



# The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

## Synergies between gender equality and climate action

The Netherlands, 21-22 February 2024

### Comments paper – Austria



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*This publication is supported by the European Union Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (2021-2027).*

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# Synergies between gender equality and climate action in Austria

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## Abstract

Only 23.5 % of green jobs are held by women in Austria. This is below the OECD average and emphasizes the need for a gender-transformative approach in the green transition. This comments paper discusses various initiatives, studies, and government efforts set by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK) aimed at promoting gender equality and diversity in green jobs, including the Just Transition Process, the Environmental Foundation, and the study “More women\* in the railway industry!”. Although the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action has already taken important steps and is offering a wide range of initiatives, there is still a long way to go until the full synergy between gender equality and climate action is achieved in Austria.

## 1. Relevant country context

20.8 % of Austrian workers are employed in “green jobs”, i.e. activities that promote sustainability and reduce emissions. This share is above the OECD average of 17.6 %, however, 15.1 % work in “polluting jobs”, which also is above the OECD average of 12 %. Furthermore, women are immensely underrepresented in green jobs: in Austria, women consist only 23.5 % of the green workforce. The OECD average is slightly higher at 28.3 %, which is still less than a third of workers in green jobs. Eastern Austria, where the capital Vienna is located, has the highest share of women in green jobs, 28.8 %, compared to only 18.5 % in Southern Austria. As a result, women might miss out on salary and career opportunities, as the Green Transition will primarily create well-paid jobs in technical professions.<sup>1</sup>

Women also continue to be underrepresented in research and technology. In 2021, only 25 % of the research and technology workforce were women. The share is particularly low in companies, where 16.8 % of workers the research and technology jobs are women, compared to 38.1 % of public employees and 39.3 % of university staff.<sup>2</sup>

Although some gender-disaggregated data for a just transition is available, the official statistical authority Statistik Austria does not report the number of workers employed in the environmental industry by gender.<sup>3</sup> Yet, this number is cited on the official website informing about green jobs of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action,

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2023). [Job Creation and Local Economic Development 2023: Austria.](#)

<sup>2</sup> FEMtech (2021). [Frauenanteil am wissenschaftlichen Personal in F&E.](#)

<sup>3</sup> Statistik Austria (2024). [Umweltorientierte Produktion und Dienstleistung.](#)

Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK).<sup>4</sup> Hence, there is potential for more detailed data collection in the future.

Since Leonore Gewessler took over as Minister for Climate Action starting in 2020, the Ministry actively tries to have more women in management positions, for example as heads of larger organisational units, so-called section heads. Before 2020, all section heads were male, today, gender equality has been reached among these positions. Unfortunately, detailed data on women in green decision-making is not available. However, the study “More women\* in the railway industry!” (more information in section 3.1) found that the share of women in top management positions in the railway industry is only 18 %.

## 2. Policy debate

### 2.1 Why the European Green Deal needs Ecofeminism

The study “Why the European Green Deal needs Ecofeminism” was conducted in 2021 by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF), with financial support from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action (BMK) and the German Environment Ministry. The aim of the report was to expose reveal “gender-blind” spots in the Green Deal and it was published in July 2021.<sup>5</sup>

The report presents the gender gaps and opportunities in the EU's flagship European Green Deal. It explores how and why gender issues are not integrated into the European Green Deal, although they affect environmental policies and vice-versa. This publication also provides recommendations on how to move from gender-blind to gender-transformative environmental policies. These include intersectional and gender equal environmental objectives, moving towards a feminist economy of well-being and care and ensuring the use of gender mainstreaming methodologies in environmental policies.

### 2.2 Workshop “Climate protection in everyday life”

The Austrian NGO Peregrina offers workshops for women with migration background on the topic of “Climate protection in everyday life”, commissioned by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action. Every year, around 16 workshops are held on the topic of climate action in everyday life, each with seven to 20 participants. The focus is primarily on climate action measures that help people in financially precarious situations to reduce their everyday costs.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bundesministeriums für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie (2024). [Green Jobs in Österreich](#).

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger, Patrizia, Lharaig, Nadège, Wiese, Katy, Stock, Anke, & Heffernan, Rose (2021). [Why The European Green Deal Needs Ecofeminism: Moving from Gender-blind to gender-transformative environmental Policies](#). Report. EEB (European Environmental Bureau) & WECF (Women Engage for a Common Future).

<sup>6</sup> Peregrina (2022). [Workshops mit Migrantinnen: Gesund Leben – Geld Sparen – Klima Schützen](#).

## 2.3 UNFCCC Youth Delegate Programme

Every year, four young people between the ages of 18 and 26 travel to the UN Climate Change Conference with CliMates Austria to represent the voice of Austrian youth, sent by the BMK. They read up on the subject matter beforehand in order to then follow the negotiations on site and pass on the latest developments to the Austrian youth. The young adults are further supported by a communications team that captures the output.<sup>7</sup>

## 3. Good practice examples

### 3.1 “Mehr Frauen\* in die Bahnindustrie!” study commissioned by the BMK

The study “More women\* in the railway industry!”, commissioned by the Agenda Bahnindustrie Frauen\* (published in 2023), shows that only 13.7 % of 60,000 employees in the railway industry are women. The proportion of women also differs depending on the area of work: in the commercial sector it is 41.5 %, in the technical sector only 9.9 %. The gender divide is also quite tremendous in the top management, where only 18 % of managers are women. According to the study, reasons for the low proportion of women applying for jobs may include traditional, male-dominated job profiles, a lack of female role models or concerns about a lack of acceptance in the workplace. This concern is not unfounded: In the study, it became clear that women still need to emphasise their competence more and show their achievements in order to be respected and recognised by their male colleagues. The female participants in the study also cited the following additional obstacles, particularly in technical professions in the railway industry: (sexist) manners, verbal belittlement, insults, the lack of women's toilets and inflexible shift work, which makes it more difficult to balance work and family life.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2 Environmental Foundation

One fifth of all jobs in Austria are considered as “green jobs”, i.e. activities that promote sustainability and reduce emissions. However, the share of women in green jobs is very low. The Environmental Foundation<sup>9</sup> has a target to reach a 40 % women’s quota benefiting from the initiatives. Participants in the Environmental Foundation receive targeted training in cooperation with a recruiting company from environmentally relevant growth sectors, consisting of both theoretical units and practical training in the company. Companies in the relevant sectors are informed about the possibility of targeted training of future employees through the Environmental Foundation. The focus is on matching the requirements of the company with the skills and interests of the participants. The Environmental Foundation offers women the opportunity to consciously steer their professional

<sup>7</sup> CliMates Austria (2023). [UNFCCC Jugenddelegierten-Programm](#).

<sup>8</sup> Bergmann, Nadja, Hosner, Daniela & Kargl, Maria (2023). [Mehr Frauen\\* in der Bahnindustrie!](#) Studie. Agenda Bahnindustrie Frauen\* & Bundesministeriums für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie.

<sup>9</sup> Umweltstiftung: [www.aufleb.at/umweltstiftung](http://www.aufleb.at/umweltstiftung).

qualification into the craft-technical and technological field. The close cooperation with women's projects commissioned by the PES and a target group-specific information campaign further contribute to raising the quota of women in climate-relevant professions.

### **3.3 Just Transition Process**

The Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action is responsible for the Just Transition Process. This process involves discussing economic, social, and labour market policy issues related to transitioning to a resilient, climate-neutral, and environmentally friendly society and economy.

One of the central building blocks of this process is the training and further education of skilled workers in the labour market. In January 2023, the Just Transition Action Plan for Education and Training was presented, which includes a focus on gender and diversity. Currently, many green jobs are male-dominated, which may deter women from considering them as a field of employment. A cultural shift is necessary in the workplace, although this cannot be achieved overnight. However, it is important to make jobs such as electrical engineering, building installation, or roofing as inclusive as possible to attract more people. The Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action is supporting various measures to achieve this goal.

The Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action is promoting the inclusion of women in the Environmental Foundation, among other measures. The Environmental Foundation trains individuals without formal qualifications for environmental and climate-related jobs. The goal is to recruit 1,000 individuals to the foundation by 2025. Jobseekers can be placed directly into green jobs, thus addressing the need for skilled labour. The foundation produces role-model videos featuring women discussing their jobs at the Environmental Foundation, directly targeting women.

### **3.4 The Austrian Climate Dialogue**

The Austrian Climate Dialogue comprises eight dialogue events spread over two years (2023 and 2024) at various locations in Austria. Its aim is to establish a social dialogue that raises awareness and promotes acceptance of climate policy among the population. The climate crisis and the necessary social and economic transformation processes affect everyone. In recognition of diverse societies, it is essential to consider the perspectives and needs of individuals from different backgrounds, origins, and gender identities when developing solutions.

Therefore, gender and diversity experts with extensive local, national, and international networks were included in the process to advise institutions on gender and diversity issues. The objective is to establish a more inclusive practice in the field of climate communication that acknowledges the diversity of society. The climate dialogues should consider the following aspects: ensuring a balanced gender ratio among the actors in the event programmes, anti-discriminatory composition of the participants, selected multilingual programmes, explicit addressing of the issues of climate and social exclusion/discrimination, raising awareness of the topic among the project partners, and cooperation with multipliers who work with (post-)migrant communities.

### 3.5 Strengthening women in decision-making positions

The BMK actively puts more women in management positions (e.g. section heads). Before Leonore Gewessler took over all the section heads (heads of larger organisational units) were male. Today, gender equality has been reached at this level.

### 3.6 Girls' Day at the BMK

Girls' Day delivers girls of primary school age an insight into technical and scientific professions, STEM. The day of action is intended to help increase the proportion of women in male-dominated professions in the future.<sup>10</sup>

### 3.7 Other networks and institutions linked to the BMK

- FEMtech: With FEMtech, the BMK supports women in research and technology and creates equal opportunities in industrial and non-university research. It is a particular concern to provide increased support and visibility to women who are affected by other dimensions of discrimination such as age, origin, religion, disability and gender identity.<sup>11</sup>
- Own department for equality and diversity in the BMK, which aims to ensure gender equality and diversity empowerment within the BMK.<sup>12</sup>
- Frauennetzwerk: This network is open to all BMK employees who define themselves as women, as well as trans, inter and non-binary people, as a new platform for exchange and as an information hub. In addition to a monthly newsletter, other activities are also planned, such as get-togethers as well as quarterly network meetings with (external) experts as a forum.<sup>13</sup>
- BunterBund is a non-party and independent network initiative of LGBTQIA+ employees in the BMK that was launched at the beginning of 2023. Today it is club for LGBTQIA+ employees and allies of the public administration.<sup>14</sup>

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

- *How can EU Member States stimulate the collection, reporting and monitoring of gender-disaggregated data on the national and European level?*
  - One option should be to make individual level data collection the standard (rather than household level). Another approach could be to create a new survey that is organized at the European level but conducted and carried out

<sup>10</sup> Bundesministeriums für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie (2023). [Girls' Day](#).

<sup>11</sup> FEMtech: [www.femtech.at](http://www.femtech.at).

<sup>12</sup> Bundesministeriums für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie (2024). [Gleichstellung und Diversität](#).

<sup>13</sup> Bundesministeriums für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie (2024). [Frauennetzwerk](#).

<sup>14</sup> Bundesministeriums für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie (2024). [BunterBund – LGBTQIA+-Netzwerksinitiative](#).

at the national level (similar to the HFCS). A major benefit of this survey would be that it includes a core set of questions that would make data comparable across participating countries.

- *How to stimulate a more gender equal and diverse workforce in sectors relevant for the green and just transition? How can broader communities be engaged in the green and just transition?*
  - The low shares of women in STEM and green jobs point to the need to work *against* structures and norms that are one-sidedly oriented towards men, as well as to work *for* inclusive structures and norms. This includes a company culture and working conditions that are not geared towards male full-time employees, but equally towards people with care responsibilities and the need for flexible working arrangements. It is also essential to promote a work and communication culture that is based on respectful interaction without constant pressure to perform. Sexist or racist comments and inappropriate behaviour must have no place, and a safe space for complaints and action must be created.
- How to promote female leadership in the green and just transition particularly in the political and public sector?
  - Working and promotion conditions must focus on skills rather than similarities and cliques. The Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action (BMK) actively promotes women in management positions so that at least gender equality is reached. This should be standard practice in the political and public sector and should be enforced with quotas, if necessary.