

75inQ Public Comment:

Renewable energy – legal framework after 2030

Introduction

75inQ welcomes the Commission's initiative in developing renewable energy sources (henceforth RES) uptake in the EU. A just and prompt transition towards them is necessary both in climate and security terms. The initiative puts forward the objective of energy affordability, among others. 75inQ's concern lies in the potential detrimental effects RES uptake may have on women as a group of energy consumers. Second, 75inQ suggests that the plan ensures gender-parity in the RES workforce that will necessarily need to expand in order to fulfill EU citizens' energy needs. Overall, 75inQ seeks to inform the Commission on the need for action in terms of gender-equality within the RES regulatory framework.

Comment

Need for Action regarding energy poor consumers

While the energy transition will decrease the levelised cost of energy (henceforth LCOE) in the EU, high upfront costs are to be expected. The LCOE of RES is indeed lower than that of fossil sources, however the needed upgrades in renewable infrastructure entails high upfront costs for providers and retailers. Those may be reflected in the energy prices for final consumers. Energy poverty in the European Union affects 9.2% of citizens.¹ This rate masks unequal realities where countries such as Lithuania record up to 18% of energy poor consumers.² A rise in energy prices will push already vulnerable households further into precarity.

Energy poverty disproportionately affects women and those living in female-led households.³ Female-led households also spend on average a larger share of their incomes on energy costs, making them overall more vulnerable to price changes.⁴ Given

¹ Eurostat, 2024energy-poorentail energy-poor.

² Eurostat, 2024.

³ Habersbrunner, K., Noreña Ospina, M., Wieser, P., Kuschan, M., & Reichmann, F. (2024). *Study on gender-disaggregated data on Energy Poverty Final Study Report* Katharina Habersbrunner, Marcela Noreña Ospina, Pia Wieser, Marika Kuschan, Franziska Reichmann. European Economic and Social Committee.

⁴ Dr. Feenstra, M. (2025) Reframing Energy Poverty through a Gender Lens

such a phenomenon, despite already constituting a large part of energy-poor households, they are also less likely to declare themselves as such. In a cascade effect, female-led households constitute the most prevalent form of monoparental households, and thus children and dependent relatives are more likely to experience energy poverty than the rest, while already belonging to the vulnerable consumer group. Energy poverty can put these individuals in situations where they are forced to choose between essential energy services such as clean cooking, appropriate levels of heating/cooling, and nighttime activities requiring energy, such as studying for children. Besides making up a large part of the energy-poor households, women and especially older women's bodies are further affected by heat and cold stress, with significant health risks.⁵ In such a setting and in order to avoid the uptake in RES impacting and furthering energy poverty as well as gendered inequality, it is important that these policies are accompanied by appropriate price-support schemes.

Need for action within RES workforce

The 2030 legal framework could also further push inequality between men and women in the workplace if it does not tackle gender parity in the RES workforce. In the energy and RES sectors, women are underrepresented within the workforce. As of 2024, only 25% of the energy workforce were women.⁶ On the other hand, when it comes to education in the STEM field, 88% of women participate in STEM education at secondary level, 35% at the tertiary level, and only 30% become STEM graduates.⁷ It is clear that women consistently outperform men in these fields and at the university level.⁸ Women are however more likely to drop out of university. This phenomenon is attributed by researchers and female students in STEM to the lack of female representation in the industry.⁹

To push an expansion of the sector and thus workforce without ensuring gender equality in employment would only further entrench these observed gender disparities. Correcting these disparities later is an even more difficult task because of path

⁵ Dr. Feenstra, M. (2025) Reframing Energy Poverty through a Gender Lens

⁶ European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Empirica, Portia, Fraunhofer-IAO CeRRI, DIW-Econ, ÖGUT and GDCC, Gender balance in the R&I field to improve the role of women in the energy transition – Final report and annexes, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/8283>

⁷ *View of Bridging the gender gap in STEM education: Analyzing the role of mentorship, curriculum design, and policy interventions in encouraging female participation.* (2025.). <https://ijsse.salmaedusociety.com/index.php/ijsse/article/view/385/308>

⁸ Lee, W. C., & Matusovich, H. M. (2016). A Model Of Co-Curricular Support For Undergraduate Engineering Students. *Journal Of Engineering Education*, 105(3), 406-430. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jee.20123>

⁹ *View of Bridging the gender gap in STEM education: Analyzing the role of mentorship, curriculum design, and policy interventions in encouraging female participation.* (2025.). <https://ijsse.salmaedusociety.com/index.php/ijsse/article/view/385/308>

dependency. Similarly, the newfound scale of the RES industry would render any gender-equality reform harder ex post. This is why 75inQ argues for strict and ambitious parity requirements in expanding the RES industry and workforce, paired with programmes that ensure women are retained in the academic field and workforce long enough to fill these positions.

Suggestions

75inQ suggests the following on the matter of gendered energy poverty exposure during early RES uptake:

1. Subsidies accompanying exposed female-led households in escaping energy poverty.
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2. Subsidies accompanying energy producers and retailers in maintaining low prices specifically for energy poor and exposed female-led households.

75inQ suggests the following on the matter of gender-equality in the RES workforce:

1. Dedicated one-on-one mentorship programmes to ensure academic and early-career retention of women in the workforce.
2. Strict gender-specific hiring requirements in the expansion of the RES workforce, by starting this staffing expansion with the objective of raising the number of women employees to that of male employees currently in equal positions.

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.