

POLICY BRIEF #2

Promoting an Inclusive Workplace in the Renewable Heating and Cooling Sector

As we strive to meet the ambitious Energy Roadmap 2050 goals and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by over 70%,¹ the expansion of renewable heating and cooling sources is paramount. Achieving these targets necessitates fostering diversity and inclusivity in the energy sector, ensuring that women have equal opportunities to drive the green transition. To this end, these policy recommendations focus on creating a more inclusive and uplifting work environment within the RHC industry.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Gender Quotas:** Implement gender quotas for leadership positions and across all divisions and departments to break down horizontal and transversal career barriers.
- **Entrepreneurial Support:** Offer coaching and technical support for women entrepreneurs seeking to establish businesses in the RHC sector.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Foster collaboration and mentorship by creating more networking opportunities among women in the RHC industry.
- **Mentoring Programs:** Establish mentoring programs to guide women's career development and provide guidance within the sector.
- **Gender and Family-Friendly Policies:** Develop policies supporting work-life balance, including options for part-time work, childcare support, remote work possibilities, and equal advancement opportunities for part-time employees.
- **Gender-Responsive Budgeting:** Implement gender-responsive budgeting for both internal and external projects to ensure equitable resource allocation.
- **Safe Reporting Procedures:** Create safe spaces and structured reporting procedures for addressing any disruptive or unfair behaviours within the workplace.

Targeted stakeholders:

Service Energy Companies, Venture Capitalists, Energy-Related Networks

Meeting the Energy Roadmap 2050 goals requires substantial reductions in energy consumption and a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Expanding renewable heating and cooling sources is critical to achieving these targets. To build a more sustainable energy sector, we must prioritize diversity and inclusivity, ensuring that women have equal opportunities to contribute to the green transition. This involves making entrepreneurial support more accessible to women, creating gender-inclusive work environments, and improving work-life balance.

To create a more positive and inclusive work environment within the RHC sector, it is crucial to prioritize diversity in leadership roles through the use of gender quotas. To accelerate the transition toward environmentally friendly practices, we must move away from conventional business practices and instead welcome fresh perspectives, particularly from underrepresented groups such as women.²

Supporting women entering the energy sector, both as employees and entrepreneurs, is paramount. Women entrepreneurs in RHC require access to both entrepreneurial and technical support to facilitate the implementation of innovative solutions. Research has indicated that hiring practices present a significant obstacle for women seeking entry into the energy sector.³ To address this, it is essential to **establish networking and mentoring programs for women**, as they often face challenges related to male-dominated networks⁴ and unequal access to funding.⁵

Within the workplace, it is imperative to implement policies that are considerate of gender and family needs in order to attract a diverse workforce.

The implementation of more gender- and family-friendly workplace policies can not only attract more women but also create a more diverse and inclusive workforce overall. A flexible work environment that accommodates part-time employment and offers childcare support addresses the diverse needs of employees beyond their work responsibilities. Additionally, considering opportunities for career advancement for part-time employees ensures that their professional growth aligns with their personal preferences and circumstances.

This includes offering flexible work arrangements coupled with childcare support, as well as ensuring that part-time employees have opportunities for career advancement. Many women continue to bear the primary responsibility for caregiving duties within their families⁶, and thus, flexible work hours and part-time positions that do not hinder career progression can be particularly beneficial. Additionally, childcare support is crucial for many families, and energy service companies should actively promote their improved work policies to appeal to young employees who may be starting families.

Furthermore, it is essential for employees to feel safe when reporting any unwanted behavior in the workplace. **Establishing a secure and structured system for reporting workplace issues is crucial**, as inappropriate behavior can take various forms, including physical, verbal harassment, or unfair practices. These behaviors may be deeply ingrained in the organizational culture, making them challenging to address. To effectively address these issues, it is vital to designate dedicated and well-trained individuals responsible for handling such complaints.

[2] Pearl-Martinez R., Stephens J., 2016. Toward a gender diverse workforce in the renewable energy transition, Sustain. Sci. Pract. Policy 12 (1).

[3] GWNET, 2019. Women for Sustainable Energy: Strategies to Foster Women's Talent for Transformational Change.

[4] European Commission, 2019b. She Figures 2018.

[5] IDC. (2022). International Data Corporation. European Women in Venture Capital.

[6] SEforALL, 2017. Scaling sustainable access pathways for the most vulnerable and hardest to reach people.

W4RES is a Horizon 2020 project that aims to scale-up the involvement of women in the market deployment and uptake of RHC solutions via replicable support measures tested and validated across the 8 countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Slovakia). W4RES will run until October 2023 by an international consortium of 12 partners. A balanced union joining forces and expertise on renewable energy sources research & advocacy, innovative business lines development and women advocacy.