

Women's empowerment in the nuclear sector: Time to act

Women make up less than a quarter of the workforce in the nuclear sector worldwide, hurting not only diversity within the industry – a key point in ESG strategy emerging from the Paris Agreement – but also its competitiveness.

In France, this question is even more critical as the upcoming EPR2 newbuild and SMR programmes will require recruitment of thousands of people.

« With this huge need of talent, women have a key role to play, » says Aline Des Cloizeaux, France President of Women in Nuclear (WiN), a non-profit organization of women working professionally in various areas of nuclear energy and radiation applications.

Mid 2021, as part of an action plan to promote gender balance in the nuclear sector, the Nuclear Energy Agency, an OECD organization, launched an international survey to measure the gender gaps in the global nuclear industry.

The French national survey conducted by WiN France and GIFEN shows that with 24% – roughly in line with the rest of the developed world – of women the gender balance has remained flat over the last 3 years with under-representation of women in executive positions (10%) and in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) domains (21%) especially at technician levels.

Previously this percentage had constantly increased from 11% in 2011 up to 24% in 2018. And in comparison, this percentage French industrial sector employs 30% of women.

« Despite initiative measures imposed by French law, the nuclear actors and their leaders have to get mobilized, » said Aline.

Attracting more women to the nuclear industry is one of the main goal of WiN, which since its foundation in 1992 has been a strong advocate for environmental sustainability, diversity and gender equality.

In France, WiN acts on several fronts:

- Participation in forums and organized trades days for college students, high school students, and women in job search at regional and national level,
- Mentoring of young graduates and professionals
- Organization of the annual Fem'Energia awards in partnership with EDF,
- Organization of conferences on nuclear applications (energy, health, arts...)
- Participation in public debates on the energy transition,
- Joint events on gender diversity with other women's associations and networks.

At an international level, as for COP 26, WiN Global uses its voice as a network of experts to call for urgent action from policymakers to include nuclear as part of the net-zero solution, and ensure that women are involved in all decision-making steps in addressing the climate crisis.

If you want to join us and help us to recruit women in nuclear industry,

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