

GENDER POLICY AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OF ALBANIA

Erind Pirani

Ombudsman, Albania, E mail: epirani@avokatipopullit.gov.al

Abstract

Albania is on the way to the European Union, and the gender policy is a part of our journey toward Europe. The paper assesses the contribution of gender approaches to understanding European integration. It offers a conceptualization of such approaches as including a distinct ontology, epistemology and methodology. While feminist literature on the European Union is diverse, all such literature sheds light on the gendered process of European integration. They are two distinct contributions of this literature: (a) it illustrates the relevance of movement actors and other advocates in shaping EU policies; (b) it shows that economic integration entails the creation of new gender regimes. The paper illustrates these contentions presenting case studies of the EU's response to the reform of the common policy and of enlargement. Gender Equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration – recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a 'women's issue' but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable peoplecentred development.

Keywords: *European Union, gender policy, new gender regimes, gender equality*