

WOMEN ENERGIZE WOMEN

Blog Article

Women's wind of change

Women Energize Women @ WindEnergy Hamburg (27 September 2022)

Five inspiring podium speakers from five different countries, working in entirely different positions in economic institutions, politics or science – and yet they have something essential in common: On the one hand they are all passionately working towards a just energy transition and on the other, as women, they still represent a minority in the energy sector. Our latest on-site event „Breaking the gender barriers, breaking the silos - joint efforts for the energy transition within and beyond wind energy“ took place in the context of the WindEnergy Hamburg trade fair. After inspiring welcoming words by Dr Simone Peter, president at German Renewable Energy Federation (BEE) and Katarzyna Rezza Vega Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), we had a look at the cross-sector challenges of diversification and integration.

Being part of the workforce

Numbers of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) illustrate that there is a share of only 21% women in the wind energy workforce, a number that is even lower within senior (8%) and lower management positions (13%) or jobs that deal with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, short STEM (14%). Within the discussion it became clear, that this is not only a problem for the wind sector, but for other sectors alike: „There is still a lot of unconscious gender biases making it harder for women to get into leading positions in the sector“, said María José González, who is coordinating the green hydrogen program of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mines in Uruguay.

This is why a lot of female experts and entrepreneurs engage in women networks that offer supportive structures and exchange platforms. „Luck is opportunity meeting preparations. And that is how I got where I am right now.“ said Jeanette Gitobu, who is Policy Advisor for Africa at the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC). The Wind Global Leadership Program, where she is also working as director, is trying to influence those very factors: the necessary capacity building as well as the scarcer career opportunities for women. Even beyond sector boundaries the initiative is developing great inspirational potential: “That is a good motivation to keep up what we’re doing to achieve even more in the future!” said, Dr Gokce Mete, Senior Manager of the Global Hydrogen Stakeholder Platform at South Pole and Co-Founder of Women in Green

Hydrogen, a network aiming to increase the visibility and amplify the voices of women working in the sector.

Being educated

Another thing that could contribute to gender equality is education. Sarah Barber, who is managing the Wind Energy division at the Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences (OST) stressed the need to change the way of teaching and learning to enable more women to pursue a STEM career. Also getting into action could help to demonstrate the great benefits of diversity: „At WeDoWind [a research and development network] we are collecting unsolved challenges from the industry and share them with people that are keen on finding solutions. With a very diverse set of people, we are a lot better prepared to solve complex problems.“ The promotion of diversity is essential to the energy transition, because it asks for very broad skills and perspectives to solve the current problems. At the same time for this transition to be just, it needs to address the requirements of all its end-users. Therefore „the world needs female qualities like compassion, empathy and solidarity“, as Sarah Barber put it.

Being the change

In order to make this change happen there is still a lot to be done. Women still put in a lot more effort to get into a leadership position and shape the future of our energy industry. Therefore empowerment, after all, is a huge factor. Malgosia Bartosik, who started as an intern and is now working as Deputy CEO at WindEurope, is a perfect role model when it comes to this: „If you don't believe in yourself no one else will!“, she told the audience.

And it's where Women Energize Women comes in and highlights all those wonderful women of the renewable energy sector, showing their expertise, their engagements and their visions for the future. We are honored by the huge resonance of our #womenenergize event at the WindEnergy Hamburg fair and hope that all who couldn't make it to this on-site event, had now a glimpse of the discussion that took place.

Author: Women Energize Women editorial team