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## Gender Equality in the Nordic energy sector

### Nordic Energy Research

The Nordic countries have many common fields of work and the energy sector is one of them. The Nordic Council of Ministers supports a platform for sustainably cooperative energy research and policy development with the goal of making Nordic energy carbon neutral.

In the field of research, support is given to promote gender equality and women's power and influence in the energy sector, something that Green Women have also been working for since we were founded in 2005. The Nordic Energy Equality Network (NEEN) is an umbrella organization that works inclusively to give voice to a sustainable energy transition.

NEEN published a report in August called: Gender Equality in the Nordic Energy Sector. Green Women have responded to the report and we believe that the level of ambition, to achieve gender equality in the energy sector, is the very best!

***The report gives an overall picture of the status of Gender Equality in the sector. The overall conclusion that women are underrepresented in Nordic energy research and in the decision-making area. The aim is now to highlight the need for gender equality and stimulate further discussions for a positive impact on the sector.***

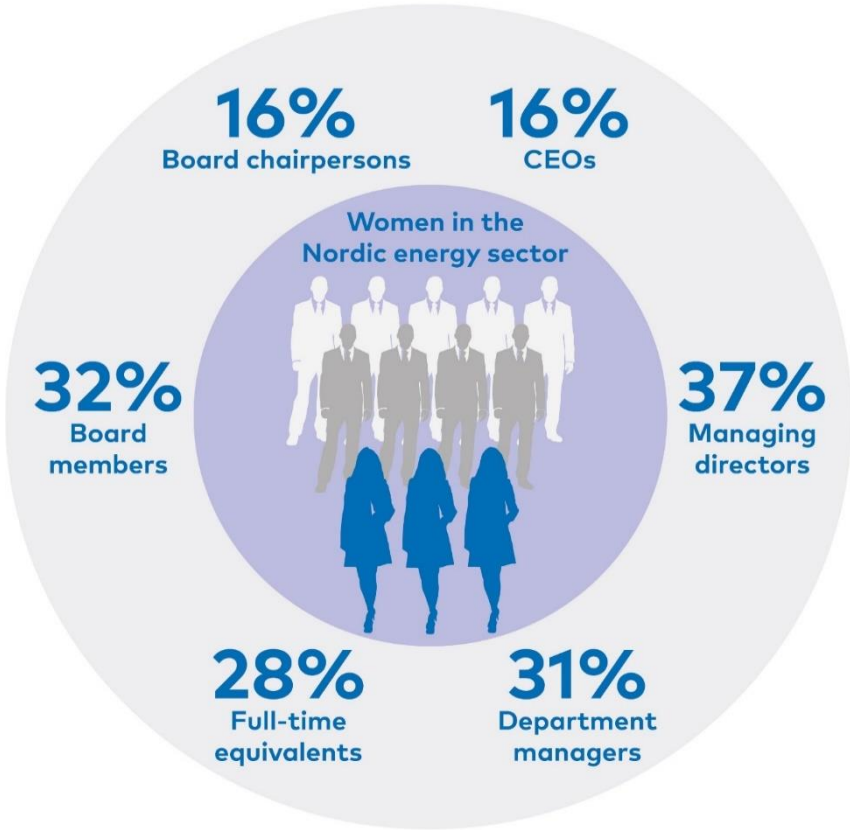
# Nordic Energy Companies

## Women hold one third of decision-making positions in the Nordic region

Women make up 31% of all decision-makers but 28% of FTE. Using the employment rate is particularly relevant when addressing gender gaps as women work more part-time.

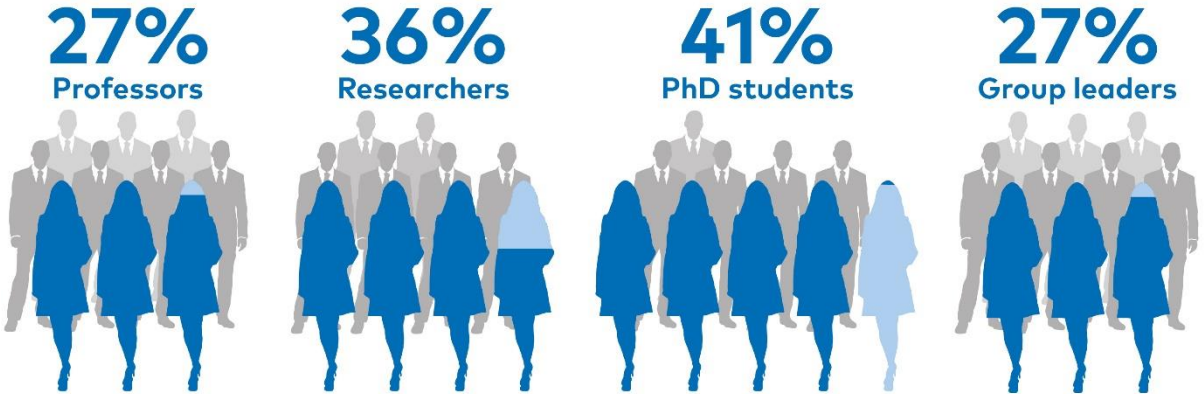
Although women hold 31 percent of the decision-making power of the energy companies included in the survey, women are less represented at managerial level. Only 16% of the chairmen and 32% of the board members are women. The same trend can be seen when it comes to vice president positions, where women make up 37%, but only 16% are CEO positions. In addition, a large part of the Vice President chairs are HR services (human resources and development managers). Since women are less represented in the most important management positions, they have less overall decision-making rights. Therefore, women's average decision-making power is 24 percent, based on the scoring method used, the report states.

The figure below is from the report.



## The whole of the Nordic countries

Women are a minority in all research positions within the responding research groups. In 2019, 27 per cent of group leaders and professors were women. However, the proportion of women is slightly higher among researchers and doctoral students: 36% and 41%. The main reason for the gender imbalance within the research groups, the researchers themselves believe, is that few women apply for these positions. The figure from the report.



Of the leaders of university institutions, 12% were departmental leaders and 19% of the professors were women. Of the 26 departments that responded to the survey, three have female department leaders (12%). 19% of the professors at the departments are women, most of whom are in engineering or technical departments. Like the respondents to the research groups, respondents at university institutions suggest that the main reason for gender imbalance is that few women seek scientific positions. Half of departments encourage women to search through their job advertisements and many promote women, especially as role models.

Figure (left): Gender balance among Nordic university’s department leaders

Figure (right): Gender balance among Nordic professors



## My comments

Gender equality is a human rights issue, a question of justice and anti-discrimination.

Equal places for work are said to be less stereotypical, more fun and more creative.

Research shows that equal workplaces perform better, which generates more profitability.

- Why, what is it that makes women's participation on their own terms lead to better results and what do we mean by a better result?
- And how can a woman be involved on her terms in a patriarchal world where the man's gaze and wallet continue to control what is considered demand and worth investing in?

**Explaining the Nordic countries' advanced gender equality work** and the desire to be even better, as the report "Gender Equality in energy sector" says it wants to, needs to start with Nordic historical development and the development of today's social support.

The long-term political work on equality, how conditions have been created and what difficulties need to be solved in order to achieve the goal that women can fully participate in working life on their own terms need to be clarified in order to increase understanding and facilitate continued equal sustainable development.

1. Insurance systems that allow financial access to childcare with the quality, possibility and financial support of being at home with a sick child.
2. Women's organizations, NGOs receiving state aid for lobbying for the implementation of gender equality under signed UN conventions. In a Nordic context, there is a desire for fathers to also take responsibility for their children and for women's salaries to be equal to men's salaries for equal work.
3. Long-term strategic work in the Nordic countries where gender equality is considered important to prioritize and a political respect and listening to women's organizations as well as high union organizations where just as long has been on the trade union agenda.
4. An economically free education system all the way up to university and research level.

## Outlook

**The Nordic region was urbanized late** in comparison to the rest of Europe. A remnant of the woman's historically strong position in the local community and family is close in time. Anthropological research proves that the skills and interests of all people have been needed in sparsely populated rural areas and villages simply for the survival of society. Anyone who was particularly good in any field of work did do the job regardless of gender, a non-patriarchal divided society.

The economic outlook for growth over the last almost two hundred years has damaged the environment, nature, animals and people, leading to gender division and catastrophic emissions into air, water and nature. The realization of the need for a circular economic system, with responsibility for both production and consumption from the origin of the product to the landfill is slowly beginning to penetrate, but political governing frameworks are not yet in place. Work on transition

must speed up to meet the aspirational goal of the five-year-old Paris Agreement to focus on 1.5% global warming. In northern latitudes, warming is accelerating, yet life continues to live in the north as if there were four globes available. Energy for heating and cooling, for mobility, transport and for recreation is seen as self-evident.

**The report 'Gender Equality in the Nordic energy sector'** should be seen in the light of this. Then it becomes more logical that it is precisely Nordic ministers who want to see more research on equal development in the energy sector. The sector continues to be dominated globally by oil, coal and gas and is considered one of the most stereotypical workplaces. Unfortunately, this stereotypes also still applies in the renewable and fossil-free energy sector.

The report states that:

**“Gender Equality in the energy sector is crucial to stimulating more inclusive and innovative solutions to achieve the green energy transition”.**

Green Women agree, gender equality is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

The report notes that the Nordic energy sector reflects global patriarchal conditions and notes that a change is needed. I also believe that the Nordic countries have the very best conditions for achieving the desirable change to achieve gender equality. I believe, however, that this presupposes that we in this sector can communicate the whole of our entire democratic social fabric, break patriarchal structures and include social sustainability.

## **Today's energy system is a patriarchal construction**

The infrastructure of energy has been built up in the current power structure over the last hundred years. The choices that have been made characterize what society looks like today. Hydropower has required the construction of dams that have created dry riverbeds, making fishing impossible for subsistence and fishing for sport and tourism. Oil drilling along the Norwegian coast has provided jobs and growing communities while reducing the previous fishing industry. Windmills and solar energy have not yet affected society's infrastructure in the same way. Nuclear power, which Green Women believe is by far the most patriarchal form of energy, has created a gigantic waste problem we share with all nuclear countries. In Sweden, parties talk about how the waste can be safely stored for hundreds of thousands of years. At the same time, philanthropist Bill Gates has gone in but huge financing in research into new nuclear power, which has knocked out market mechanisms. Nuclear waste is considered to be able to be used several times, the waste is compressed and becomes even more dangerous, and there are no ready-made prototypes.

Nuclear power, coal, gas and hydropower are examples of patriarchal systems that require major investments, have a hierarchical structure and redirect society to adapt. People, animals and nature are simply allowed to submit and move. New structures have been created and will be created.

## Research on women's special competences

- Precautionary principle
- Social skills
- Solutions for the whole
- Small is beautiful

Equal inclusion of women's skills requires that problems with the structure of energy systems get on the table. We have moved from a domestic energy market to a Nordic and European market. Today, training in energy requires that you like the situation and want to work in the existing structure. If you don't, you'd rather work with something else, as you risk being both marginalized and ridiculed. This is devastating for the whole development of society.

Energy transfers must withstand climate change, here wind and solar are safer than large dams that can overflow. Solar and wind can also be used locally on a smaller scale and act as security in case of unrest between countries. There is great potential here for **women's cautionary thinking** and willingness to work with comprehensive solutions.

In a circular economy, there is no room for oil or gas, but the men who work in these sectors do not accept being unemployed. They need to retrain for new jobs, which they may not want or can't afford. Few politicians dare to go to election on the question to shut down industries. This requires knowledge of the climate's impact and responsibility for the crisis, as well as national financial support for retraining. **Women's social skills** and ability to communicate anti patriarchally are needed in this transition work.

In the circular economy, a short-term market economy works poorly. The reasonableness of putting a price on the environment has been discussed for a long time among ecological economics. It may work in the short term. Nordic and European business are starting to get on track and understand that they need to help argue for the introduction of common global rules as a price for CARBON emissions. A short-term but necessary solution to cope with the acute climate crisis we are in. The project to push carbon dioxide back into rock rooms must also be seen as a short-term solution during the time sluggish investors want to withdraw as much money as possible from their short-term investments. The countries with functioning tax system provide economic conversion aid to profit energy companies, which also disadvantages market mechanisms but favors conversion in the short term. Politics usually lags behind when they are afraid of not being re-elected. It requires **women's social talent** to communicate savings and reuse. **Small is beautiful** and smaller companies' waste heat and municipal activities as well as energy housekeeping should be highlighted as a top priority, then it is easier to engage more people in the transition.

Communication around energy is often mediated when there are large expensive proposals presented, a typically patriarchal phenomenon. In addition, media communicators tend to love to build up evaporating and crippling conflicts between different parties, one should be right and one should be wrong. Since the reality is not like that, both politics and the media risk losing their credibility in the transition work, which is devastating from a democratic point of view. Knowledge of local small-scale energy development work even in cooperative form or association-driven is not disseminated, often it is also run on a voluntary basis and by many women.

**If women are to be included in the entire energy sector, as the report seeks, must:**

- **Overall energy goal will be to prioritize technological development in order to save energy.**
- **Small-scale and more robust energy solutions are valued.**
- **Consumer power benefits and that smart grids are developed.**
- **Research on complete solutions with organic energy solutions based on a circular economy is supported.**

All stages of a society's energy infrastructure affect the volume of CARBON emissions and quality of life. By quality of life, I mean a society that can afford to offer free schooling and economically reasonable preschool, healthcare and care for the elderly, where people with different disabilities and socially fragile people can continue to live a dignified life. A quality of life in which residents can feel confident that the energy system is working and can cope with the climate change we are in, a system that is not dangerous and can be used as a weapon by terrorism.

### **End comment**

In the 1980s and 1990s, those who advocated for the sun and wind were often marginalized. In 2006, the Swedish Statistic Institute (SOM) saw that a majority of women, 70%, wanted to prioritize precisely those types of energy. In the same year, 100% of male engineers sat on Norrbotten County Administrative Board and set up the region's future energy initiative, the 25% female civil engineers available in the particular area were not requested. (GK report 2006). No women were included in the ordering trail either. That's where today's structure was laid down.

Women have worked in technology since time immemorial; woven, made clay pot, cultivated and later knitted and knitted, fundamental to systematic thinking and logical construction. These links should be highlighted in schools to strengthen girls' self-esteem in technology areas.

Women should receive research and investment support on their own terms, based on their ideas that they themselves are allowed to develop. Here is the opportunity for the Nordic countries to achieve not only equal energy development but also a long-term sustainable one. A development that strengthens regional cooperation based on regional differences.

Ewa Larsson, social scientist, for Green Women