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75inQ Public Comment:

EU strategy for islands

Introduction

75inQ welcomes the Commission's initiative in establishing long term and short term goals and challenges for the development of insular regions of the European Union. While the goals outlined in the proposal are indeed crucial, 75inQ finds that a crucial aspect of insular development is left out: that of gender balance. Insular regions are lagging behind the rest of Europe in terms of gender balance in work and pay. 75inQ finds that advancing decarbonisation and the development of renewable energy in insular regions could be both complemented by and impactful for gender equality-enhancing measures. The draft contains several mentions of enhancing living standards for the insular communities, and as women compose roughly half of these, it is fitting to target their well-being.

Comment

The intention to further the energy transition has to be acted upon with gender balance in mind. In the European Union, the energy sector remains male-dominated. Few women are employed in the industry; their positions are unequally distributed across the departments of these organisations and they remain focused on human resources, and they are also paid less than their male counterparts. For these reasons, expansions of the clean energy sector must be made in the right direction from the start, as it is much more difficult to steer an already established industry towards gender mainstreaming once inequalities are already entrenched in the sector.

On the other hand, gender inequality is higher in insular regions than in continental regions of the European Union. Studies find low correlations for the gendered pay gap per macro regions, but once we reach the micro-regional level, correlations appear.¹ Among others, insular regions and areas of the European Union exhibit higher levels of gendered inequality and pay gap. Ocean-dependent economic regions also exhibit higher levels of gender pay gap.² Last of all, in

¹ Matuszewska-Janica, A. (2025). Spatial Autocorrelation of the Gender Pay Gap Indicator Across the Macroregions of the European Union. *Folia Oeconomica Stetinensia*, 25(1), 180-200.
<https://doi.org/10.2478/fofi-2025-0009>

² Martin-Imholz, S., Karalija, E., O'Brien, D., Moya-Falcón, C., Velázquez-Ortuño, P., & Montoto-Martínez, T. (2025). Gender, vulnerability, and resilience in the blue economy of Europe's outermost regions. *World*, 6(4), 165. <https://doi.org/10.3390/world6040165>

insular regions, women tend to strive less in work.³ This all makes crucial the implementation of gender equality-enhancing measures in insular regions.

These two factors of inequality make this legislative draft the perfect opportunity for the Commission to both steer insular regions towards the energy transition and towards a more socially equal future.

The switch to cleaner energy would itself be made prompter and larger where female empowerment is achieved in these regions. Examples show up to 20.8% extra in renewable electricity share when women are empowered through work.⁴ The reasons behind such figures are both the larger diversity of insights taken into account in these spaces but also the fact that women better perceive the potential social impacts of energy policies.

Suggestions

75inQ suggests that the communication be

1. Encouraging national policy makers to raise awareness about STEM education and professions in insular regions
2. Encouraging the development of the clean energy industry in insular territories with special attention given to female employment
3. Encouraging national policy-makers to deploy further efforts to reduce the gender pay gap in insular regions

About 75InQ:

The 75inQ foundation works to accelerate the transition to sustainable energy by promoting gender equality in line with the Sustainable Development Goals developed by the United Nations. The Dutch foundation conducts research, awareness campaigns, community outreach and facilitation to pursue these objectives. 75inQ focuses on SDG7 and SDG5 by accelerating diversity in the energy sector towards a more inclusive and sustainable energy transition. 75inQ has an active community of 1400 female professionals in the energy sector.

³ Norlen, H., Papadimitriou, E., De, D. L., & Dijkstra, L. (2021). Mapping the glass ceiling – The EU regions where women thrive and where they are held back : monitoring EU regional gender equality with the female achievement and disadvantage indices. *JRC Publications Repository*. <https://doi.org/10.2776/07411>

⁴ Sen, K. K., Karmaker, S. C., Chapman, A. J., & Saha, B. B. (2025). Women's empowerment in driving the energy transition for sustainable development in developing nations. *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews*, 216, 115647. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rser.2025.115647>