

# EU policy recommendations – Empowering women in energy sector

## EU Summary



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# INTRODUCTION

The energy sector across Europe presents a significant gender disparity, with women still greatly underrepresented. In the EU, the energy sector workforce is predominantly male, comprising 77.9%, while women represent only **22.1%**. This gender gap extends to the renewable energies sector, where women are similarly in the vast minority.<sup>1</sup>

Women and girls, in all their diversity, are often on the frontlines of the climate crisis and face greater adversities from climate change across the world, largely due to their economic disadvantages. The correlation between underrepresentation on one hand and bearing the brunt of the adverse outcomes of current energy systems on the other hand is evident.

Moreover, reports show women and women-led households are disproportionately affected by energy and transport poverty. This vulnerability is intensified by factors such as age, disability, and ethnic background.<sup>2</sup> Women are also less likely to make decisions on energy in their households even though they are often responsible for more household labour and energy usage. The participation of women in the unpaid domestic sphere is also on the rise. Reports indicate that women were more affected by the loss of jobs and income during the COVID pandemic.

This EUWES (Empowering Underrepresented Women in the Energy Sector) project seeks to identify the current obstacles hindering women's representation and to promote gender equality through the recommendation of inclusive policies and practices. The project's primary goal is to empower women and foster opportunities for them to actively participate in and contribute to decision-making processes within the energy sector.

To contribute towards the goal of the project, EUWES partners offer a comprehensive set of policy recommendations for EU institutions to remedy this issue. These recommendations are organized into three categories, each tailored to improve gender equality, representation and feminist principles in EU decision making as well as the educational sector and private sector. We also offer good practice examples at the end of the summary.

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<sup>1</sup> *Gender and energy*. 2016. European Institute for Gender Equality. Available at: [https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/energy?language\\_content\\_entity=en#:~:text=In%20Europe%2C%20the%20energy%20sector,where%20w%20omen%20are%20also%20underrepresented](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/energy?language_content_entity=en#:~:text=In%20Europe%2C%20the%20energy%20sector,where%20w%20omen%20are%20also%20underrepresented)

<sup>2</sup> Birgi, Olgu Gizemi, Marta Ferdebar, Antonia Fuhrmann, Katharina Habersbrunner, Anke Stock. 2021. *Gender and energy poverty Facts and arguments*. Available at: <https://www.empowermed.eu/resource/energy-poverty-and-gender-facts-and-arguments/>

## Recommendations for EU policy/decision makers

In the EU, the landscape of energy decision-making and energy consumption reveals a complex role for women. As of November 2022, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) reported that women hold **43%** of the senior ministerial roles related to energy in EU member states. Yet, women's representation falls to **29%** within national parliamentary committees dedicated to energy issues, as recorded in September 2022.

### **To improve gender justice in EU policy making, we recommend the European Union:**

1. Adopts **Gender Equality Action Plans (GEAPs)** across the institutions. These plans have been proven to identify strategic areas for improvement, set ambitious objectives and outline concrete measures for achieving gender equality.
2. **Incorporates a feminist perspective** into all upcoming and existing climate and energy policy making. A feminist approach transcends gender mainstreaming; it calls for a profound restructuring of our energy systems and indicators of success.
3. Requires and supports member states **to include gender mainstreaming in the implementation of these policies**, particularly in National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) and Social Climate Plans. Incorporating a gender perspective is essential to ensure that these initiatives are equitable and address the diverse needs of all citizens, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and inclusivity of environmental and social policies.
4. Acknowledges and addresses the feminization of energy poverty and fosters a fair European energy market. The EU energy policy continues to be designed for a “gender-neutral” energy consumer. The EU should foster gender-sensitive approaches to energy access, considering unique needs of women.
5. Integrates specific targets on women-led initiatives and broader gender equality measures into its policy framework including budgeting.
6. Resources and requires intersectional gender training for policy makers to enhance their understanding of the gender nexus to deliver more effective policy-making.
7. Mandates the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data in the energy sector and establishes mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of gender mainstreaming in the energy sector.
8. Prioritizes the integration of gender experts and civil society organizations into dialogue meetings.
9. Requires further consultation and collaboration between social and environmental committees in the European Parliament
10. Ensures further budget allocation towards specific gender and energy programmes

11. Launches a public awareness campaign to highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming in the energy sector and promote gender equality.
12. Provide further training and collaboration between existing EU platforms on Gender equality and energy and climate

## Recommendations to support the education sector

Enhancing the involvement of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines is imperative across Europe not only for fostering equal opportunities and social equity but also for addressing urgent societal challenges such as climate change. However, the current situation indicates that a lot of work remains to be done. In 2021, within the EU, women comprised only 32.8% of tertiary education graduates in STEM fields. This is crucial, as a larger pool of female graduates would provide energy-related companies with a broader talent base from which to hire.

**We recommend the European Union provides more funding opportunities such as Erasmus+ projects to support initiatives for gender equality in educational institutions.**

Steps towards this could include:

1. Adopting Gender Equality Action Plans (GEAPs) at the school, university or faculty level as an effective way to institutionalize efforts to promote gender equality
2. Delivering courses, workshops or training sessions for teachers and professors to enhance their understanding of gender issues and unconscious biases
3. Appointing a dedicated person to oversee activities on gender equality
4. Increasing the visibility of gender aspects in teaching materials to ensure a concerted effort to diversify the authors and content used in STEM courses.
5. Integrating gender perspectives into STEM curricula.
6. Encouraging research and final theses focusing on the gender-energy nexus.
7. Establishing mentorship and internship programs for female students in STEM studies
8. Creating informal networks of women working or studying in the energy sector
9. Carrying out promotional activities aimed at high schools in order to attract female students towards STEM studies.

## Recommendations to support the private sector

In the EU, the energy sector workforce is predominantly male while women represent only 22.1%. This gender gap extends to the renewable energies sector, where women are similarly underrepresented.<sup>3</sup> The ongoing energy transition offers new opportunities for a more inclusive workforce, however this will not happen without clear vision and strategic commitment from the EU, member states and energy companies.

**The European Commission should require and encourage energy companies to:**

1. Conduct Gender Self-Assessment (GSA) and adopt Gender equality plans
2. Provide training and reskilling programmes for their employees
3. Appoint gender equality officers
4. Provide mentorship and leadership programmes
5. Prioritize women in recruitment
6. Encourage female employees in the energy sector to engage actively in informal networks tailored to women in STEM.

### PROJECT DEFINITIONS

**Gender** refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being female in all its diversity, and the relationships between women and men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are context/ time- specific and changeable.

**Gender equality** refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality between women and men is both a human rights issue and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.

**Disaggregated data** refers to breaking down data into subcategories to reveal patterns that cannot be fully reflected by larger, aggregate data which does not account for disadvantaged groups.

**Gender-energy nexus** refers to how gender intersects with energy issues, including topics on energy injustice, energy poverty, energy usage and marginalisation across sectors.



## GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

### In policy making:

- CAN Europe's policy briefing [Towards a Feminist Foreign Climate Policy: considerations for the EU](#).
- [Germany's Feminist foreign policy](#).
- [ENPOR](#)'s recommendations for gender
- [W4RES Horizon 2020 project](#) funded by the EU to involve women to support market uptake of renewable heating and cooling.
- The [EmpowerMed](#) project is a great example of collecting gender-disaggregated data to show how summer energy poverty disproportionately affects women.

### Educational sector:

- The Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing of the University of Zagreb conducts [Internal gender equality assessment](#) and [Gender equality plan](#).
- The role of a [Gender equality officer](#) at the University of Cologne.
- [Gendering MINT digital](#) is a useful tool for engendering STEM studies, also the Technical University Berlin offers a certificate study program "[Gender Pro MINT](#)" with 30 ECTS for students of STEM studies.
- The North Rhine-Westphalia Technical University in Aachen (RWTH Aachen University) [organises seminars, fairs, and programmes fostering female students'](#) careers in the STEM field.
- [#NoMoreMatildas](#) is a great campaign of Association of Women Researchers and Technologists which provides very good communications.
- The Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing of the University of Zagreb launched a podcast [ŽensCast](#) offering future female students stories of women who started their professional careers at the Faculty.

### Private sector:

- [XEnergy](#) is a good example of such a mentorship programme to strengthen the role and visibility of women in the energy industry and other sectors.
- [GWNET](#) aims to empower women in energy through interdisciplinary networking, advocacy, training, and mentoring
- [Women Energize Women](#) is a campaign and conference that spotlights the importance of women in shaping the global energy transition.

[Full version of the recommendations](#) and more about [the EUWES project and our partners here](#).





