

Gender inequalities and aging policies in Europe

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Gender inequalities in older age result from accumulated gendered disadvantages during the life course. The need to adopt a lifecourse approach when dealing with the interconnections of ageing and gender arises from the understanding that present circumstances of older people can be understood by references to their prior lifecourse. This paper first performs a conceptual review of what it means to age for women from a feminist approach (Arber & Ginn , 1996 ; Freixas , 1997), in words of Slevi Calasanti, age matters (Calasanti and Slevi, 2006). The second section will review some demographic data to better understand what the present and future prospects are which have to face the political challenges forthcoming. In fact, ageing is a distinctly gendered phenomenon, women being increasingly represented in the older cohorts of the European population. Estimate data for 2012 (Eurostat, 2012) shows that European population of 65 years and over represents a 17.9% of total population (52.033.205 women and 38.139.934 men). Third, we will review the main aging policies in the EU and the possible gender imbalance implementation or gender gap (Bettio , Tinios & Betti , 2013). One especially unsettling issue concerns the lack of visibility of the problem which affects and impacts on older women, as caregivers, as beneficiaries and as citizens. Thus, older women are recipients of echoes of past disadvantage, just as they begin to receive signs of future problems. As the EU has taken a lead on both ageing populations and gender balance, it is appropriate that it devotes attention to possible side effects of their interaction. Finally, in the concluding section will attempt to analyze and highlight those issues which contribute to the welfare of the elderly women and review which the challenges are for the future in pro of equal gender treatment and opportunities.