



# How to Set Up a National/Regional Network of Women in Sustainable Energy



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# Executive Summary

It is a well-known fact that the energy sector continues to be male-dominated. The absence of gender equality can be observed in all parts of the world.

Gender inequality is even more prevalent at decision-making levels. Women are generally underrepresented on company boards and across senior management positions, as well as in politics.

This reality of under-representation is even more accentuated in energy-related fields. As a result, the few women that manage to secure top positions are often less connected with their peers than their male colleagues.

Yet gender equality has proven to be an indispensable factor in reaching sustainability.

It is these observations that motivated four women professionals working in the sustainable energy field to found in 2017 the Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition (GWNET) as an international non-profit organisation under Austrian law.

GWNET is a global network aiming at empowering women working in sustainable energy in all parts of the world, at different career levels from both the public and the private sector.

Over the last five years, the work of GWNET has grown to encompass global activities around advocacy, mentorship, and networking. The lessons learned over this period have been invaluable and have solidified the beliefs that drove us to set up the network.

It is these lessons that we have put together in this guide to provide guidance to upcoming women's energy networks on the steps to consider when setting up their initiative, as well as learn from existing networks and what they are doing in this space.



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# Introduction



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# Why it makes sense to set up national/regional networks of women in sustainable energy

Gender diversity drives innovation, opens new pathways for technology deployment, brings valuable perspectives to social and economic development and provides a richer pool of talent for key and emerging industries. In the landscape of global issues requiring strong leadership and a skilled workforce, few areas are as critical as the transition to a sustainable energy system.

Yet, as documented in IRENA's January 2019 report "[Renewable Energy: a Gender Perspective,](#)" the energy sector continues to be male-dominated.

It is therefore heartening, that the UN Global Roadmap for Accelerated SDG 7 Action emphasizes that "gender equality and women's empowerment must be prioritized, including empowering women in the design, production and distribution of modern energy services, including for productive uses, as well as equal representation of women in decision-making processes in the area of energy" [1].

While the under-representation of women in sustainable energy is a global phenomenon, different nations and regions exhibit different characteristics. Gender-based stereotypes and prejudice which translate into obstacles for women to thrive in sustainable energy are often region- and culture-specific.

Networking and advocacy can therefore be expected to be most effective when they are led at a national and regional level.

Furthermore, a considerable number of nations and regions have endowed themselves with institutions to advance the achievement of SDG 7 ("Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all") and to promote energy transitions to carbon-neutral energy systems.

Legislation on renewables and energy efficiency, therefore, needs to occur at a national/regional level, benefiting from national/regional consultations.

[1] [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/11/hlde\\_outcome\\_-\\_sdg7\\_global\\_roadmap.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/2021/11/hlde_outcome_-_sdg7_global_roadmap.pdf)

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Since many national markets for sustainable energy are still quite small, it often makes sense to promote regional cooperation for sustainable energy, thereby creating regional markets which are also more attractive to investors and better for trade because of their size.

### **What is a women's network?**

A professional association of women, centred on a particular issue (e.g., energy) in a specific location (city, country, regional, global) offering a variety of activities for its members.

National/regional women's networks for sustainable energy can benefit from the relative cohesiveness of a particular nation/region and from the (often) shared language.

Members of a national/regional network will find it easier to connect and exchange views on issues of policy and strategy.

Labour law and regulations are usually uniform across a country and will often be quite similar from one country in a region to the next.

Job mobility within a nation/region will also occur more frequently than at the global level.

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# What to keep in mind when attempting to set up a national/regional network of women in sustainable energy

The impulse to set up a national/regional network of women in sustainable energy will most likely result from a small group of women who desire more interaction with like-minded female professionals.

If the core group of potential founders has strong personal networks, this will be an asset from the outset; it will greatly facilitate the initial growth of the network.

The starting point for a national/regional network could also be as a component in the work programme of a dedicated national, regional or global international organisation. It could also result from bilateral cooperation – akin to the Energy Partnerships of the German Government.

Before setting out to start a new national/regional network, it is advisable to check out existing networks [2] with similar objectives and investigate whether there is scope for creating synergies or even for direct cooperation. This avoids unnecessary competition.

Female networks can also encounter difficulties which arise from the fact that they may be perceived to challenge prevailing gender stereotypes.

Women intending to create/animate such networks may wish to strengthen their own competence in and resources for dealing with gender-based discrimination.

## 1. Mission Statement

Regardless of the origin of the idea to set up a national/regional network of women in sustainable energy – an important first step is to define the objective(s) of the intended network.

This could be done in the form of a short mission statement, or in a more detailed fashion.

[2] See Appendix – List of selected women’s networks



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## **PowerHer, Rwanda**

“Our mission is to leverage the number of women, their opportunities and influence in the Rwandan Energy Sector.”

Most networks might aim at the following — please find some of the non-exhaustively indicated exemplary functions listed below:

- Promoting ongoing/periodic (online and in-person) professional exchanges among members;
- Organising dedicated networking events;
- Supporting members in their professional development – e.g., through mentoring, training and coaching, by sharing vacancy announcements, etc.;
- Lobbying for better overall working conditions of women in sustainable energy by advocating for needed legal changes as appropriate (e.g., on parental leave, flexible working hours, rules on gender-neutral advertising of jobs and recruitment, equal pay legislation, etc.) and by promoting overall good practice for the promotion of equality between women and men;
- Creating public awareness around the concept of a just and inclusive energy transition;
- Working on data on women in energy;
- Protecting the interests of members in case they have suffered blatant discrimination;
- Working with the media to raise public awareness around gender equality in sustainable energy;
- Giving members added visibility on social media and through dedicated professional fora;
- Inspiring, mobilizing and connecting women who work in sustainable energy or are interested in this sector.

Of course, a national/regional network could also be more business-oriented, akin to a chamber of commerce or a female branch of an industry association.

One of the first steps would be to craft a short and powerful mission statement that captures the essence of the intentions of the founders for the future network.

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### **Asociación Española de Mujeres de la Energía, Spain**

“Ensure that the presence of women in all areas of the company is balanced and that the teams are diverse, by promoting female vocations in the areas of technology, science, mathematics and engineering. Helping employability by strengthening the presence of women in the energy sector at all levels, especially those with the greatest difficulties; and promoting women in the promotion and development of their professional career in the energy sector.”

Proponents may wish to use the process of crafting the mission statement to widen the original circle and start drawing other women into the exercise.

Once the mission statement is crafted, it can be disseminated through private and/or official channels to attract women who might wish to participate in the foundational efforts.

It is important to define early on what constitutes success for the network, so that at the appropriate moment mechanisms for evaluating and monitoring performance can be created and fruitfully applied.

#### **2. A legal form**

Proponents of national/regional networks for women in sustainable energy will also want to deliberate carefully which legal form to give to their initiative.

A legal form is important, because there are costs associated with running a national/regional network and there may be income from membership fees, donations or subsidies.

The legal form ensures transparency and accountability of the leadership to its members and satisfies the legitimate regulatory interests of national authorities by establishing clear rules for governance.

This also allows for continuity and smooth functioning beyond the involvement of the initial founders.

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Often the legal format of a non-for-profit entity may be the most evident choice. Legal requirements for non-for-profit entities vary significantly from one country to the next.

In some countries, such as Austria or also Germany, it is very easy to found a non-for-profit entity (called "Verein"). In the US the requirements of §501 Title 26 subsection (c) United States Code (which lists the possible categories of non-for-profit organizations) are more demanding.

Other countries have differing legal requirements.

While a national network will seek to satisfy the regulatory demands of the country of registration, a regional network will need to ensure that the legal form chosen enables it to **work effectively and efficiently in all regional member countries.**

In the legislation covering "Verein" the indispensable elements of governance (General Assembly, Board – consisting at a minimum of a Chairperson, a Treasurer and Secretary; Independent Auditors) and financial accountability are laid down, as well as the periodic reporting duties a "Verein" has towards the relevant government authority.

If the national/regional network pursues **commercial activities** - such as collaborating on joint ventures or jointly accessing credit-lines as well, the corresponding legal form would need to be chosen that allows for the intended commercial activities under the relevant national legislations.

Another option is to create the network as an "initiative" or a "programme" within an already established legal entity with a wider mandate (example: CEEW Women in Sustainability Initiative).

The governance set up for a chosen legal form should also include stipulations about how to resolve conflict among members of the network in the planning of activities.

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## **Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition, International**

GWNET is governed by statutes. As noted in the statutes, the organs of GWNET include: 1) The General Assembly; 2) The Governing Board; 3) The International Secretariat.

To promote its global activities, GWNET has also created an Advisory Council.

Read the statutes [here](#).

### **3. Funding**

Proponents will also wish to carefully consider **how they can raise the funds needed** for the intended activities of the future national/regional network.

The funds needed will vary considerably – depending on whether the network wishes to limit itself to virtual encounters, host (and finance) regular in-person meetings, reach out to wider constituencies through cooperation with local and regional media outlets, or indeed fund concrete operational/business activities by members.

Is it planned to collect **membership fees**? Should the membership fees be nominal – a tangible sign of allegiance – or substantial enough to provide solid income?

What level of membership fees is commensurate with the income situation of the intended members? Should there be various types of memberships – e.g., individual, corporate, and student members?

Is it planned to approach sponsors for larger sums of money? Are there government entities that could provide a subsidy (such as an office space, or make financial contributions)?

How should the membership fees be collected: electronically; through money order; paid in person at relevant meetings, etc?

Should there be other sources of income? Proponents may be in a position to access an endowment or an inheritance to create their financial viability.



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Does the national/regional network intend to engage in project work to self-finance the intended activities?

#### **4. Target audience and interaction among members**

Proponents will want to be clear about whom they want to recruit as members of the future network. Will it be professionals (junior – middle management – company/organisation leadership level)? Should it include/encourage especially younger women, perhaps as early as from college?

Are women from the “old energy sector” (oil, gas, coal) welcome as members in order to stimulate change in these sectors or will the future network focus exclusively on renewables and energy efficiency?

How will the members interact? How often? Online, on-site or through hybrid formats?

#### **Turkish Women in Renewables and Energy, Turkey**

Founded in May 2018, this network represents a professional network of women who are already active or who are interested in being active in the energy sector and mainly in renewable energy.

#### **5. Language(s)**

The languages the national/regional network will operate in need to be explicitly defined and communicated to avoid disappointment.

#### **6. A dedicated website and social media presence**

These days, online communication of high quality is of the essence. The website should be designed with due attention to the intended target audience. It should also provide for the possibility to collect fees and donations electronically.

Depending on the priorities of the network, the website should allow for network-internal exchanges (fora, resources for members only, etc.).

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To provide an example, GWNET shares members-only information in a monthly “Members’ Digest”. Its periodic Newsletter (distinct from the members’ digest) goes to a wider audience and includes topics of a more general nature.

The electronic Women in Energy Expert Platform (WEEP) allows women to self-register their profiles which they also have the responsibility to keep up-to-date. WEEP can be searched by external parties such as conference organisers, according to several categories and with due safeguards in place, and allows for some interaction among members.

### **Women in Energy Expert Platform**

The GWNET Women in Energy Expert Platform aims to connect and empower women working in energy in all parts of the world in order to provide greater visibility, networking opportunities and professional connections between women.

Learn more about how to set up your profile [here](#).

Social media – as appropriate in the local context – should be used both for external (official accounts for dialogue communication) as well as for internal communications (e. g. a private LinkedIn group). It is advisable to also work with specialized media professionals from the outset so that they can accompany the birth of the network.

### **7. A physical office and remunerated staff**

Depending on the nature of the intended network, a physical office space – if the network can afford it – may enhance visibility and facilitate the day-to-day running of the network.

The request for office space addressed to a governmental entity or an international organisation may open up opportunities for cooperation. The same may be true for private sector entities (corporations) who might wish to sponsor the nascent network. Due care should be taken to avoid the appearance of partiality due to the co-location of the office with a major stakeholder of the relevant local energy landscape.

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In many parts of the world, shared office facilities exist and often provide a fully-fledged office infrastructure for a reasonable price. With the current global health pandemic, more flexible ways of working have been established and many organisations have switched to a mix of central office and remote home office modes which often provides more flexibility to the employees. Modern communication technologies such as Zoom, Webex or MS Teams facilitate remote teams to a great extent.

Permanent staff working for the network will be needed once the network hits a certain degree of professionalism/size.

### **8. The actual founding of the network**

Once steps 1 through 7 have been clarified, the actual founding can occur, perhaps accompanied by a suitable celebration or in combination with a national/regional event on sustainable energy.

Once the founding has occurred, the active recruitment of members needs to be given priority.

### **9. Running the network**

A national/regional network of women in sustainable energy will be useful to its members if it provides valuable services to them. These services can be free of charge or come with a fee.

Typically, such networks provide the following services:

- Newsletters, mostly in electronic format, are frequently used to facilitate the flow of information to members; newsletters can also be a valid tool to spread information about the network to the outside world.
- Working on closing the data gap on women in energy through the collection of data (through surveys etc.) and the drafting of reports.
- The organisation of training and mentoring programmes.
- The organisation of networking events, conferences, job fairs etc., including events on how to attract women to sustainable energy.
- Development of a platform to connect the members.
- A dedicated “jour fixe”, especially in metropolitan settings, can facilitate the personal interaction of members of the network.
- Contribute to studies and bring more gender awareness to general energy networks; this will give added visibility to the network and create valuable connections; share studies and plans for studies (allowing for collaboration).

## **Women in Energy Pakistan, Pakistan**

Women in Energy Pakistan offers:

### STEM Pipeline

Career Talks to female students to choose technical STEM fields  
Student Chapters in local universities

### Trainings & Workshops

Solar PV Trainings for Female Engineers  
Workshops on Adaptive Leadership and soft skills

### Networking.

Access to a diverse group of women leaders  
Virtual and in-person networking events

### Mentorship & Role Models

Mentorships offered by experts and seniors in the field  
Sharing success stories of successful women leaders in energy

### Recruitment & Retention

Partnership with companies for recruitment of female talent  
Virtual Job Fair (1300+ attendees, 60+ companies in 2020)

### Policy & Regulation

Industry Standard gender-inclusive HR policies for companies  
Lobbying for placement of female expert on Company Boards.

## **10. Evaluate**

After a pre-set period, leadership and members may wish to evaluate whether the purposes of the network – that were defined at the outset – are being achieved.

If there is a need for improvement/invigoration of the activities of the network, the appropriate action should be taken by the Board (in case the network has assumed the legal entity of a “Verein”) or by the appropriate governance body.



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## Recap of Section

When setting up a national/regional network of women in sustainable energy, consider the following steps:



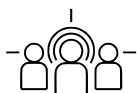
**Crafting a powerful mission statement**



**Deliberating on the legalities of setting up your network**



**Considering your possible sources of funding**



**Identifying your target audience**



**Defining your working language(s)**



**Launching a dedicated website and social media presence**



**Setting up a physical office (where relevant) and recruiting remunerated staff**



**Founding your network**



**Providing valuable services for your network**



**Evaluating the purpose of your network**

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## Collaboration between networks

GWNET is animating a group of national/regional women in energy networks who meets on a regular basis and can provide ideas & inspiration for the set-up of similar entities in other parts of the world.

On April 8th 2019, we held our first collaboration workshop for women's energy networks in Berlin, Germany, at the premises of the Bundesverband Erneuerbare Energie e.V. (BEE), bringing together representatives of national and regional women in energy networks from all around the world.



This workshop brought together networks from Austria, Canada, Central America, Egypt, Germany, Mexico, Namibia, Norway, Pakistan, Russia, and Turkey, to advance cross-network information exchange while brainstorming on future joint activities.

This workshop highlighted the vital need for regular convenings and engagements between women's networks, to advance collective objectives and share best practice.

To follow this up, we held a virtual networking event on 8th June 2020 and a third one on March 15th 2021, together with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, and on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi), under the Bilateral Energy Partnerships.

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With network representatives from Austria, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, Germany, Jordan, Norway, Rwanda, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, and South Asia, this third networking event highlighted the diversity of perspectives in the energy sector and created a shared platform aimed at advancing women's participation in the energy transition, all of this against a backdrop of the pandemic which has had numerous impacts on gender and the workforce.

The draft for this present guide was discussed and improved in a context of a fourth networking event in the framework of the German Government WomenEnergizeWomen Conference in Munich on 11 May 2022. Network representatives from Austria, Brazil, Chile, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Jordan, Mexico, Rwanda, South Africa, and Ukraine told their impressive stories of success and shared their different and complementary approaches to founding and running regional networks.



These workshops and networking events are a core part of the work that we do, as we understand the power of collaboration in advancing the participation of women in the energy transition, by providing a platform to share best practices, resources, and support, for national and regional women's energy networks.

We aim to continue providing platforms such as this, ensuring that we are building on each other's strengths for a more powerful push towards an inclusive and gender-equal energy transition. In this respect, GWNET looks forward to having many newly created networks join this group.

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# Conclusion

The Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition stands ready to assist with the founding of national/regional women in energy networks. The energy transitions need to be accelerated and we believe that women have the right to be as actively involved as men in them.

Expectations are that sustainable energy jobs will grow significantly within the next couple of decades. IRENA estimates an increase to 42 million in 2050 (four times the current level) [3]. Women will wish to be able to access these new jobs on a par with men. Mitigating climate change and taking adaptive measures to its already felt impact requires innovation and inclusive processes. Fostering women's talent for transformative change is of the essence.

At the Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition we believe that networking among women has great potential and in addition - we know - that it brings joy to those who engage in it.

We sincerely hope that the steps and lessons shared in this guide will encourage you to set up a network within your place of work, bringing together fellow women energy professionals to advance the energy transition.

[3] [Global Renewables Outlook: Energy transformation 2050](#)



# Appendix - List of Selected Women's Networks

Organisation	Location
<u><a href="#">AEMENER (Spanish Association of Women for Energy)</a></u>	Spain
<u><a href="#">African Women in Energy Development Initiative (AWEDI)</a></u>	Africa
<u><a href="#">Ethiopian Women in Energy (EWiEN)</a></u>	Ethiopia
<u><a href="#">Hypatia</a></u>	Germany
<u><a href="#">International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy (ENERGIA)</a></u>	International
<u><a href="#">La Red Mujeres en Energía Renovable y Eficiencia Energética (REDMEREER)</a></u>	Mexico
<u><a href="#">Nashmyat for Energy (نشميات الطاقة والمناخ) and Climate</a></u>	Jordan
<u><a href="#">Nordic Energy and Equality Network (NEEN)</a></u>	Nordic/Baltic countries
<u><a href="#">PowerHer</a></u>	Rwanda
<u><a href="#">Rede Brasileira de Mulheres na Energia Solar (MESOL)</a></u>	Brazil
<u><a href="#">Regen's Women in Renewable Energy Network (ReWiRE)</a></u>	UK
<u><a href="#">Solwomen</a></u>	USA

<u>South Asia Women in Energy (SAWIE)</u>	South Asia
<u>Turkish Women in Renewable and Energy Network (TWRE)</u>	Turkey
<u>WePower – Women in Power Sector Network in South Asia</u>	South Asia
<u>WIMEN</u>	Austria
<u>Women &amp; Inclusivity in Sustainable Energy Research (WISER)</u>	International
<u>Women in African Power (WiAP) Network</u>	Africa
<u>Women in Cleantech &amp; Sustainability (WCS)</u>	USA
<u>Women in Energy</u>	Pakistan
<u>Women in Energy and Mining</u>	Kosovo
<u>Women in Energy (WONY)</u>	Central and Eastern Europe
<u>Women in Green Hydrogen</u>	Germany
<u>Women in Management Africa</u>	Tanzania
<u>Women in Renewable Energy (WiRE)</u>	Canada
<u>Women in Renewable Energy (WIRE) Network</u>	Island Nations
<u>Women in Renewables Asia (WiRA)</u>	Asia
<u>Women in Renewables Initiative</u>	Australia

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<u>Women in Sustainability (WiS)</u>	India
<u>Women in Sustainability, Environment and Renewable Energy (WiSER)</u>	UAE
<u>Women of Renewable Industries and Sustainable Energy (WRISE)</u>	USA, Canada
<u>Women's Energy Club of Ukraine</u>	Ukraine

\* This is not an exhaustive list of women's energy networks, but is instead, a list of networks known to GWNET as per the date of publication. The list will be continuously updated.

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# About GWNET

The Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition (GWNET) aims to advance the global energy transition by empowering women in energy through interdisciplinary networking, advocacy, training, and mentoring.

GWNET seeks to address the current gender imbalances in the energy sector and to promote gender-sensitive action around the energy transition in all parts of the world.

GWNET's work focuses on:

- **Networking:** facilitating connections among women working in the fields of renewable energy and energy efficiency to advance the energy transition, through events and the Women in Energy Expert Platform.
- **Advocacy:** generating and disseminating information on the role of women in the energy transition as well as organising conferences, seminars, and workshops which foster discussions and promote gender-sensitive action around the energy transition.
- **Mentoring:** leading the development of several regional and global women mentoring programmes as well as the matchmaking of mentors and mentees within the sustainable energy sector.

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