

D1.2 Report on the mapping of national gender policies in energy sector-Slovenia





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Introduction to women in energy sector in Slovenia

Gender mainstreaming is a very important strategy aimed at improving the well-being of genders and creating a more just society, which goes hand in hand with the actual improvement of public policies, programs and projects and a more efficient allocation of resources. The basic principle of gender mainstreaming lies in assessing the implications of a specific legislation, policy, program or project onto different genders and taking actions in case the above-mentioned actions do not provide equal opportunities and benefits for all genders.

To be able to carry out this assessment, some preconditions need to be met, among them gender-disaggregated data and a gender analysis, which allow for a concise understanding of the state of the art as the basis upon which the gender mainstreaming approach can be planned. It is important to understand that such an approach will be implemented within a system with pre-established structures, companies and workspaces with existing gender biases, norms and stereotypes that impact their functioning. This makes the implementation of a gender mainstreaming strategy more difficult, as these biases need to be recognized, deconstructed and reshaped to create an environment in which progress can be made.

In addition, human resources play an important role. While more attention has in the past been dedicated to specific gender-related goals, such as increasing the involvement of women in decision making, economic empowerment of women or eliminating sexual and gender-based violence, there exists little research and activities with regard to the nexus between gender and environmental issues, such as energy. This means that there is a significantly lower amount of expertise to further this goal.

The energy sector is also a so-called traditionally male domain. Research shows that such sectors may reinforce gender stereotypes and at the same time produce environments in which it is even more difficult for women to excel. The lack of role models makes it harder for women to enter the field, and many of them develop coping mechanisms when faced with gender-based discrimination, denying the role of gender in success, making it easier for them to survive in the male-dominated world.

The existing gender disaggregated statistics in 2023 show that the situation is no different in Slovenia. Whereas Slovenia is known for a larger share of female graduates, amounting up to 61.1 % in all studies in 2014, this share was significantly smaller for STEM studies, reaching only 32,4 % of all graduates. Graduates in both tertiary and doctoral levels in science, mathematics, computing, engineering, manufacturing and construction per 1000 inhabitants are to a larger extent men, with a larger difference at tertiary level education (5,9 men compared to 4,8 women), and a smaller at doctoral level (0,4 from men and 0,3 for women). This is where the disparities begin, and they continue in employment, and in the fields of electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply there are 7,0 men and 1,5 women per thousand persons, which constitutes an extremely large gap. In managerial positions in general, there are 25,7 men and 14,7 women per thousand persons. In 2018, the share of senior female managers in

energy was 20 %.

The research hereby conducted is part of the project Empowering underrepresented women in the energy sector (EUWES). An analysis was conducted on gender equality policies to understand how they addressed the energy sector, as well as on energy policies to see how they mainstreamed gender. On the side of gender equality policies and measures, the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act was considered as the main legal document, which serves as the starting point for the other analysed strategic documents and actions plans, namely the Resolution on the national program for equal opportunities of women and men 2015 - 2020 and the Resolution on the national program for equal opportunities of women and men until 2030, which was adopted at the end of our research, the Periodic plan for the implementation of the Resolution on the national program for equal opportunities of women and men 2015 - 2020 for the years 2018 and 2019 and the Guidelines for gender mainstreaming into the work of ministries 2016 - 2020. Academic papers were also searched in order to obtain more information about the gender - energy nexus, but unfortunately, we were unable to identify relevant information. In addition, national media and bulletins from various energy networks and providers were searched to find the mentioned nexus, which had limited success. While analysing the gender-related documents, a lexical search was conducted at first by using the categories related to energy and sustainability. As the nexus is practically non-existent, a more thorough reading was necessary, focusing also on the aspects of gender mainstreaming and finding topics that are related to energy, such as women in poverty, gender pay gap, women and education and STEM etc. The search category for academic and other research, national media and bulletins focused around the variations of “women, gender, gender equality, energy, energy poverty, energy”.

Interviews were carried out with key stakeholders in gender and energy fields to determine both of the above correlations. Interviews were carried out with the representatives of the Department of equal opportunities at the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the advisor of the president of Slovenia, the director of Prosperia, a consultancy company in the field of green transformation, a member of a green political party Vesna and a professor at Faculty of engineering. An informal conversation also took place with representatives from the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy, which indicated that the gender perspective is not in large depth considered in their work. While conducting the interviews, the Guiding questions for semi-structured interviews provided in the Deliverable 1.1. Mapping Methodology of the EUWES project were used as guidelines, but were then adjusted to the relevant interlocutor. The findings of the research show that there is extremely little available information about the nexus and that further work is needed to better understand and to strengthen the role of women in energy.

1 Analysis of the gender equality policies

The gender equality levels of Slovenia are higher than the EU average, which is the positive side of the story. The negative side is that the rate of progress in Slovenia is slower than that of the average. The key legal instrument in Slovenia in the area of gender equality is the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act, which was adopted in 2002¹. The first national program on gender equality was adopted in 2005 and the latest national program that is in place until 2030 was adopted in September 2023. In order to implement the national programs, the Equal Opportunities Act determines that two-year action plans should be adopted, and the Government then has to report on their implementation every two years. The objectives and measures that are defined in the national program provide guidelines to the ministries and other governmental authorities both for planning and implementing their respective policies and programs as regards gender equality, and for mainstreaming gender into their work.

The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MDDSZEM) is in Slovenia responsible for the promotion of gender equality. Within the ministry, the Department for Equal Opportunities (Department) is responsible for the area. It was established in 2012 and it replaced the Governmental Office for Equal Opportunities, which was originally named Women's Policy Office, which had been in place since 1992. This was perceived by those dealing with gender equality and human rights as a very large degradation of the area, which also correlated with the levels of political will directed towards furthering gender equality in Slovenia. Members of the Department stated in a qualitative interview conducted with them for the purpose of this research that in the past years there has been a rise in political will to bring about progress on gender equality.

Ministries are themselves responsible for mainstreaming gender into their work. Under the Equal Opportunities Act the government and all ministries are obliged to consider gender equality when planning, designing, and implementing policy measures. All ministers have Coordinators for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. They are the ones responsible for the implementation of duties within the competence of the Ministry, while the Department can assist them when requested to do so. The role of a Coordinator is an additional task of an employee, not their primary position. Their devotion to gender mainstreaming is often correlated to their personal inclination to the topic. In the past, there has been training for Coordinators, which enabled them to obtain basic knowledge on the topic. The Department plans on having additional workshops in the future and believes that this would be advantageous for achieving gender equality in Slovenia.

Most of the measures related to gender mainstreaming were promoted through EU funds. Two projects should be emphasized in this regard. The first was carried out in 2007 – 2008 and was aimed at raising awareness about the importance of gender mainstreaming in public administration. It analysed the use of tools to achieve gender mainstreaming, as well as carried out workshops for high representatives and coordinators for gender equality at the ministries. From 2010 to 2012, the second relevant project took

¹ <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO3418>

place, the aim of which was to establish a system for gender mainstreaming and for the assessment of effects of national policy implementation by gender.

As a consequence, in 2015 MDDSZSEM adopted a set of Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in the Work of Ministries 2016-2020. The Guidelines acknowledge the need to strengthen gender equality policy, including the gender mainstreaming work of ministries and coordinators. In 2023, the Ministry of Public Administration adopted the Methodology for the estimation of impacts of governmental measures on various societal issues², which include gender equality, but not at a very detailed level. The National resolution until 2030 devotes one chapter to gender mainstreaming, guiding ministries on how to carry out this task. The Equal Treatment Act of 2006 was succeeded by the Protection against Discrimination Act in May 2016.

None of the above-mentioned documents address the nexus between the energy sector, energy poverty and gender. They do include some issues that are relevant for this nexus, among them the gender pay gap, the importance of overcoming gender stereotypes that reproduce gendered roles in STEM, increasing the share of women employed in STEM as well as women in decision-making positions in companies, while recognizing that older women are one of the groups that are most at risk of facing poverty.

When asked in the interview with the representatives of MDDZSEM about the reasons for the low share of women in the energy sector, they stated that there is a need to conduct research to understand the problem. On one hand, there is the general assumption related to the low share of women in STEM, as well as the difficulties they face when obtaining decision-making positions, but on the other hand there are probably some circumstances that might be specific for the energy sector that should in their views be analysed.

The lack of existing data and analysis on the gender-energy nexus was also addressed by one of the counsellors of the President of Slovenia. The president, who in Slovenia does not have any executive powers, but does have moral influence, is an advocate of gender equality. As such, she opened the second-round table entitled “Women in energy” that took place on 8 March 2023. In it she stressed the importance of increasing the share of women in the energy sector, as well as women in decision-making positions.

As part of the interview with the president’s counsellor, the importance of addressing energy poverty was stressed, especially as it impacts to a high extent single mothers and older women. The green transition plans should be gender-sensitive and they should also address the gendered energy poverty.

Neither the Ministry nor the Office of the President have yet adopted gender equality plans.

²<https://www.stopbirokraciji.gov.si/novice/vlada-je-potrnila-metodologijo-za-oceno-ucinkov-predpisov-na-razlicna-druzbeno-podrocja>

Women in the labour market

Labour participation in Slovenia is relatively high compared to the EU average, which is also a consequence of the large participation of women in the labour market. The situation for women in the labour market is worse compared to men, as their labour participation is lower and their unemployment rates are higher. In addition, they often find themselves in temporary or part-time employment.

In 2016, the share of women working in the sector “electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply” was a little bit less than 20 %. In the same year, women earned on average 0,3 % less than men.³ Based on the National resolution until 2030, this share amounted to 17,3 % in 2023, and the document addresses this gender segregation as problematic.

Pay and pension gap

The report⁴ of the Government Office for macroeconomic analysis and development on the pay gap from the year 2020 does not address the energy sector specifically. It does however emphasise that women are majority shareholders in only 13,3 % of Slovene companies, and they also represent the minority in the leading position of the private sector. Compared to other EU member states, the pay gap in Slovenia in 2018 was comparatively small and amounted to 11,5 % in the public sector and 8,5 % in the private sector. However, compared to 2007, the pay gap increased by 7.8 percentage points. In 2020, the pay gap decreased again and amounted to 3.1 %⁵. In the sectors where women represent a relative minority, the pay gap was smaller and actually to the advantage of women.

The pension gap is significantly higher than the pay gap and in 2020 amounted to 16,3 % for persons older than 65. Women are also much more at risk of poverty than men, especially older women. The risk of poverty for women, older than 75, amounts to 30,5 %, compared to men, for whom this share is 14,6 %.⁶ Consequently, it is very likely that older women are also more prone to energy poverty compared to older men.

The Resolution on the national programme for equal opportunities of women and men until 2030 describes the importance of the intersectional approach, thus moving beyond the binary approach, and it emphasises the need to look at intersectional discrimination, also including the LGBTIQ+ persons, with regards to poverty and sexual and gender-based violence.

³ Čelebič, T, Kajzer, A., Perko, M., Ršelič Selan, A. Položaj žensk na trgu dela v primerjavi s položajem moških v Sloveniji. *IB revija (Ljubljana)*, letnik 51, številka 2, str. 5-13. URN:NBN:SI:DOC-PBXS64BN from <http://www.dlib.si>

⁴ Gregorič, M., Perko, M., Sodja, U., Pečar, J. and Čeleb, T. Plačna vrzel in neenakosti spolov v Sloveniji.

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

2 Gender in the energy policies

The following key energy policies were reviewed in order to explore the gender aspect in the energy policies in Slovenia:

- Energy law
- National Climate and Energy Plan
- Regulation on energy poverty
- Law on energy efficiency
- Law on stimulating renewable sources of energy
- Law on electrical energy supply
- National strategy for the exit from coal and the restructuring of coal regions in accordance with the principles of a just transition
- Act on the introduction of installations for the production of electricity from renewable energy sources
- Long-term strategy to promote investment in the energy renovation of buildings

Key finding of the review is that none of the listed key energy policies includes gender aspects or any highlights of vulnerable groups. Gender issues do not seem to be a concern of the energy policies and measures in Slovenia at this moment. However, this is not to say that the issue of gender equality does not appear in the energy sector at all - the rest of the chapter outlines examples that gender equality is being discussed in the energy sector.

Decision-makers on the nexus between gender and energy

On March 8 2023, a round table Women in the energy sector took place, the president of Slovenia Nataša Pirc Musar made the opening statement. She stressed the importance of raising the share of women working in the sector as international research shows that diverse teams are more successful when it comes to innovation and profit, while also having lower corruption rates. In her opinion, there can be no green energy transition.

At the same event, the state secretary at the Ministry of environment, spatial planning and energy Tina Seršen stated that the energy crisis revealed the high vulnerability of retired women and single mothers.

These groups will need extra support in order to achieve the green transition.

Gender equality in the energy sector

In 2022, Elektro Gorenjska, the energy company for the region of Gorenjska, adopted a Gender equality action plan, aimed at addressing employment at all levels. In 2023, the share of women employed in the company was 22 % and as such the highest in all power distribution companies.

In an interview in the internal newspaper of Elektro Ljubljana in November 2021, Martina Pohar, the head of the Unit for joint services in Elektro Ljubljana, was asked whether she is facing any additional challenges as a woman in a position of power. She answered that she is certain that the only criteria that matters is whether you are “good or bad”, if you know how to do your job or not. She does however acknowledge the fact that energy legislation is not well known to women lawyers.

In the interview, she also spoke about the division of labour in the Department for balance sheets, which is based on gendered roles: men are present in the field, where they check electricity metres, while women stay in the office and prepare the bills for the electricity users.

Women in management

In an interview⁷ in 2011 for the Manager’s Association of Slovenia, Ms Mojca Kert Kos, who was the director of Petrol Energetika for more than ten years, spoke about her belief that women as managers are more inclined to cooperate, based on the female’s natural role in life and role in the family. According to her, the future lies on the principles of female management, but the road to balanced representation of both genders is still long. In order to achieve progress, special measures are needed, but she was not certain whether quotas, which she found slightly unattractive, were the best way forward. As an alternative, she mentioned the adoption of codes of conduct, as a softer measure to bring about diversity, but at the same time expressed her doubt about their implementation. Awareness raising about balanced teams, with the aim of improving the understanding and acceptance of the necessary change, is in her view the most important measure to achieve progress.

At the time of the interview, Petrol Energetika had 40 % women in decision-making positions, compared to the average of 10 % on Slovene companies. Ms Kert Kos described that at the time of her joining the company, there were only 3 women employed, but through encouraging women in a way that they gained the opportunity to fully participate in work processes, the spontaneous process that led to a more balanced structure took place. Her words show the importance of proactive support of women, yet lack the understanding of systemic and structural obstacles that women face in decision-making positions, as well as in STEM fields.

⁷<https://www.zdruzenje-manager.si/assets/Baza-znanja/Razvoj-zenskega-managementa/Zakaj-je-raznolikost-imperativ-rasti.pdf>

In another interview for the daily newspaper Dnevnik⁸ Ms Kert Kos mentions one of the minuses of being a manager at a relatively young age in a distinctly men's world, stating that it took a lot of energy for her to receive recognition from her (male) colleagues. She expressed scepticism about ever being accepted fully as a woman in a position of power. She spoke about the difficulty of finding work-life balance, mentioning the fact that her time was divided between being a manager and a mother with practically no time left for a social life. In her opinion, men usually have more time for informal socialising, during which they obtain also commercial information, giving them an edge over women.

One of the qualitative interviews for the purpose of this research was conducted with Prosperia, a company specialising in green energy transition. They are the organisers of the already mentioned round tables on women in energy. The reasoning behind the events was the recognised importance of bringing women to the forefront in the energy sector, giving them a voice and power, as well as supporting them in not being victims of gender stereotypes and norms.

The director of Prosperia sees as an important obstacle to increasing the share of women in the energy sector the lack of women that study and specialise in energy, which is a consequence of gendered roles and gender stereotypical career choices. In her belief it is important that women in energy focus on being their authentic selves instead of trying to apply the traditional male principles of governing. Including women and ensuring that the whole society will be part of the green transition is the only way in which the transition will be just. This will also make the system more efficient. The technological solutions that are becoming and will be part of the green transition also provide an opportunity for the larger involvement of women in the energy sector, for example solar panels, co-ownership and financial schemes, which are pushing the end users to be proactive in searching for means of obtaining energy.

Nexus gender and energy poverty

Within H2020 project EmpowerMed (September 2019-August 2023), Focus was highlighting the fact that women tend to be disproportionately affected by energy poverty⁹. There is growing evidence that energy poverty disproportionately affects women and female-headed households - a situation that is exacerbated by age, class and ethnicity, among other factors. It is therefore crucial to take a closer look at the relationship between energy poverty and gender. The interrelationship between gender and energy poverty is explained by the following four dimensions: physiological, health, economic and social/cultural. Apart from highlighting the gender - energy poverty nexus, project EmpowerMed also wanted to draw attention to the need for a fair transition from a gender perspective. To ensure that we "leave no one behind", a just transition will need to be based on policies and measures that are fair for women.

⁸ <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042441477>

⁹ <https://focus.si/boj-proti-energetski-revscini-in-energetska-tranzicija-skozi-enakost-spolov/>

3 Key policy and action recommendations

Gender equality policies

Chapter on gender and environmental issues in the National programme on gender equality

In light of increasing environmental degradation and climate change, and the urgent need for a green transition, we would recommend that one of the chapters in the National programme on gender equality be devoted to the nexus between gender and environmental issues, among them also energy. In line with existing, yet limited research on gender and energy in Europe, we would propose that special attention be paid to the issue of energy poverty, with special measures dedicated to decreasing energy poverty among single mothers and elderly women. Prior to that, it is important to conduct a thorough analysis on energy poverty and gender in Slovenia to obtain information on the existing state of affairs.

Decrease inequalities in the field of upbringing and education

The latest National programme has a whole section dedicated to decreasing inequalities in the field of upbringing, education, science and culture and overcoming gender stereotypes. This is one of the most important measures to deconstruct power inequalities and we recommend that a lot of effort and financial support be dedicated to these activities. It is also important to understand to a larger extent the gender stereotypes and roles of men and women when it comes to environmental issues, as the research in this field is relatively new.

Increased support to women in energy and in positions of power

In the research it has become clear that women in positions of power in energy do acknowledge differences between women and men, including the fact that it was not easy for them to be accepted by their predominantly male colleagues, or the more difficult role in terms of work-life balance, but at the same time they tend to be sceptical of positive measures such as quotas, as they are often perceived as the reason that they obtained their position and not the fact that they are highly qualified for the managerial position. It has been noted in international research that women in STEM can also adopt negative coping strategies to deal with gender bias, such as denial of its existence, which is even more present in traditionally male sectors. We would therefore recommend that more efforts be invested in offering support to women in the energy sector and in positions of power as an example of a positive coping strategy, acknowledging that gender bias in STEM is a problem and supporting means to overcome it.

Gender in the energy policies

Further research to establish the nexus between gender and energy

Based on the findings of this research, namely the fact that energy is not a special focus in gender policies and that gender is not mainstreamed into energy policies, we would recommend an in-depth research in the field of energy poverty and gender in Slovenia, gender biases in the energy sector and education system. This would allow for specific steps to be taken to change the (im)balance of power.

Strengthening of Coordinators for equal opportunities

Coordinators are responsible for mainstreaming gender into a specific field of work at the level of ministries. We would recommend that the job of a coordinator be the sole responsibility of an employee and not just an additional task that they carry out after completing their primary responsibilities. We would also recommend additional training for the coordinators, implemented on one hand by MDDSZSEM to improve the more general skills and knowledge, and methodologies for gender mainstreaming, and on the other hand by experts that focus on specific sectors to advance the work in their relevant areas of work.

Raising awareness about gender / intersectional aspects and energy issues

Energy policies have a history of being focused on supply of energy, not on consumption, and as a consequence, energy policies assume that women and men have the same needs, values, experiences and aspirations towards energy production and use. Policies for energy transition would need to consider the distinct gender and intersectional differences in the use of energy, as well as in energy production. It is still very much needed to raise awareness about the issues related to gender, as well as other social categories which are intersectional, and energy sector. There is a large deficit in awareness and capacity building - incl. enhancing expertise in this area – about gender and energy, especially among the policy- and decision-makers. It is needed to develop a gender-aware understanding of energy production and consumption.

Collecting sex-disaggregated data with an intersectional perspective (race, age, class, ability...) on energy aspects

In part, the lack of awareness is linked to the lack of data. Apart from scarce case studies and small samples, the EU does not have available energy related data disaggregated by sex, age and disability related to energy use and production. Absence of sex-disaggregated data is likely to reinforce existing inequalities and the vicious cycle between lack of data and no remedial action. Good data is the basis of policy making as well as allowing benchmarking and tracking progress.

Engendering energy indicators

In the light of afore mentioned lack of awareness and data, the development of gender and intersectionality sensitive indicators in the energy field would be an important step in informing better policies to be more gender-sensitive. It would also serve to design targets for action. The revision of National Energy and Climate Plans of the EU member states, which is due in 2024, could be a good

occasion to provide engendered energy indicators.

Involvement of women in all their diversity in design of plans for operationalising the energy related directives

Operationalisation of the energy related directives can still fix some of the disparities for women in all their diversity that are currently still integrated in the directives. That is why it would be recommendable to ensure a relevant participation of women at all levels of designing operationalisation plans for the implementation of the energy related directives.

Prioritising women in training and jobs related to building renovation and renewables

It should be considered how temporary measures, such as quotas, can best be used to promote equal opportunities for women to take an equal part in the construction jobs, as well as in jobs related to deployment of renewable sources of energy. Also, in training and building up skills and qualifications it should be considered carefully how to ensure that women are given equal opportunities to take part and to be included.

Protecting women against rising rents or other costs due to renovation or deployment of renewables

It is necessary to work out more detailed plans on how to ensure that the rents and other housing related costs do not rise as a consequence of renovations, so that this burden does not disproportionately affect women.

Other policy recommendations

Holistic approach

It is important to ensure that gender is not only mainstreamed into energy-related policies, but that a holistic approach is taken when designing new policies or measures. When discussing the green transition, for example it is necessary to include both the gender and the energy perspectives. At the same time, both elements need to be part of housing policies, another pertinent subject in Slovenia. If gender coordinators were given a prominent role, perhaps as part of the minister's or state secretary's offices within the ministries, with an actual capacity to influence the policy-making process, this kind of holistic and cross-cutting approach would be made possible.



EUWES