provided through benefits and pensions, but their provision requires proof of the degree of disability with medical evidence. The benefit reforms were part of the so-called 'rationalisation' of welfare since the austerity measures began to be implemented in Greece. The neoliberal discourse produced to legitimise further cuts in public expenses for social care 'blamed' the welfare state for contributing to the fiscal crisis, including the huge deficits.

¹⁸ The Health of the Greeks in the Crisis: A Mapping of Health Status and Health Services in Greece, Institute for Social and Preventive Medicine, available at: https://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ygeia_singles_complete_vero2.pdf

¹⁹ Academic Network of European Disability Experts, European Semester 2016–2017, p.7. available at: <http://www.disability-europe.net/country/greece>

Analysis of the Resulting and Underlying Societal Changes

Austerity was conceived to function as a gender and racial backlash since the very beginning of its implementation. It is not only the significant impact of the shrinking social policies on gender and racial equality reflected in labour affairs and social relations but it is also this slow and deeply influential process of undermining social rights, equality, and relevant moral values.

In particular, it can be said that gender equality has functioned as a democratisation factor in Greece challenging the dominant patriarchal values of traditional society. The massive entry of women into the job market and higher education, the elimination of institutional gender divisions in the public and private sector, the reform of the family law in 1986, and the recognition of the central role of the left in the historic struggle for democracy in Greece are considered to be some of the most important achievements of the Third Greek Democracy, formerly described as the 'truest' democracy that ever existed in Greece. This period was seen as a period of overall progress in Greek society after a long period of civil war, a 'stunted' post-civil parliamentary regime and a seven-year-long dictatorship.

Though this 'democratic progress' began to erupt long before the fiscal crisis, the social impact of its transformation became visible during the past seven years of austerity. From this point of view, the undermining of social and labour rights, state authoritarianism, and police brutality have been a reaction to the achievements of the post-dictatorship generation and of women.

The undermining of labour as a medium of neoliberal regulation of the workforce has had a very significant negative social and psy-

chological impact on the population. Unemployment, the sparsity of workplaces and the entrapment in a blurry zone between unemployment and flexible underpaid or uninsured employment have created a widespread feeling of social disappointment and lack of self-confidence, especially among the youth and women. In many cases, the loss of the professional status of the individual signalled the loss of their proper identity.

As mentioned above, women's entry into wage labour has functioned as an emancipation, contributing to the progressive transformation of Greek society. In this sense, women's unemployment or flexible labour could have a potentially negative impact on their social position, pushing them back to the domestic sphere. Furthermore, women – in many cases freelance professionals, such as lawyers or engineers, who are not in a position to undertake the costs and expenses of an independent office - are forced to transfer their work to their homes for economic reasons and are facing the reality of a gradual merger of their professional and personal life. Correspondingly, these events result in the undermining of their professional status and self-determination since their work is continuously interrupted by domestic duties and childcare.

In a similar manner, some contradictory changes and transformations are being noticed in the field of interpersonal relations and their public perception. Financial problems and unemployment often become the source of interfamilial conflicts. The lack of stable income and the stressful effort to make a living disrupt the everyday routine of every individual. Likewise, the continuous job changes and the job-seeking in between causes physical and psychological exhaustion and sometimes a sense of failure. Moreover, unemployment, or 'hetero-employment,' means many young women and men between the ages of 24 and 35 lose their professional status and their scientific expertise due to lack of practice.

The 'denial' of the well-nurtured expectations of youth discourages many young women and men from making long term plans, undermining their personal development. In many cases, young people are forced due to economic problems and the lack of a steady income to return to their parents' house or to continue living under the paren-

tal roof. This situation also deprives them of the right to their privacy and the stability of their personal life.

On the other hand, the social experience of the crisis has become the springboard for the emergence of alternative forms of organising a household based on the values of solidarity. Shared lodgings between friends are becoming a new housing reality in many Greek cities, providing young people with the opportunity to share the 'burdens' of independent living. In this context, many gender stereotypes are being challenged, affecting the lives of young couples living together or of newly formed families. In some cases, the difficulties at work, long hours or rotating schedules, and other problems, necessitate a more balanced division of domestic duties and care work. Notwithstanding these contradictory trends, the undermining of the living conditions provoked by austerity cannot in any way become the impetus for an emancipatory process.

By the same token, an equally contradictory trend is being reflected in a potentially conservative turn of some youth categories regarding family issues, seeking stability through the traditional forms of marriage and family in an overall fluid social environment. However, as of today there is no credible evidence to verify this.

The answer to the reasonable question, 'Is austerity the source of gender-based violence?' remains ambiguous in the case of Greece. The lack of national level research on gender-based violence makes it more difficult to analyse the situation. On the other hand, international or European sources (Eurobarometer and others) indicate a current increase in the rates of gender-based violence in Greece. However, it is important to underline the fact that gender-based violence and domestic violence in Greece have become more visible in recent years. As mentioned above, gender-based violence was a social taboo, or, even worse, in many cases it was acceptable and normalised even in recent Greek history. Feminist struggles and discourses against gender-based violence, the progress of women's emancipation, and the development of a legal context in 2006 have made gender based violence more visible. Moreover, the creation of institutional structures to eliminate gender-based violence, regardless of their insufficiencies, have also reinforced this visibility. It is clear, however, that no safe comparative conclusions can be drawn.

Nevertheless, it is safe enough to assume that financial problems and frustration grounded on 'trembling' identities, performing masculinity can be used as an excuse to exercise violence against women or the LGBTQI community in a society still dominated by patriarchal values. Recently, many cases of gender-based violence have seen the light of day: the rape of a migrant student by her schoolmates in 2006 and the public humiliation of a couple in 2013 for adultery are just two. To put it differently, gender-based violence is not linearly produced by austerity though it 'flourishes' in its context.

Overall, it can be said that during the past seven years of austerity an empowerment process for women has taken place reflected in how they have challenged their traditional roles and also in politics. The general 'trouble' caused by austerity, has become in a controversial way a source of 'gender trouble' in the sense that the traditional gender division could not 'respond' to the demanding situation of the crisis. A mother's rolling schedule or a father's freelance employment could lead to the adoption of a less traditional division of parental roles. Furthermore, the impact of the social crisis led many women and men to the quest for more collective and collaborative solutions to problems of everyday life: groups of young parents help each other with caring duties and organise rolling shifts: picking children up from school, helping them with their homework, taking them and picking them up when they have to attend an activity.

Ultimately, it can be said that one of the most unexpected but positive aspects of the current social crisis is the reinforcement of political participation of young people and women and the flourishing of original forms of collective action. Women and youth have been at the forefront of the anti-austerity movement and of the newest and more inclusive forms of first degree syndicates/unions. The Trade Union of Salaried Technical Workers representing engineers, technologists, geologists, and designers, which has elected many women as members of the administrative board and also a woman as president, and the Association of Translators-Editors-Proof-readers, which also has many female elected members and elected women presidents, are two very good examples of this process and of the solidarity movement. Though it can be said that the massive participation of women in the solidarity

movement might reflect some of the dominant stereotypes regarding the 'care gender', it has been noted that women are also visibly present and in more militant forms of the solidarity and solidarity in refugee movements, such as the squatting movement or in initiatives against auctions and evictions.

Generally speaking, since 2010 women appeared as forceful actors of the anti-austerity movement often adopting confrontational roles to fight police brutality and the state's authoritarianism. In some cases, women's massive participation in the movement has become the springboard for an emancipatory process and for the transformation of dominant gender divisions in smaller communities. The anti-gold mining movement in Skouries Thessaloniki is a very good example of this. In northern Greece, in Ierissos, Chalkidiki, young and older housewives stood on the frontlines of the anti-mining movement, organising assemblies and coordination, denouncing police brutality and repression. Many of them describe this experience as deeply transformative. As Melachrini, member of the coordination, mother of a four-year-old son at the time, commented while being interviewed in 2013: 'At this moment there is neither the space nor the time for a personal life. This struggle is changing us all, both women and men. When we go back home we will meet again.'¹

1 Daskalopoulou, N. (2013) 'Feminism that Doesn't Say its Name', Avgi, 23 May 2013.

Analysis and Recommendations to Left Actors

i. Austerity as a Transformative Collective Experience

The slogan heard in the 2008 Athens riots in the aftermath of Alexis Grigoropoulos' shooting, by shotgun, by a special officer of the Greek police, 'Money to the banks, shots for the youth', symbolically marked a general unrest, triggered by the young man's death, but at the same time expressing deeper causes. The December 2008 events expressed the widespread frustration and anger of the youth faced with the financial problems of the country, the increasing unemployment rates, as well as the state's rising authoritarianism.

Almost three weeks later, on December 22, the attack against the general secretary of the Athens Cleaners Union, Konstantina Kouneva, with sulfuric acid by thugs paid by her employers – OIKOMET, a large manpower company in the cleaning sector - motivated a large-scale movement with massive protests against employer violence. The case of Konstantina Kouneva - who has been an elected member of the Syriza European Parliament group since 2014 - has brought to light the issues of the immense brutality and gender-violence exercised against immigrant women living and working in Greece in a shocking way and also of the working conditions in the female-dominated cleaning sector. Although even today women immigrants face multiple exclusions in the workplace, it is fair to say that the attack against Konstantina Kouneva was actually a starting point for the Greek society to come to terms with the reality of exploitation and abuses that immigrant women are suffering in Greece. Furthermore, these events have, in a way, changed the left's political agenda, indicating the urgency of designing a new strategy in the labour movement that would include un-

derrepresented groups in the official trade union movement and not visible workforce.

These two events have been emblematic in the sense that they reflected the internal contradictions and the underlying societal changes of the Greek crisis: on the one hand the impoverishment, the rising authoritarianism and the far-right attempting to capitalise on the general frustration provoked by the latter, and, on the other hand, the emergence of a radical social movement with original tactics and with the goal of politically expressing its demands.

The social discomfort and the frustration caused by austerity resulted in a demand for radical overall change. The anti-austerity movement also expressed non-materialistic demands. The demand for 'Real Democracy' expressed by the Indignados Movement in Spain during the summer of 2011 is just such an example. By the same token, gender and racial oppression emerged as an important aspect of the social consequences of austerity: on 6 May 2012, a group of falsely called HIV positive women was detained by the Greek police, forcibly tested, charged with a felony and publicly exposed when their mug shots and personal data were published by the media. This event took place a few days before the elections in the spring of 2012. Andreas Loverdos, the Minister of Public Health at the time, publicly declared that these women 'were a threat to the Greek family'. This case is an example of the moral panic implemented as a state apparatus in times of social crisis. As Athina Athanasiou underlined, 'Through the discipline medical discourse a borderline is drowned between the political body which needs to be protected and the foreign bodies threatening it.'¹ The same motive was repeated, only a few months later, with the 'Xenios Zeus' operation, implemented by the Samaras Government in the summer of 2012. 'Xenios Zeus' was a large-scale nationwide police operation conducting abusive stops and searches that resulted to the thousands of people being placed in detention camps all over Greece. The operation became visible since it took place inside the urban fabric of Greek cities.

¹ Athanasiou, A. (2012) *Crisis as a State of Emergency: Criticisms and Resistance*, Athens: Savvalas, p. 34.

ii. The Left Towards the Gender Trouble

Since the beginning of the recession and austerity in Greece, the gender and racial aspects of the policies implemented have been underlined in several cases during anti-austerity protests and other related activities. Racial and gender inequality reinforced in the context of the neoliberal regime are being indicated in the political agenda and discourse of the movement, mainly from the point of view of the social rights crisis. Furthermore, in the context of the multiplicity of the events following the aggressive presence of the far-right and the neo-Nazis in the public sphere - including their parliamentary representation gained in the 2012 election - a more intersectional approach and relation was promoted between the antifascist, feminist, and LGBTQI movements.

On the other hand, the left-wing political parties have adopted different approaches to the gendered consequences of austerity, which were strongly related to their political positions on gender issues and gender inequality. The Greek Communist Party (KKE) in its official political manifesto still recognises the downfall of capitalism as the only path to women's emancipation, whilst SYRIZA has developed a more complex analysis of gender issues and gender equality during the crisis. It is important to mention that the Greek Communist Party still has a very conservative discourse on sexual orientation, rejecting feminist and LGBTQI theory, describing it as a theory 'that denies the essential differences between the two sexes'. According to the theoretical-political newspaper put out by the Central Committee of the Greek Communist Party (Issue 1, 2016), the Greek Communist Party (KKE) supports the idea that 'sexual orientation is a private matter, like cohabitation. Sexual orientation, sexual relationships or sexual satisfaction do not produce social rights.' In due course, the Greek Communist Party voted against the cohabitation agreement in 2015 and against the legal recognition of gender identity in October of 2017. As far as smaller left-wing political parties in Greece are concerned, their political agenda on gender issues was shaped during the crisis depending on how connected they were to the feminist and LGBTQI movement. Many left-wing political organisations, groups, and smaller parties have adopted a very militant feminist agenda. Notwithstanding these differences, the majority of the left in Greece has recognised the significant negative impact of austerity measures on the lives of women.

The latter can also be considered a result of existing historical links between the feminist movement and the left in Greece. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the left has become the springboard for women to integrate into public life and politics in Greece. The National Liberation Front (EAM) during the Second World War and the German occupation of Greece, the leftist youth organizations in the post-civil war era (such as the Labraki youth), and the anti-dictatorship movement represent crucial moments in the massive participation of women in politics in modern Greek history. During the 1960s and 1970s, left feminists introduced feminist politics and theory into their parties and political organisations. However, the bureaucratic and male-centred character of left parties has become the source of frustration for many left feminists, pushing them towards anarchism or to abandon politics altogether. The neoliberal 'shock' of the 1990s following the fall of the Soviet Union has led the left in Greece to rethink the division between capital and labour as a so-called 'primary division', underestimating gender or race as secondary divisions and also functioning as a drawback in the integration of feminist ideas in left politics. The contact with the anti-globalisation movement has revitalised the feminist approach, reinforcing the links between left organisations and the feminist and LGBTQI movements. The first Athens Pride festival in 2004 was organised with the support and use of the infrastructure of the Athens Antiracist Festival. The anti-austerity movement had proven to be mature enough to promote an intersectional political agenda including gender issues.

In the same fashion, the anti-austerity movement in Greece has put into motion new forms of organisation and political practice where women have taken on central positions. The social rights and social solidarity movement is an example (solidarity networks, food banks, solidarity with migrants, squats and others) though in many cases reflects a latent traditional gender division of labour.

Conversely, not many radical changes have taken place in terms of women's political representation in the parties of the left although overall the number of women representatives has increased: in the September 2015 election, SYRIZA elected 33 women out of a total of 145 deputies, and the Greek Communist Party elected 3 women out of 15

representatives. However, women ministers remain a minority in the current coalition government. There are six women ministers and two vice-ministers, while two of them are members of the Independent Greeks party (ANEL). One of the most important ministries, the Ministry of Labour, is exclusively handled by women. Since 5 November 2016, the young academic and lawyer Efi Achtsioglou is the Minister of Labour. Her appointment came as a surprise given the male-centred and middle-aged character of the current government. Achtsioglou has received sexist criticism from many leftists as well. Many gender and age stereotypes were reproduced through this criticism. On the other hand, though many left and anarchist feminist groups have underlined the sexist and misogynist grounds of this criticism, which represents politics as a field exclusively open to middle-aged and healthy heterosexual males, at the same time they recognised the contradiction of an aspiring young female scholar undertaking an important governmental task in a period when austerity measures were being implemented, and, in particular, measures that threatened labour, increased unemployment and worsened the positions of young adults and women at work.

The widespread feeling of collective frustration provoked by the signing of the Third Adjustment Program by SYRIZA in some cases has activated conservative and sexist social reflexes, even in some parts of the left. SYRIZA was accused of 'pink-washing' with the cohabitation agreement for same-sex partners and the legal recognition of gender identity. In other words, it seems that in times of internal crisis for the Greek left, feminist ideas and practices are once again targeted.

iii. Building a Feminist Alternative

In the aftermath of the continuous implementation of a destructive anti-social policy and of the SYRIZA July 2015 compromise, the building of an inclusive and feminist approach in politics as an alternative to austerity comes as a new challenge for the left. The need for a grass-roots policy with feminist perspectives as a remedy to the social impact of the austerity is urgent.

Since the beginning of the recession in Greece a large scale solidarity movement emerged, developing forms of collective resistance to austerity policies and promoting self-organization (community clin-

ics, food banks, housing projects for refugees etc.). The evaluation and consideration of the social solidarity movement's experience is crucial for this process. A 'green' and 'purple' equitable economy based² on the principles of an equal and de-gendered division of labour, implying the need for a social and institutional investment in care services – including the recognition of forms of unpaid labour – and infrastructure could provide strategy alternatives. Then again, the redistribution of the care burden through internalisation of its costs³ presupposes a great deal of public investments, which remains a great challenge in times of crisis.

While the world marches against misogynist culture – like the #metoo movement – everyday life is very far from being feminist. But how can we address some key points to advance along this long transformative path to feminisation? Firstly, we should struggle for social protection and social insurance for all separating it from paid employment. Given the fact that the number of uninsured people has increased enormously during the recession in Greece, this is a top priority. Secondly, and in particular in Greece, we should struggle against all austerity measures and the elimination of their impact on women's social standing as described above. Thirdly, we should promote the idea of an alternative lifestyle and political culture, which challenges all the dominant gender divisions in labour, politics and personal life including the promotion of forms of shared parenting, etc. Nevertheless, in times of austerity the political struggle against privatisation of crucial sectors and services and the defence of the public character of education and health services are essential for the building of a more equal and feminist society.

As Nancy Fraser⁴ notes, the crisis of care represents the social-reproductive contradiction of financialised capitalism. And this contradiction becomes apparent every time the consensus between market and social protection erupts in a period of economic recession.

2 Ikkaran, I. (2017) 'A Feminist Alternative to Austerity: The Purple Economy a Gender-egalitarian Strategy for Employment Generation', in Bargawi, H., Cosi, G. and Himmelweit, S. (eds), *Economics and Austerity Europe: Gendered Impacts and Sustainable Alternatives*, Routledge, p. 28

3 Ibid, p. 29

4 Fraser, N. (2016) 'Crisis of Care? On the Social Reproductive Contradictions of Contemporary Capitalism', Nikos Poulantzas Annual Lecture, 07 December 2016, pp. 3-4

From this point of view, the introduction of a non-capitalist social care economy cannot be in any way emancipatory if it is not combined with the engagement of a strategic plan for the reinforcement of political participation and of continuous struggle against capitalism and against patriarchy.

The LGBTQI movement could be an example: the political engagement of the movement and its eagerness for collective struggle against social and fiscal oppression have paved the way for a successful strategy. The struggle for the visibility of the community in the context of a traditional and conservative society combined with the call for a joint political battle against austerity, racism and police brutality was fruitful enough to lead to the political expression of some of the movement's demands. The birth of grassroots political LGBTQI initiatives and organizations throughout Greece is another example of its successful strategy.

This process requires structural change in left-wing parties, meaning the rejection of all gender stereotypes reproduced in everyday political routine. As Maria, a 40-year-old left-wing activist engaged in the antiracist movement, says, 'Left politics in Greece are exclusively designed for healthy young men. Women and men with caring duties, people with disabilities or illnesses, [and] older people cannot keep up with the pace of the long-lasting political procedures, meetings, etc., – which, by the way, never start on time.'⁵

The paternalist figure of the so-called political leader or 'edifier' (in Greek, καθοδηγητής), even if this term is no longer used, is still present and dominant in left politics, in the student and labour movements, during assemblies, protests, and public discussions. The gender division of political 'labour' also remains. Men are responsible for safeguarding a protest block. Furthermore, there are always male negotiators with the police during protests. Likewise, during the crisis it has been noted that a visible gender division is taking place in the left's political discourses and manifestos: men tend to speak more on the central political issues such as the Greek economy or Greek debt, whilst women speak on political and social right issues, on gender and cultural issues and ideology. Similarly, male leftists often see themselves

5 Interview in the context of the research conducted by the undersigned.

as left theory 'specialists', speaking and writing on abstract issues of Marxist theory such as 'power and the state' or on macroeconomic perspective such as 'production and surplus', while women tend to speak more about collective experiences, such as the solidarity movement. Not surprisingly, there are very few women scholars known as 'readers' or 'instructors' of Marx's *Capital*.

The issue of building a leftist feminist alternative to austerity is bound to radical change of the shape and the internal structure of left parties and political groups. The idea of feminisation of politics, which is on many occasions wrongly interpreted in the political discourse, can provide some guidelines on: equal representation not only through technical measures such as quotas but through reinforcing a feminist political culture, adoption of a more inclusive participatory model of decision-making and political practice, and embracing diversity that does not jeopardise the people's unity.

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Biography

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Since the 2007 financial crisis many countries have been enacting harsh austerity measures. In Southern Europe and Ireland, this austerity was largely dictated by the EU and the IMF. In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, it was the pressure to succeed placed on the EU new member states and their desire to gain rapid integration into the European economic market which compelled respective governments to accept tight budgets.

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Whatever the individual case may be – the mantra of saving money for the sake of balanced budgets, improved competitiveness, and debt avoidance has devastating consequences on women's working and living conditions as well as gender relations more generally.

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This Paper is part of a compilation of studies from different European countries. You can find all of them here: www.rosalux.de/austerity.