



WOMEN ENERGIZE WOMEN

Blog Article

A Wind Farm in my Backyard

The “Women Energize Women” event “THE FUTURE OF WIND ENERGY - Public Support, Citizen Participation & Financing” at the HUSUM Wind fair 2023

Husum, normally a quiet holiday resort on the North Sea, was overflowing with wind experts, onshore and offshore representatives, and exhibitors from the wind energy industry from all over Germany in the second week of September 2023. On its first day, 12 September 2023, the HUSUM Wind fair 2023 along with the German Wind Energy Association hosted the Women Energize Women event entitled “THE FUTURE OF WIND – Public Support, Citizen Participation & Financing”. This on-site event invited women* wind energy experts to a networking breakfast and panel discussion on how we can increase public support for wind energy on a global scale.

A call for a wind of change

Dr. Simone Peter, President of the German Renewable Energy Federation (BEE) e.V., and Katarzyna Rezza Vega, Head of Women Energize Women at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, welcomed the participants to the event. A short introduction on the importance of gender equality and a call for a wind of change set the stage for a discussion that covered a wide range of topics, such as the acceptance of onshore wind farms, wind farm development processes, financial investments, and the establishment of a diversity and gender balance at all professional levels.

Wind for communities

The panel was moderated by Serafina Funk, Head of Women Energize Women at the German Renewable Energy Federation (BEE) e.V., and was comprised of four women with diverse perspectives on wind energy. Julia Wolf, Head of Acquisition Wind and PV Region South, RWE Renewables Deutschland GmbH, stressed the importance of wind energy for Germany to achieve its net zero targets by 2045. Since 2% of the country will be needed for wind and solar in the future, “a clear target set by the government is crucial,” she explained. On the other hand, as Katharina Johannsen, Editor at energate, put it: “The acceptance of renewable energy in Germany is better than many people think. 80% of the people would like to see more of it, and two-thirds of all people would have nothing against renewable energy technology in their ‘backyard’.” Dörte Zink (formerly Nölting), CFO of Prowind GmbH, added: “We need the support of the people who live in the region,” and this is often achieved by involving the local community.



Communication is key

As it is not possible to develop a wind farm project for less than one million euros in Germany, there is always a project developer involved, even when developing citizen energy, panelist Dr. Marie-Luise Pörtner, Managing Director of Baywa r.e. Wind GmbH, pointed out. Therefore, the aspect of communication is very important. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. "The development of a wind farm is a very specific issue and in order to create acceptance, you first have to listen," said Dr. Marie-Luise Pörtner. Furthermore, by ensuring transparency and asking the right questions, local journalism can promote social acceptance in the region, Katharina Johannsen emphasized. But creating a transparent flow of information does not stop at the newsroom. The local community must also have a say in the project development, beyond just a yes or no. It is important that participation is not only financial but also qualitative. Dörte Zink added that it is equally necessary to point out the risks. Investing capital always involves a risk, which people may forget and be surprised by.

Diversity matters

It is no secret that diverse and gender-inclusive teams and companies are more successful. Nevertheless, "citizen energy events are still male-dominated, they don't bring gender equality to the renewable energy sector," noted Katharina Johannsen. Julia Wolf agreed: "We want to have more women in the renewable energy sector, but if you look at the representatives in a city, most of them are men. We need a change not only in the renewable energy sector, but in all sectors, such as administration or finance." From her experience in presenting wind farm projects to communities, Dr. Marie-Luise Pörtner learned that it can be helpful to approach women in a different way than men. To ensure women's participation, the project should be presented in a way that women feel free to ask questions and show interest. This also applies to job advertisements; creativity and a more open format is required. Creating an atmosphere of trust will attract women to a place of work and the more women there are, the more will follow. "I think, men and women have done a good job so far in the renewable energies. But the key is collaboration. We have to use all the talents in our society to work towards the energy transition," concluded Julia Wolf.

Let's be the wind

A Q&A followed the panel discussion, of which the audience eagerly made use. A participant, who had travelled all the way from Australia, was particularly interested as Australia is on the threshold of entering offshore wind power. She received a variety of suggestions for involving communities and strengthening acceptance of wind energy.



Our collaboration partner, the German Wind Energy Association, made it possible for us to be at the HUSUM Wind fair 2023 and we are looking forward to more events and collaborations in the future. To stay informed, follow @womenenergize on our social media channels via LinkedIn, Instagram, and X. Let's be the wind, the wind of change!

Author: Women Energize Women editorial team

