



Good Practices and Policy Recommendations for WiRES

WiRES – Women in Renewable Energy Sector is concerned with the role of social dialogue in boosting female employment in renewable energy sector (RES) and enhancing women workers conditions in the sector.

Taking into account the results of the research, this section of the report explores what social partners can do to make the renewable energy sector a gender-friendly sector. Remove barriers experienced by women in the labour market is not at all an easy task. As a cross-industry matter, gender issues are commonly addressed at cross-sectoral level that is certainly the most appropriate one. However the WiRES research confirms the renewable energy sector to be featured by an expanding production capacity. Social partners are therefore called to take actions, by preventing that the typical gender unbalances existing in the European labour market will not be replicated in the expanding Renewable Energy Sector. The following recommendations are intended to facilitate them in achieving such a goal.

The policy recommendations for WiRES should be considered as concrete tools to overcome those barriers hampering the integration of women in the renewable energy sector. Good practices collected throughout the research are also reported in this section in order to show successful actions to be disseminated and further replicated in the field.

1. Preparing the ground for social dialogue in the renewable energy sector

Policy recommendation: social partners should address the specific needs of WiRES and evaluate the feasibility to arrange ad hoc social dialogue processes and structures for RES (e.g. sectoral specific committees).

The WiRES results show that proper experiences of social dialogue for the renewable energy sector are still lacking. Undoubtedly social dialogue in the renewable energy sector is still weak. Most of the bipartite and tripartite forum of consultations are generically referred to environmental issues. In this picture social partners have not enough room to address the specific needs of the renewable energy sector, both at the national and European levels.

Extract from the WiRES research

As regards European countries there are no agreements in place to cover this sector as such. In this framework, it is rare to find specific social dialogue experiences in the field of alternative energies. This is the reason for which proper gender-oriented initiatives are still lacking and the making of a gender-friendly sector is therefore jeopardized.

It is therefore necessary to address the specific needs of *WiRES* and evaluate the feasibility to arrange *ad hoc* social dialogue processes and structures for RES (e.g. sectoral specific committees) in order to allow new social partner organisations or sub-sections of existing organizations to fully accomplish their role to make the ecological conversion of the economy as fair as possible, especially from a gender perspective.

Social partners at European level are called to pursue the same target.

These steps will encourage collective bargaining to cover the renewable energy sector as such, which is a precondition to carry out the set of policy recommendations listed hereinafter.

2. Close the mismatch between labour supply and demand in the green economy

Policy recommendation: social partners are called to take actions aimed at promoting vocational education and training as well as anticipating future skill needs, also for WiRES.

According to WiRES results, social partners could play an important role in influencing the gender composition of the renewable energy sector. The research shows that collective bargaining is the most appropriate instrument to overcome those barriers hampering gender balance at workplace.

The first challenge social partners are called to face refers to the mismatch between skills supply and demand in the green economy.

The WiRES research acknowledges that the requirements for some of the most widespread occupations in renewable energy, at this stage of its development,

tend to exclude women. Moreover, trends in the European “green labour market” suggest that jobs in RES are likely to follow the increasing polarisation of the labour market.

In this picture, women risk finding themselves without the necessary qualifications to take advantage of opportunities in the green economy, owing to a lack of skills and expertise. Without qualified entrepreneurs and skilled workers, the available technology and resources for investments cannot be used or cannot deliver the expected environmental benefits and economic returns. Endeavours to close the current skills gap and anticipate future needs are essential for a transition to a green and low carbon economy.

In order to address the existing mismatch between skills supply and demand in the green economy social partners are called to take actions aimed at promoting vocational education and training as well as anticipating future skill needs for WiRES.

Social dialogue and industrial relations could play an important role in governing the labour market, by outlining future occupational requirements and steering the workforce towards the needs of the enterprises. Social partners could support educational institutions in curriculum design as well as in organizing multidisciplinary learning environments, within companies in the RES, including internships to help young people gain experience and access the labour market. Social partners could also more and better promote continuous training for teachers and trainers, which are traditionally female occupations, including subjects and contents related to sustainable development.

Extract from the WiRES research

Social partnerships could play a relevant role in managing the procedures for competences’ certification and the validation of non formal and informal learning outcomes.

3. Gender mainstreaming for policies in RES

Policy recommendation: social partners should take actions aimed at promoting gender mainstreaming for policies in RES (work-life balance, gender pay gap, occupational segregation, ceiling glass, etc.) in order to guarantee a better reconciliation between work and private life and make the sector more attractive towards women.

Among the existing barriers for female participation in the labour market, a relevant role is played by flexible working hours, childcare needs and the culture of organization. Against this background, social partners are requested to promote gender mainstreaming for policies in RES (work-life balance, gender pay gap, occupational segregation, ceiling glass, etc.) in order to guarantee a better reconciliation between work and private life and make the sector more attractive towards women.

Good practices

ENEL, Italy

ENEL implemented the “C’è posto per te” (“There’s room for you”) service, which is aimed at guaranteeing all Enel mothers-to-be a reserved parking space in the Company garage or in another affiliated Facility.

Center of Hárskút, Hungary

At the Renewable Energy Center of Hárskút both home working and part time work is possible, provided that the nature of work makes it possible. For example the position of the assistant manager had to be filled in while she was on maternity leave, but when she came back, both her and the new employee got to keep their jobs. Teleworking, which is yet another uncommon possibility in Hungary is a necessity for the Energy Center, due to their dual place of work.

Vattenfall, Sweden

In Sweden the production of electric and geothermic energy is provided by Vattenfall, a state-controlled firm that focuses its attention on the renewable energies. As it has been pointed out in the case study carried out by the

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions - European Monitoring Centre on Change case studies – Energy sector Vattenfall, Sweden (2008) – the firm does not only pay attention to renewable energies, but it also tries to maximize its efforts to make the workplace an optimum environment, in which employees can express the best of their abilities and acquire new and better competences.

25% of employees are represented by women. In 2006 the firm introduced a set of policies aiming at satisfying the balance's needs of its employees.

Family friendly policies and equal opportunities – in Sweden the law requires all firms to present an annual plan for equal opportunities – are a central part of the firm culture, as it is clearly pointed out in the Vattenfall CSR Report (2007). The Group Collective Agreement and the Group Works Council of 26 March 2007 establish the corner stone for a culture aimed at the work-life balance. The Company offers back-up measures such as the parental leave, regional back-up services, the possibility of enjoying flexible working hours (on the basis of the employees' requests), and non-remunerated leaves in case of specific family situations. Furthermore, it is possible to concede support measures for the re-entry of those employees that are in maternity or parental leave.

Cumerio Med AD, Bulgaria

The owner of CUMERIO MED AD is the German company “Nord Doiche Refinery”. The CUMERIO MED AD is the only company in Bulgaria, with metallurgy production, refinery of the cathode copper, production of sulphuric acid and ore-dressing enterprise. The total number of workers is 800, of which 15% are women. The members of the Trade Union Federation “Metalitsi” are made up of 447 workers of which 15% are women. The trade union density is 55.9%.

Action description:

1) Objectives:

- Establishment and maintenance of social harmony on the basis of equality and mutual recognition and balance of interests.
- Achievement of Collective labour contract terms, aiming to combine family interests with occupational development.

2) Activities (target groups): Inclusion in the Collective labour contract

(CLC at company level) of additional measures and social activities, besides those defined by the law as means for improving quality of life and attracting women to trade unions in the workplace.

Mothers and single parents with two children under 18 years old use 2 days additional paid leave.

- When children begin school mothers with children use reduced (4 hours) working day.
- Employers cover kindergarten expenses of their workers as it is in the CA: for second child 75%; and for third – 50%; for fourth and every subsequent child – 25%;
- The employer ensure breakfast for free for pregnant women to a value of BGN 2 per day
- Each year employers organise and pay for summer camp for children under 16 years old.
- Employers pay additional amounts for national holidays and leave, guarantee free medical examinations, ensure monthly meal vouchers, compulsory and additional insurance is paid for by the employer.

3) Results and resources involved:

- Establishment of good corporate environment in the company
- Lower absenteeism rate of employees with family obligations
- Increasing labour productivity and company productivity balance

Reducing gender pay gap also in the renewable energy sector is first of all an effective strategy to make the sector more attractive towards women. However social partners face the challenge to combine reduction of gender pay gap with work life balance policies: working in non-standard jobs is associated with the gender pay gap, which is higher among people in such employment conditions compared with standard working time arrangements.

A number of tools to implement by social dialogue initiatives have been identified during the WiRES project:

- Monitoring of wage differentials (e.g. through the implementations of online tools). Mapping developments with regard to gender discrimination

at the workplace and the measuring of pay differentials are important preconditions for successfully developing activities.

- Information on wage differentials is also an important prerequisite to address discriminatory aspects of wage formation.
- Introduction of mandatory pay audits. This would provide transparency in relation to pay systems, thus enabling employees and unions to engage in deliberative learning processes with employers over narrowing the pay gap.
- Introduction of gender neutral pay structures through collective bargaining and revision of job classification systems to detect and eliminate discriminatory pay gaps. It has been acknowledged that the gender pay gap may be a consequence of men's and women's jobs being evaluated differently, with 'typical' female occupations being undervalued.

Good practices

ENEL, Italy

The Company's concern for the issues of diversity management found concrete expression during 2009 in a specific initiative: the founding, together with ten other large multinational companies, of an association whose purpose is to support female corporate leadership. "W Value" stems from the awareness, confirmed by a McKinsey study, that companies with a significant number of women in their top management have better results, from the point of view of both organizational health and economic performance. Among the associations' objective is to carry out a program of activities that enables companies to capture the benefits stemming from greater participation by talented women in corporate dynamics and women to express their professional capabilities and have them acknowledged.

Enel thus is a member of "W Value" in order to be part of a network of companies that intends to experiment with innovative instruments regarding the management of diversity and equality.

It has been about one year since "W Value" was founded. Enel has contributed – though the active participation of its representatives – to guiding the "launch" phase of the association, as well as to planning and

implementing its activities. The main initiatives have involved, and will involve, Enel women (developing managers and professionals) as participants, and focused on the following areas:

- skill building, with the goal of strengthening the credibility of women in high-level managerial roles through training aimed at increasing their business capabilities and reinforcing the elements that define leadership
- mentorship, supporting women throughout their career with a senior figure to guide personal and professional growth;
- role modeling, through the identification of the key characteristics, both professional and other, of successful managers;

flexibility, which aims to develop proposals for innovating the world of work, creating instruments and equal opportunity for growth or women, and facilitate a lifestyle that reconciles private and professional life.

Center of Hárskút, Hungary

The Renewable Energy Center of Hárskút is worth mentioning in this aspect as well. Currently more women are employed in the company than men. (The ratio is around 65:35.) Unfortunately there are no women in the physical labour section, but that is about all where they are not employed. In Hungary architectural engineering is a mostly male dominated profession, but at the Energy Center two women are responsible for such tasks and for the same wage as the previous male engineer in the same position. The reason this deserves to be emphasized is that the so called “glass ceiling” is also present in many places of Hungary, but not in the Energy Center that serves as our example.

4. Stereotypical views in RES

Policy recommendation: social partners should gain awareness and, at the same time, disseminate information about the opportunity offered by a green carrier

The research results show that the energy sector has a highly masculine image which deters women. Moreover it is reported that there is a stereotype view that women are not technologists and that they are not capable (even when provided

with appropriate support) of building, operating and maintaining sophisticated technologies.

With reference to the renewable energy sector, stereotypical views should be erased by means of information, training, mentoring and coaching, including psychological support services, aimed at facing possible obstacles rising in male dominated working places.

Social partners are the most suitable stakeholders to carry out these kind of actions. They are in the condition to emphasize the difference between the traditional energy sector and the renewable energy sector, whose image has a potential stronger female appeal, by taking awareness actions aimed at removing such a stereotypical views and disseminating information about the opportunity offered by a green carrier. The research outlines several reasons to overcome the stereotypical views on women in the renewable energy sector and to incentive women to have a positive look at a green carrier (See box n...)

Extract from the WiRES research

A green job can provide the chance to earn more. Many green jobs offer better wages and benefits than jobs traditionally held by women.

Women can start with any skill level. Women with a high school education to those with advanced degrees can find a place in the green economy. Not every job will put women on a career ladder, but each job can be used as a stepping stone to improve skills and move women toward their next career goal.

Green jobs appeal to workers with a diversity of skills and interests. Women with diverse interests and aptitudes ranging from mathematics to mechanics to management can find a rewarding green career. For example, home insulators do hands-on work, while recycling coordinators supervise operations and set collection schedules by remote. Green jobs can be indoors or outdoors. Women need to understand all of the opportunities that are available to them.

There are multiple ways to get started in a green job. Training for green occupations is offered in a variety of forms, including on-the-job, paid union apprenticeships, programs sponsored by nonprofit organizations, and formal

degree programs. For some occupations, such as electricians, workers can begin their training with a high school or vocational school education, and then go on to a college, trade school, apprenticeship, or certification program. Other career paths, like engineering, require minimum a BA (bachelor's) degree for entry-level positions. Sometimes, unions offer a good starting point for finding training opportunities.

Green job opportunities are available for workers of any age. The pathways into green jobs are for all workers—those just starting out or those in need of a career change. There are ample opportunities for younger workers to get started and for more seasoned workers to use their skills in new ways.

Green jobs can give women greater satisfaction. Research shows that job satisfaction is a key ingredient for success in other areas of life, and that it contributes to a general sense of fulfillment. In taking a green job, women can have satisfaction knowing that they are contributing to a healthier environment for the present and future generations. Also, green jobs often offer career paths so that women can grow professionally. When women consider a broad range of occupations, including green jobs, they are likely to find closer “occupational fits” with their skills and interests.

Green employers are looking to hire. In many Member States, green jobs are in demand and future growth is projected. According to the EU 2020 Programme requirement every Member State should seeing growth green industry by 2020. In addition, despite the economic recession, companies are still looking to develop green technologies and they are identifying a skills shortage as they do so. For example, the lack of a skilled and well-trained workforce was a barrier to growth in the solar power or in other RE sector.