

# **Diversifying diversity: Inclusive engagement, intersectionality, and gender identity in a European Social Sciences and Humanities Energy research project**

## **1. Introduction**

This paper aims to discuss how gender perspectives can be included in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) energy and climate research by reflecting on the attempts to implement gender and inclusive engagement within issues in a Horizon 2020 project. It argues that gender equality strategies should embrace perspectives that sufficiently address how various forms of intersectionality may inform and strengthen inclusive engagement. This involves evaluating who is doing the research, what topic is being studied, how it is studied and by whom. In addition to concerns about the lack of gender diversity in research broadly speaking, [1] there have been calls for more equal gender representation specifically in energy research, to better integrate gender perspectives and make the research more representable for energy users. Additionally, while the gender gap in science and research is shrinking, the pace is slow. It will take many, many generations before a gender balance is reached. The field is dominated by men, and recent studies have given little attention to gender. When examining 4,444 journal articles in three leading energy journals, Sovacool [2] found that less than 16% of articles were written by women, and that none of the authors reported<sup>1</sup> having an academic background in gender studies or feminist studies. Additionally, much of energy research is done primarily by men from the Western Hemisphere [3]. Yet, despite this reality, there have been few notable energy funding calls directly encouraging more gender-balanced energy research. Some notable exceptions include The Atlantic Council Global Energy Center's Women Leaders in Energy Fellowship, the "She is Sustainable" networking programme in the UK, EPSRC Inclusion Matters programme and the UKERC Whole Systems Networking.

Evaluating the content of research involves looking at what is studied and the impact on different groups in society, e.g. how the research takes both men's and women's needs and perspectives into account. Anfinson and Heidenreich [4] note that gender is often reduced to a simple gender balance issue (e.g. how many men and women participated in an event). Thus, there is great opportunity for research to reflect a more nuanced approach to gender. Sovacool et. al. suggest that gender and identity should be a core part of energy studies' aim, scope, and research design strategies "because they mediate access to resources, exposure to pollutants, and opportunities to participate in energy resource management, policy, and science" [3, p. 96]. Listo [5], inspired by the early works of ecofeminism [6], has called for more contributions from feminist development scholars, e.g. since energy poverty in developing regions is particularly gendered [7].

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<sup>1</sup> Self-reporting is, of course, also biased as some academics might choose to not include certain expertise and over-emphasize other expertise.

This paper explores attempts to integrate gender in an EU Horizon 2020 funded energy SSH research project called SHAPE ENERGY (2017-2019), which built a European platform for energy-SSH, aiming to develop Europe's expertise in using and applying energy-SSH by bringing together researchers, businesses, policymakers, NGOs, and citizens—providing a better understanding of both the successes achieved and opportunities for improvement, with 11 project partners across Europe. SHAPE ENERGY is an ideal project to study because, in accordance with the policy of gender mainstreaming in the EU, gender engagement was made an explicit goal of the project by designating gender as a cross-cutting theme. Thus, gender was part of the project's thematic structure in guiding the consortium's foci.

For example: consortium coordinators often used gender as an example of an overlooked issue when talking with EU policymakers; the project contained one “gender specialist” partner with particular focus on gender in the project—with participants with academic backgrounds from gender studies (although without much accompanying power); and a gender perspective was an explicit target in the project proposal.

In this paper we will explore how the attempt to integrate a gender perspective turned out in practice and how it was perceived by the different actors involved. Further, we investigate how inclusion, in more general terms, was conceived of among the project participants. We find that some attempts at gender engagement were more successful than others, and that project partners were explicitly engaging this with varying levels of success. We argue that frank and reflexive discussion of a consortium's progress against its own targets and initial aspirations is rarely done; it is commonly left to informal, private conversations with colleagues, despite the value that these exchanges can bring to, e.g., ensuring that the mistakes of the past are not repeated by others.

This paper proceeds as follows: we begin by reviewing relevant EU and European Commission (EC) policy on *gender mainstreaming* (1.2), give an account of *intersectionality theory* (1.3) and the paper's core development of *inclusive engagement* as a tool for implementing inclusive research and engaging key stakeholders (1.4). In Section 2 we describe the datasets employed in this paper and an overview of the methodology used. In Section 3 we analyse the datasets, and in Section 4 we identify concrete challenges and opportunities for better understandings of engaging inclusion. These are: Difficulties in highlighting the value of gender perspectives, Lack of translation of gender goals, Few allocated research tools and training opportunities on gender issues, Difficulties with chosen pronouns' representation of gender (issues), and Gender perspectives not understood in intersectoral contexts. This paper concludes with summary remarks and recommendations for inclusive engagement in future research projects in Sections 5 and 6. Based on our findings we argue that, in order to create a more inclusive energy research, we need to integrate an intersectional perspective rather than a binary gender perspective. Research designs that embed more reflexive approaches that are sensitive to factors beyond gender are key to establishing more inclusive research in both strategic planning and day-to-day operations.

## *1.2 Gender mainstreaming and EU funding*

There has been a longstanding gender imbalance in research and innovation, including women both being underrepresented in most research decision-making and receiving less research funding [8]. In this context, the EU Horizon 2020 research program called for gender mainstreaming across the entire program, which was defined as pursuing three objectives: “1) Fostering gender balance in research teams, 2) ensuring gender balance in decision-making, and 3) integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation (R&I) content” [9]. Such a call for better gender balance is being continued in Horizon Europe (2021-2027), the next big round of EU funding [10].

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is an autonomous body of the European Union, established to “contribute to and strengthen the promotion of gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in all EU policies and the resulting national policies, and the fight against discrimination based on sex, as well as to raise EU citizens’ awareness of gender equality”<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the EU, through EIGE, is offering resources, knowledge and tools of how to improve gender balance and integrate a gender perspective in all research projects.

Gender mainstreaming has been endorsed as the best strategy for achieving this in the EU. However, there has been much debate about the efficacy of gender mainstreaming as a policy. It has been depicted as having a potentially transformative function with regard to achieving more gender equality [11, 12] and as a strategy that “brings new energy” to gender equality politics [13, p. 19]. The main tenet lies in the move away from ‘ghettoisation’ where gender is treated as a special topic. The tenet of gender mainstreaming is to make gender relevant for leaders and policymakers on all levels, and something that needs to be integrated in all policies and decision-making. Thus, gender mainstreaming has been seen as a promising strategy for organizational and cultural change [14].

However, there has been criticism towards gender mainstreaming, both regarding how it is constructed as a strategy [15, 16], and then also how it has been performed in EU research contexts [17, 18, 19]. Previous research on gender equality measures in the EU shows that even when there are formal policies in place, resistance, even from individual civil servants, can translate into institutional inertia [13]. Indeed, Mergaert and Lombardo [20] found, when studying the European Commission Directorate General (DG) Research and Innovation, that bodies can go from being supportive of to resistant to gender mainstreaming. They conclude that “resistances in DG Research and Innovation show that in the institutional battleground between formal norms demanding the implementation of gender mainstreaming and informal patriarchal norms socializing individuals to preserve the gender-unequal status quo, gender mainstreaming gets ‘filtered out’” [20 p. 16]. The civil servants were in control of the process and preferred a gender-neutral framing to appear less threatening to the gendered status quo. These experiences suggest

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<sup>2</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/about>

that some of the barriers to implementing gender mainstreaming include a lack of political will, support and resources from management, and power for those expected to implement it.

Such flaws of the policy may, according to Benschop and Verloo [13], be closely related to the issue of the motivation behind gender mainstreaming, which is often argued as a business opportunity related to economic demands like being profitable or solving recruitment problems. Research in Norwegian organizations has shown that gender equality has been deprioritized in favour of other considerations like financial profit [21]. Thus, the concept is being adapted to, and therefore dependent on, economic considerations rather than being seen as desirable in and of itself. Another assumption often made is that more knowledge about gender inequality will automatically lead to greater gender equality [22]. Gender mainstreaming is therefore, in practice, often performed through awareness-raising activities through courses and seminars [23].

A 2017 evaluation of gender as a cross-cutting issue in Horizon 2020 concluded that, although a number of positive improvements have taken place, there were major shortcomings in how projects managed to integrate gender perspectives in their research and activities, e.g. how gender balance in research teams improves very slowly, and failure to reach full potentials and meeting KPIs on gender balance [24]. This suggests that it is challenging to integrate gender perspectives into Horizon 2020 projects generally, not just in energy research.

Thus, even the most optimistic advocates of gender mainstreaming admit that, so far, this strategy has not delivered its expected potential [25]. Nevertheless, the EU has—in contrast to other funders of research—been showing much concern and commitment (in varying degrees) to gender. There is a multitude of guidance documents and toolboxes on how to integrate gender issues into research—e.g. such as those developed in collaboration with Gendered Innovations at Stanford University [26]. There are, however, not many studies investigating how this has been done in practice; our study makes an important contribution in this respect.

### ***1.3 Intersectionality***

Gender issues have received some attention in EU research and innovation, topics of diversity, intersectionality and inclusive engagement have received less. Intersectionality is a concept stemming from gender studies and feminist theory that illustrates how gender discrimination and other forms of discriminating (e.g. racism, homophobia, xenophobia) may interact and strengthen each other [27]. It can be defined as “the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power” [28, p. 68].

The literature on intersectionality has to date predominantly focused on feminist and identity politics [27, 29], psychology [30] and mainstreaming studies [31]. As a feminist theory, it has been contested [28, 32]. Nevertheless, it has become a frequently used and powerful theoretical

perspective to show how several identities overlap and create a different entity, more than the “sum of the parts,” that participates in or is subject to systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination in complex ways. One example is how black women can face a double discrimination within multiple identity groups, as Crenshaw [27, p. 150] notes:

*Black women are regarded either as too much like women or Blacks and the compounded nature of their experience is absorbed into the collective experiences of either group or as too different, in which case Black women's Blackness or femaleness sometimes has placed their needs and perspectives at the margin of the feminist and Black liberationist agenda.*

The concept of intersectionality has also been used on an individual level to discuss how different personal attributes that makes up a person (e.g. gender, class, race, age) interact to form a complex individual identity [33]. This valence of intersectionality has even been frequently deployed outside the academy when considering how issues of diversity and identity should be addressed in the public sphere; see Appiah [34] for but one example. Gender identity is a complex topic in itself, in this article we engage with it in an open approach, committed to an inclusive rather than exclusive view on gender and gender expression.

In the context of energy studies, intersectionality perspectives have been used very rarely. A study on climate change through the lens of intersectionality [35] emphasized how such an analysis can show an individual’s situatedness in power structures arising from dynamic social categorizations, creating a pathway that “stays clear of traps of essentialization, enabling solidarity and agency across and beyond social categories” [35, p. 417]. Although SSH research has been quite good at responding to and addressing energy issues, intersectionality and inclusion are seldom used within these study contexts [36]. By utilizing intersectionality in our analysis, this paper explores the multi-situational backgrounds—beyond simply gender—of participants. Such a nuanced appreciation of these identities within the context of energy SSH research is not only novel, it is also necessary to properly develop a meaningful strategy of inclusive engagement.

#### ***1.4 Inclusive engagement***

The concept of *inclusive engagement* has been utilized in multidisciplinary fields with societal consequences with the goal of fostering more just and democratized engagement. It has been used in relation to education [37], community development and engagement [38, 39] and public engagement [40]. It is closely related to inclusive management, which can be defined, as Feldman does, as: “the necessity of combining information and perspectives of three domains: the political, the technical, and the local or experiential” [41, p. 305].

Within energy research, and in the social sciences more broadly, there has not been sophisticated or operationalized engagement with relevant stakeholders along these lines when forming research

teams or doing fieldwork; attention is, at most, given to forming a representative selection of participants. In this paper we aim go beyond this and chart a course for productive uses of inclusive engagement—beyond solely considerations of gender—in energy research. To that end, we define inclusive engagement as:

*Inclusive engagement is the inclusion and engagement of multiple key stakeholders representing key societal groups affected and effecting a concrete real-life issue or topic. It is operationalized by including and engaging them prior-, during- and post discussions of the given topic and by providing agency and autonomy both in the owning of problems and the development of solutions.*

## **2. Methodology**

This paper makes use of data triangulation, focusing on: (i) documentary and oral accounts from project management describing ways in which the project promised to address and carry out strategies related to gender issues; (ii) data from 17 multi-stakeholder city workshops; and (iii) an e-mail-survey sent out to all project partners. In this section, we provide an overview of the SHAPE ENERGY project itself and how gender was planned to be incorporated (2.1) and introduce the data collected for the present analysis (2.1-2.3). As the collection of data concerning gendered perspectives in energy research was an integrated part of the project, the methodological and empirical framework follows a mixed method.

### ***2.1. Case study context: the European Union Horizon 2020 SHAPE ENERGY project***

From 2017 to 2019, the €2m EU Horizon 2020 funded project SHAPE ENERGY (Social sciences and Humanities for Advancing Policy in European ENERGY) was tasked with building a European platform for energy-SSH. It aimed to develop Europe’s expertise in using and applying energy-SSH by bringing together researchers, businesses, policymakers, NGOs, and citizens. The project consisted of 11 project partners: research teams from eight countries (United Kingdom, Norway, Bulgaria, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Czech Republic, France, and Turkey) and three non-research partners: a media and communications agency (Spain), an EU think-tank (Belgium), and an EU-wide energy-related municipality network (headquartered in France).

One of the pitfalls and common misconceptions of case studies [42], is that one can generalize from a single case study; however, that is not our intention. Indeed, our intention in using a case study approach here is to use SHAPE ENERGY as a context-specific prompt for discussing the wider landscape of complex interdisciplinary (energy) projects operating across international borders and with large numbers of collaborators. SHAPE ENERGY is obviously all these things, but it is an especially interesting case given that it was tasked by the EC in including Gender Studies (as part of ‘SSH’) thinking in its planning and approach in some way. As such, our discussion throughout the paper is therefore not limited to only the project context of SHAPE

ENERGY; the project is used as a platform for discussing bigger themes of energy and environment issues.

SHAPE ENERGY sought to impact energy engagement at a societal level across various sectors and cultures, including an analysis of gender considerations that would need to be taken into account to facilitate broad based engagement. The project design also responded specifically to three aspects of gender engagement, as mandated by all Horizon 2020 proposals. This is how the project originally sought to address gender and how the project envisioned reporting on this focus. As we will see below, there was a disconnect from the ambitions of the project and how it was actually implemented, but understanding what these ambitions were, and how they were framed, and how they were ultimately reported on is an important step in evaluating the effectiveness of the gender focus of the project. Below is a summary of the aspects of gender engagement and how the project envisioned addressing them:

Areas of focus	How it was aimed to be addressed in SHAPE ENERGY
Encourage women’s participation in science and research	Set targets to involve men and women equally in all activities, supported by being sensitive to working conditions that could be conducive or prohibitive to women’s participation (such as utilizing virtual meetings over face-to-face meetings in a manner that could be more compatible with family commitments).
Address women’s needs in addition to men	Create a cross-cutting policy-focused report focused on gender with the intention to: (1) address underrepresentation in research, technology development, senior business management, and policymaking; and to (2) give explicit consideration of the role of gender in hindering or accelerating the transition to a low-carbon energy Europe.
Study the issue of gender itself to gain a better understanding of the role of gender in science and research	Monitor progress against these targets for equal inclusion of men and women in an effort to identify and overcome existing biases. Compare men’s and women’s participation in these project activities while also accounting for other factors such as income, educational background, and geographic location.

*Table 1: Initial goals for addressing and reporting on gender in SHAPE ENERGY*

One of the main goals for the project was to encourage and focus on diversifying and growing the energy-SSH contributor base by achieving new/increased participation from women and all SSH disciplines and researchers from across Europe, as well as forging new links with the energy-STEM communities and secure widespread, cross-sector commitment to the 2020–2030 research and innovation agenda. The main planned criteria for achieving a sufficient gender balance was the quantitative balancing of men/women in stakeholder engagement activities, as well as research team composition; for example, noting that during the project’s first year, it employed 101 people in 12 countries, 60 women and 41 men. Another example of the quantitative counting of gender can be seen in Table 1, which shows the overall gender distribution for project activities.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	202	63.1%
N/A	1	0.3%
Female	117	36.6%
Total	320	100.0%

Table 2: SHAPE ENERGY workshops and sandpits gender distribution

## 2.2. Dataset 1: Multi-stakeholder storytelling workshops

One crucial component of the SHAPE ENERGY project was 17 multi-stakeholder half-day to full-day workshops organized with partner cities across Europe between October 2017–May 2018. They used ethnographic methodologies, such as storytelling, for describing people’s cultural practices, and used these to debate relevant energy related challenges in local communities. Workshop organizers were trained in professional facilitation of the storytelling workshops at a two-day training workshop in Brussels. Gender issues were not given much attention in this training. Facilitators were trained to respond to scenarios where individuals may dominate the conversation, but this was not explicitly tied to gender. In addition to a public facing guide [43], partners were given detailed internal guidelines for both organizing and conducting the workshops and on using storytelling as a method to help stakeholders from multiple backgrounds talk together. The facilitators were all trained SSH scholars, but they were not chosen in a specifically representative manner, as it was up to each workshop organizer to choose their own facilitator. The facilitators were however often senior research staff with long experience. For a full overview of all the workshops, see Robison et al. [44]. These workshops had a gender balance target of 40% male/female representation, (i.e., at least 40% of both men and women), so one of these guidelines was to “Please take gender and age balance into consideration [when issuing invitations] and keep monitoring this as invitees confirm or decline.”

In addition to gender balance, these workshops aimed to convene a diverse set of local actors including experts, politicians, civil servants, businesses, NGOs, and community groups to identify needs and obstacles for engagement with energy-related issues at the local level. To that end, a local co-hosting institution would coordinate with the organizing SHAPE ENERGY partner to identify a local concern (e.g. how the city could move towards carbon neutrality in the transport sector in a few decades).

One basis for using the storytelling method is that it allows for, and explicitly invites, multiple voices and perspectives and is inclusive and deliberative [43]. Stories are a linguistic currency accessible to everyone; this approach was intended to open up deliberative processes to people, perspectives and voices that might not feel competent or able to participate otherwise [43]. The collaborative storytelling methods were meant to help catalyse meaningful discussions between



different groups and were successful in engaging effectively with us and each other across geographical, sectoral, gender and disciplinary boundaries.

Each workshop featured one observer tasked solely with documenting the interactions. One goal was to produce knowledge about the existing relationships among the stakeholders by observing power dynamics and how they interacted with one another. The observers were provided ready-made templates to fill in with handwritten notes during the workshops. Amongst a wide variety of other concerns, the templates used by these observers specifically asked for descriptions of how gender (among other factors) impacted in the dynamics of the workshop. A clear benefit with these templates were that this standardised the observer's feedback to also focus on matters they might have otherwise overlooked. It also seems clear that templates of this nature can constrict the room's ability to provide extensive answers and restrict the observer's creativity. At the end of each workshop, participants were also asked to complete a short feedback survey (which included gender counts); organizers of 15 of the 17 workshops collected this data.

### ***2.3. Dataset 2: Email-survey with project partners***

During the final phase of the SHAPE ENERGY project, three questions were distributed to key participants, asking them to reflect upon how gender and other intersectional identities had been addressed throughout the project. Partner organizations were sent questions directly, and the questions were targeted towards the research teams themselves as well as the relevant stakeholders they engaged with. These were:

- 1. How have you dealt with gender as a topic for your research in SHAPE ENERGY? Describe your strategies, and how it worked out. Please give concrete examples.*
- 2. How have you dealt with gender as a concept for your researcher team in SHAPE ENERGY? Describe your strategies and how it worked out. Please give some concrete examples.*
- 3. How have other parameters such as age, race, socioeconomic class and sexuality been dealt with in your work packages and themes in SHAPE ENERGY, if at all? Are there things you would have done differently today?*

Representatives from eight of the 11 partners answered the short questionnaire. The answers were compared and analyzed in order to map out how gender perspectives had been dealt with within the research groups themselves, the public outreach and participation that the project engaged in and to what extent had gender been integrated.

## ***2.4 Data analysis***

The two datasets outlined above provide textual data: the original project proposal's plans for addressing gender, notes taken during multi-stakeholder workshops, and responses to a questionnaire provided to project partners. All data were then analysed through qualitative data analysis, by triangulating the findings from the different datasets with categories emerging in a conditional matrix [45, p. 158], using a grounded theory approach [46].

This approach allowed for an inductive process of gathering the data with an open mind regarding their outcome, allowing the data itself to guide the analytical process. The categories arose from outlining all major findings from the data, comparing and drawing connections between key points, thoroughly discussing within the author group which of the findings provided key insights to our analytical goal of understanding the gendered aspects of the project better, and thus further exploring the selected items, and categorizing them into what we in Section 4 deem to be five key challenges related to gender in energy SSH research.

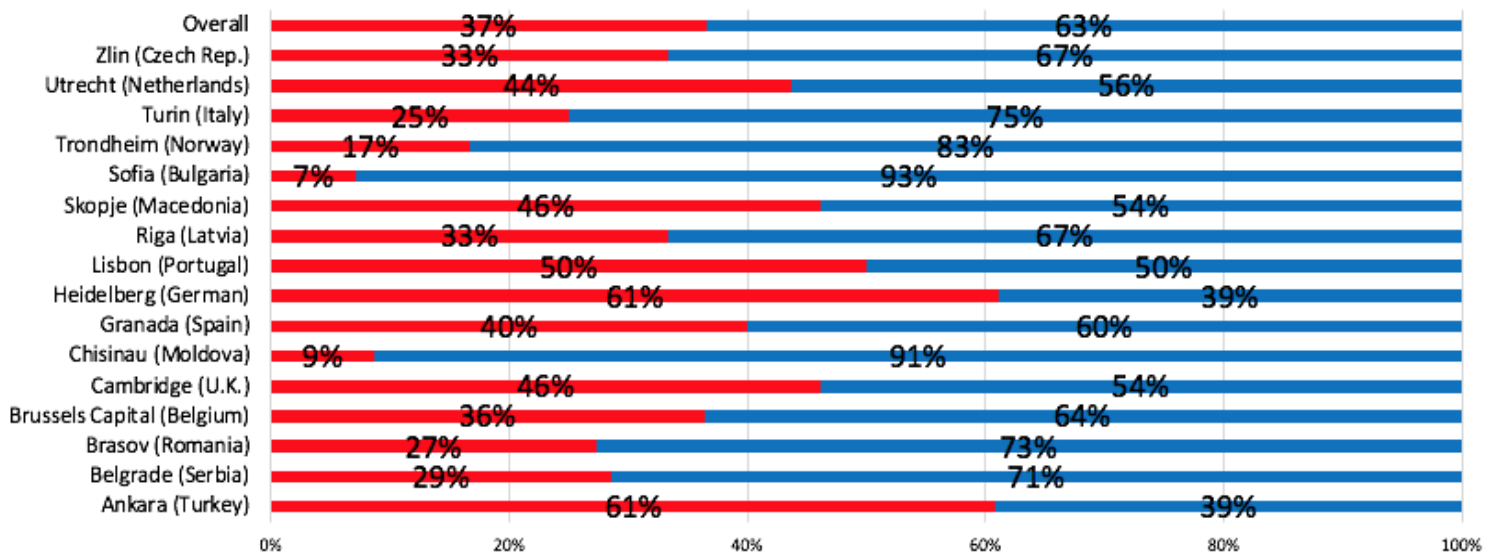
## **3. Gender in the multi-stakeholder workshops**

In this section, we detail our findings regarding how gender was tackled in the multi-stakeholder workshops since this activity both generated considerable in-depth data on inclusion as well as involving 12 out of 13 of the project partners, before then turning to the specific challenges we have identified across our data analysis (Section 4) which also therefore draws on other SHAPE ENERGY activities and processes. We draw upon all of the different data described in Section 2 in both these two analysis sections (3 and 4). The categories analysed below were chosen as they represent key findings from the triangulation process, and shows important areas where gender was implemented and understood in different ways throughout the project, and its interaction with project members, informants and stakeholders. Herein Section 3, however, we specifically discuss: composition of the workshops (3.1); intersections of gender and age (3.2); and reflections on inclusive facilitation (3.3). This analysis shows that when analysing the dynamics of the workshops in respect to gender it is helpful to be able to draw upon intersections with other identity aspects to both explain behaviours in the workshops and, by extension, to prepare for more productive and inclusive facilitation of workshops in the future.

### ***3.1. Composition of the multi-stakeholder workshops***

We will begin with investigating how gender was engaged with in the multi-stakeholder workshops, using data reported in the SHAPE ENERGY evaluation report [47]. From those completing the feedback surveys at 17 workshops, the female-male gender was registered and included both organizers and stakeholder-participants:

- left red = women participants.
- right blue = men participants.



**Figure 1. Workshops’ gender-ratios**

As Figure 1 shows, the overall ratio for workshop attendance was: women (37%) and men (63%), with large national varieties, ranging from a representation of 83% men in Norway, 91% men in Moldova and 93% men in Bulgaria – to 61% women in Turkey and Germany. 11 of these workshops had at least 33% female participation, with seven of them having greater than 40%. While the overall project had quantitative targets set for gender participation, the coordinators chose not to pass this down in the form of individual numerical targets (e.g. each workshop must achieve x% women). This was partly because some local organizers were clearly nervous about attracting enough participants and therefore the coordinators did not want to put additional hurdles in their way. It was also felt that local organizers were the best positioned to make judgements concerning invitations, and they were already attempting to balance many different factors (e.g. diversity of organization type, seniority, expertise) in addition to gender. Even when organizers were attempting to have a gender balanced discussion, they ran into some practical barriers by in many cases sending invitations to organizations who would select representatives, rather than individuals. When organizations provided their list of attendees, they didn’t specify the gender of each participant meaning that, even when a local coordinator was attempting to keep track of these details, they sometimes weren’t able to do so. As one workshop organizer noted: “we explicitly aimed for a good balance of female and male authors, but to be honest this was very difficult to check, because names are often not clearly linked to a sex.”

Beyond looking at participation rates, we also analysed the written ethnographic accounts concerning the dynamics of interactions made by observers at all 17 workshops. From one of the rather male dominated multi-stakeholder workshops, the following reflections were made:

*“We selected the organizations, but we let them be free to choose their representative(s)...it was very evident that the female participants (who also happened to be, on average, the youngest participants) were by far more silent than the male ones. The facilitators tried, with little success, to encourage them to give their comments [...] The stories that participants created mainly had male characters (and a few collective characters as well). (Workshop organizer 1)*

This shows that when gender wasn't explicitly used as a criteria for selecting workshop participants the result can be a workshop dominated by men where the women present didn't feel comfortable or empowered to share—whether this was due to the workshops being too male dominated, based on the field being dominated by men in many countries, or due to men being very vocal in discussions, is uncertain. This is problematic because, when sociotechnical imaginaries [48] are used by policymakers in their decision-making processes, this can result in the future being planned *by* men, *for* men. Thus, inclusive engagement in a wide variety of stakeholders is key for enhancing ownership to the planned future, which we can easily see historically with women not being allowed to participate in planning processes. Misogyny, racism, and phobias towards minority population have throughout history been used to detain an inclusive engagement in society. With technological imaginaries, there is however the possibility to remedy this [48].

### **3.2. Intersections of gender and age**

One of the key concerns of workshop organizers was to facilitate broad-based discussions that were not dominated by a few individuals. Some workshops reported that men and women were equally represented and equally participated in the discussions, while others featured debates that were dominated by a few individuals who were often (although not always) men. There were, however, some interesting observations on how conversational domination could take a multifaceted form, as the observation in one workshop below shows:

*A man in his 60s spoke the most. Followed by man in his 50s, very preoccupied with mapping out solutions. A woman in her 40/50s also spoke a lot and was often the one that summed up the conversation. A man in his early 50s was a bit quiet, but he often challenged the group by posing “big questions.” The group had a good composition of people with different backgrounds, who treated each other respectfully and always gave others the time to speak and finish their arguments. No one seemed to dominate the debate or have the upper hand. (Workshop organizer 2)*

This quote highlights how conversational domination was evidently not only about who spoke the most, or the loudest, but also related to integrity and the roles either designated or taken within the group (e.g. who could be trusted/qualified to sum up others' opinions, who could pose "big questions" in a way to steer the future direction of the conversation.

It is important to note that the observers had been asked to pay attention to gender and power issues. This was partly based on an assumption that gender would play a role in the interaction, and also that men tend to dominate, interrupt discussion, or be louder than women. As we see from the quote above, such assumptions were sometimes modified by the observers; even when men dominated the conversation, other participants "didn't seem to be angry or sad." However, another concern regarding domination ran through the different workshops: that of age imbalance. In some of the workshops the youngest participant was 35 years old. Many of the workshop attendees described how female participants were not only less numerous, but also younger on average (observations in accord with Workshop organizer 1). Sometimes, as with Workshop organizer 2, older individuals controlled the direction of a conversation even if they "did not dominate the debate or have the upper hand." However, this imbalance of *both* age and gender could also have a negative effect on the storytelling method, as the distribution below describes:

*1 female (5%) and 19 male (95%) participants. 2 persons (10%) below 40; 8 persons (40%) between 40 and 60; 10 persons (50%) above 60... typical for energy-related events for high-level experts. Unfortunately, the high age of participants affected negatively the success of the storytelling method. (Workshop organizer 3)*

However, there were also cases where age and gender showed some opposite results.

*The gender balance was not good in the group that I observed. But I felt that the woman in the group was met with respect. I was particularly aware of gender issues and dynamics, but it was not like "older man is dominating a younger woman" in this case. It was actually somewhat opposite: The woman summarized, analysed and drew larger conclusions, and one of the men there spoke relatively little. (Workshop organizer 4)*

Here, we see that gender balance was implicitly assumed to be related to the risk of men dominating, but it turned out to be something approximating an opposite, with one of the women taking a lead position in the group work. Part of this can be explained by the cultural contexts these workshops take place in; the above quote concerned a workshop in Norway, where 83% of the participants were male. Because of an important cultural commitment to gender equality, it is unsurprising that, when faced with an overwhelming male group, the men would consciously defer to the women. Controlling for these cultural contexts in large, multi-national studies thus becomes

an important, if difficult task. This also serves as a warning against making stereotypical assumptions about how gender balance may play out; it is important to pay attention to what actually happens in such events. This is particularly pertinent given that the aim of the storytelling method was to engage as many different perspectives as possible—which would require quite strong facilitation to be achieved. In many workshops, there was an age bias as most participants were in their 40s and 50s.

Participation in these workshops required a sophisticated understanding of the issues being discussed. This could skew the pool of available participants in various manners, especially in socioeconomic background. There was no comprehensive effort to either recruit or report around other factors, such as race, class, or socioeconomic background. We can therefore not offer any conclusions, except to note that truly inclusive research design, facilitation, and reporting requires attending to many intersectional variables.

### ***3.3. Reflections on inclusive facilitation***

Several of the workshop facilitators were conscious of the efforts needed to achieve a balanced and representational participation in their groups and that these were not always achieved. For facilitators, there was a fine balance between being too invasive, resulting in people not contributing at all to the group, and being too lenient, risking that the conversation would become dominated by a few people. Moreover, if not many people wanted to contribute at all to the group, some facilitators saw the need to work with those who were interested in expressing themselves:

*My worries about the group: [I] felt like we didn't have that many people generating ideas. Two women spoke quite a lot (when I asked the group to contribute ideas), but the others (the men) I had to bring into the conversation more deliberately. The person who I felt was least "on board" with the whole process usually spoke to the rest of the group [not the facilitator]. (Workshop organizer 5)*

Through the observers' accounts of the dynamic and interactions in the multi-stakeholder workshops it became evident that gender balance was not the only important category in achieving inclusiveness. For the organizers, it was important that all participants were engaged. People who are more adept in social settings may easily bend the conversation in the direction that they want, potentially making the facilitator's job more difficult. This would then "slow down" the process of identifying what issues were important to mention, and which were not, in these workshops. Moreover, this also shows that the facilitator would need extensive training to be able to deal well with such situations—which can be achieved by holistic planning and facilitator training. Another example from another group's facilitator in the same workshop:

*There were two very strong characters in the group who would always want to push their view forward, even if I had moved conversation forward and tried to bring someone else in – once there was a moment, they would grab it back and present their opinion (thereby slowing progress, quite often). (Workshop organizer 6)*

Within the workshops themselves the facilitator is responsible for an equitable participation of all participants. As has been shown, gender is one factor that can lead to some individuals dominating the discussion. However, the complete picture is more complicated, as gender intersects with age, seniority, perceived seniority or expertise, cultural differences, and other factors that can lead to unequal representation. Training for inclusive facilitation must involve being able to identify and address all of these situations as they arise. But when evaluating projects in a broader level, it is important to pay attention to whether participation, and the level of empowerment of participants from diverse backgrounds, is equitable. This leads us to a recommendation (expanded upon below) that participant observation-led evaluation of the project and partner dynamics are undertaken much more regularly in projects, with gender being an explicit focus of such evaluation.

#### **4. Challenges in inclusive (energy) research**

Through the two empirical datasets explored, we find several reoccurring gender and intersectional challenges in the approaches towards gender engagement and their implementation. In section 3, we discussed concrete issues and considerations pertaining to gender and inclusion in the recruitment of participants by SHAPE ENERGY project partners. However, in this section, we highlight specific challenges in inclusive energy research drawn from the workshop reports and email survey, detailed in Sections 2.2 and 2.3. What were the main challenges that led to the actual implementation of project activities to not consider gender to the extent originally envisioned?

We bring our findings together under five challenges, which we will detail in the following subsections: difficulties in understanding the value of gender perspectives (4.1); lack of translation of gender goals (4.2); lack of research tools and training opportunities on gender issues (4.3); linguistic problems with representation of gender issues (4.4); and not understanding gender perspectives in intersectoral contexts (4.5).

##### ***4.1. Challenge 1: Difficulties in understanding the value of gender perspectives***

There was a gap between general gender awareness at a project management level and the importance placed on gender and inclusivity by the project partners. While not evident in the feedback from all project partners, many observed that gender issues were deprioritized in competition with other factors in this large-scale, multinational, multidisciplinary research project. This was a discrepancy between intention put forward in the project description and among the project management (which explicitly stated that gender was important), and how gender was

included in the project on a local level. Here, several of the partners highlighted, in their words, other important factors as having higher priority than gender inclusivity:

*We can say that gender issues were not on the top of the list. Basically, we always kept the counting of male-female presence, as we also did about the geographical coverage and the typologies of stakeholders involved. When realizing that females could have been less represented than males, we asked our tasks or WP collaborators to try to balance the figures more, succeeding in the final balance account. However, our main concern was about reaching the quantitative engagement targets for each activity, which proved to be a demanding task by itself. (Workshop organizer 7)*

Despite displaying an extra effort to achieve gender balance, this partner found it difficult to recruit enough representatives overall and ended up highlighting other factors, such as “geographical coverage and typologies” in their recruitment more than gender. Another partner who prioritized gender also argued that there were other marginalized voices, such as citizen perspectives, that benefitted from their attention:

*When we organized the multi-stakeholder workshop, we did our utmost [sic] best to have as diversified a set of stakeholders present as possible, and in the end even had an overrepresentation of citizens [...] compared to professionals. But that was actually a good thing because their voices had been under-represented in the discussions till then. (Workshop organizer 8)*

Thus, we see that gender was one, but not the only, factor when convening a diversified set of stakeholders. Naturally, recruiting the necessary number of participants was important and seeking diverse perspectives in other factors in addition to gender is valid. However, in other activities apart from the stakeholder workshops, this same group of project partners did not integrate gender issues with the rest of their work:

*Interviews with representatives of 30 organizations were carried out. Once the organizations were identified, we let them freely choose their representative(s) to be interviewed. (Project partner 1)*

Here, we see that, even among partners that report placing importance on gender concerns, they did not consider them relevant enough to instruct the organizations they interviewed to consider gender when selecting representatives. Another partner limited their engagement with gender to compiling bibliographies, and even found that difficult:

*In the annotated bibliography on energy efficiency where we did our best to make sure to balance the gender of authors and balance the contributions from different disciplines. This was very hard, because it is difficult to find out gender simply based on the names. (Project partner 2)*



There were also some partners that did not paying attention to gender because they did not think it was their task to do so, despite the stated intentions of the research design and consortium:

*We didn't deal with gender as a concept in our research team, since we thought it was actually an issue to be dealt by other partners (...) SHAPE ENERGY had other priorities (gender was just a cross cutting issue, it was not a project on gender issues in the energy field). (Project partner 3)*

In other words, the term “cross-cutting issue” was interpreted by some to mean it was not something everyone had to deal with within the project and was already delegated to someone else (such as the gender lead for the project). This “outsourcing” of gender perspectives can be problematic as it both can exclude gender as a focus in local initiatives and place the somewhat unenviable role of “gender police” on other partners. While “cross-cutting” should be indication enough that gender is an underlying concern for *all* project partners, it evidentially seems impossible to stress enough. When implementing a gender focus in larger research projects; an allocation of expertise from gender research could emphasize its importance more thoroughly in all stages of the project, while illustrative examples from other fields could be highlighted and discussed by all partners.

When considering the composition of the research teams, the importance of gender balance was a point of contention. One partner, for instance, argued for a redefinition of gender balance and that a fair consideration would be with regard to the actual number of potential representatives, and not a 50/50 target:

*We considered that the adequate approach to gender balance was not 50% men and 50% women, but to consider the proportion of men and women at managerial positions at the relevant NGOs and enterprises, as these were the targeted persons for the interviews. Therefore, among our list of potential interviewees, we invited 7 men and 3 women, which represented well the actual gender proportion in the countries covered by the interviews. (Project partner 4)*

This partner was, however, the only one who launched a more contextualized interpretation of what constituted a reasonable gender balance; most others assumed 50/50 as a default. Thus, we see that most partners struggled, or did not consider it their role to implement a gender perspective in their work with the SHAPE ENERGY project. Those who did attempt, did it mainly be trying to reach a 50/50 ratio of men and women, although this was considered in different settings for different teams. One team therefore chose to primarily highlight the relevance and expertise in their team regarding the prioritization of gender balance:

*For the composition of our research team (...), we aimed to achieve gender balance, as much as possible, although priority was given to the relevance of the researcher's expertise. (Project partner 5)*

To summarize, we observe that in the cases where gender is included as part of the partner's research efforts, it has to compete with other (also valid) concerns, often reducing the emphasis placed on gender. To the extent that gender was attended to in the different partners' work, gender balance was the most salient consideration. Some were concerned with a gender balance in the research team, others in the workshops/project activity participants, and some also in the way gender was represented in the research literature. Interestingly, when there was a gender imbalance in favor of women, it was generally not seen as a gender balance problem. There was some concern for diversity beyond gender like age, expertise, and geography. There are also other salient aspects of gender perspectives beyond mainstreaming that need consideration, as we shall see below.

#### ***4.2. Challenge 2: Lack of translation of gender goals***

“Simply” raising awareness of gender and inclusivity is not enough and, as we observed in the previous section, most of the focus on gender was usually limited to considerations of gender balance. In other words, there was lack of successful translation between the project management and the rest of the partners about what it means to place an emphasis on gender in a wider sense. This does not necessarily mean that project partners did not think gender issues were important, but that they sometimes struggled with knowing exactly *how* gender should be treated.

One challenge concerning translation of gender goals can be explained by the substantial task of reporting results from varied, multi-sited and multi-themed workshops. Anthropologists leading the qualitative evaluation of the workshops provided all partners with a form to share their own observations following the completion of the workshops. While standardizing reporting methods in this way provides substantial benefits, especially when comparing quite divergent workshops, this can also pose challenges. One of the partners noted that these forms were too constrained to provide a broad frame of gender, while intersectional perspectives were left out completely, meaning that no intersectional observations were reported. After attributing higher priorities to other concerns than gender balance in recruitment, as seen in the previous section, their subsequent research designs also neglected to focus on gender among competing concerns:

*We also collected 100 questionnaires. The respondents were participants to events. So, no gender selection was made. There were no explicit questions about gender issues, nor [did] the wording of the questions [take] this aspect into account (the questionnaire was quite short and other topics had to be given priority). (Project partner 6)*

This also highlights the strain on gender research in research projects that enrol a wide variety of partners. Here, eventual good intentions might be deprioritized for other concerns and other priorities amongst project partners. Even when project partners are on the same page regarding the intention to focus on gender research, this is likely to clash with practical and competing aspects,

like interdisciplinary collaborations and the struggles of operationalizing gender in a doable manner.

Although some partners acknowledged that gender and intersectionality were complicated and hardly fitting for quantitatively oriented feedback forms, it may represent a fruitful starting point in better understanding gender issues. However, we often saw that this insight was rather treated as an endpoint rather than an opportunity to consider how these intersectional observations might be more effectively captured. This is indicative of a broader challenge: there were many aspects of diversity, not only gender, that were often not given priority when selecting research partners or participants. As we will see in the next section, this is often related to issues of time, tools and training. This has the risk of fostering the impression that dealing with gender issues is problematic, impractical, or too time-consuming, resulting in research partners not wanting to engage with them:

*We could have raised the attention of the participants on the gender issue, making them (and us) observe how many women were running the discussion on this or that energy topic seminar / storytelling workshop / round table presentation. During these occasions, we independently and informally observed how Italian females in minority were more difficultly inserted and heard during public debates. Making all aware of this phenomenon soon after it happened could have planted a seed of reflection on future independent thoughts and actions. (Project partner 7)*

We thus observed that some project partners did not view gender to be as important as other considerations of diversity. In such instances although the project partners may recognize the importance (or at least benefit) of attending to gender diversity, they perceive providing that attention when gathering and analysing data to be too logistically difficult and, therefore, elect not to do so. On a practical level, competing priorities and time constraints were one major reason why gender issues were not considered in the way it was initially envisaged

#### ***4.3. Challenge 3: Few allocated research tools and training opportunities on gender issues***

We also observed that even when participants and organizers were mindful of gender in their recruitment, analysing and reporting, there were still shortcomings. For instance, in the qualitative feedback we received on our questionnaire, some partners noted that they both lacked, and felt like they required, specific competence in gender research. One partner noted that the characters created in their storytelling workshop probably had gendered features that could have led to interesting analysis that would have required dedicated research tools and arrangements that they lacked. This lack of training in recognizing and analysing intersectional issues could have been solved by giving workshop observers and facilitators explicit training in how to deal with these

issues. Although there was a training event in Brussels, the main focus of this training was on the storytelling method. Some participants were sceptical of this method, thus taking up time that might have used to address gender and intersectionality.

#### ***4.4. Challenge 4: Difficulties with chosen pronouns' representation of gender (issues)***

An issue with implementing good gender practices for multinational and cross-sectoral research projects is the difficulty in knowing when and how to explicitly raise issues of gender, or gendered assumptions people make, in conversations. As one project participant stated in regard to a storytelling scenario:

*The only thing we think we could have paid more attention to is related to the wording. For example, making examples having both male and female characters; using “he” and “she” instead of neutral terms such as “user” or “citizen.”* **(Project partner 8)**

Although being aware of gender is good, such an awareness is always at risk of drawing upon, and consequently reproducing, gender stereotypes. Including gender as a component of research must not be done in a stereotypical manner, and the results of such research should not be assumed from the beginning. Thus, there is a dilemma related to language. Still, the suggestion above could be one such way of invoking a gendered perspective. The group could have been challenged to discuss if it makes a difference to “change” the gender of the “user” or “citizen.” What difference it does make needs to be reflected upon and not assumed. It is a double-sided coin: on the one side, choosing a gender-neutral term breaks down the male monopoly on certain societal roles, whilst, on the other side, not drawing attention to a professional being a woman can help ensure that she is taken more seriously as a professional. There is a certain threshold that gender roles must have established before gender neutrality terms can have the desired effect; this should be examined carefully when choosing whether or not to use male and female representations for scenarios or use gender neutral terms such as “citizen.”

While not explicitly talking about gender risks misrepresentation, talking about gender risks misunderstanding and stereotyping which may perpetuate gender-inequalities. The only logical way of addressing this difficulty is to bring up the topic of gender and then talk through the ways in which gender is perceived as relevant or not in the specific context. If a workshop participant felt and expressed that energy issues are not for women, the topic of gender would have been brought up, but not adequately addressed given the desire of the workshop to promote gender equality. Although a facilitator cannot be expected to resolve such an issue during the workshop, the reasons participants have for holding such points of view should be further explored. Only when such viewpoints are fully understood can the process of moving beyond them to explicitly include gender as research lens in energy issues begin. Relatedly, some workshops featured participants that did not explicitly bring up questions of gender. In those instances, facilitators were

reluctant to steer the conversation in that direction themselves because they thought doing so would introduce biases into participants' responses:

*In addition, we would like to notice that in many of the mentioned activities, participants were given the list of SSH disciplines. "Gender studies" was one of these disciplines. However, with the only (already mentioned) exception of one interviewee, the gender aspects and studies never entered the discussions. We didn't force on that aspect because we didn't want to bias answers. (Project partner 9)*

#### **4.5. Challenge 5: Gender perspectives not understood in intersectoral contexts**

As broader intersectional perspectives were not presented as a concern or research focus within SHAPE ENERGY, we are not in a position to have strong findings concerning intersectionality in energy research. However, drawing upon Kaijser & Kronsell's findings [35] as presented in this article's introduction would suggest a need for increased focus on intersectionality in future energy SSH projects. In the previous sections we saw that lacking focus on gender can lead to projects lacking gender balance and that when gender in energy research is not understood as relevant, a project will not produce data concerning the relevance of gender. In the same manner, since SHAPE did not focus on intersectionality, we did not come to meaningful conclusions. However, there were certain reflections made throughout the process that could benefit similar projects relating to diversity and inclusiveness.

We thus argue that diversity can produce stronger research and innovation outcomes, and research activities should therefore strive to be gender-reflexive and achieve gender balance e.g. in terms of speakers, and participants at every level – as well as considering other intersectionality attributes of participants. However, as with the criticism of gender mainstreaming, which has the negative potential of being reduced to balancing the male/female, white/coloured, straight/queer, old/young binaries, one risk is that counting only benefits the counters and not the counted as the theory of *tokenism* describes [49, 50]. That is to say, person X chosen because of attribute Y might not actually work in regard to that attribute but might also have other attributes that can also benefit the chooser's organization, creating "a situation in which the intergroup boundaries are not entirely closed, but where there are severe restrictions on access to advantaged positions on the basis of group membership" [49, p. 223].

The individual consequences of a tokenism understanding relying heavily on numbers has been criticised for neglecting the complexities of gender integration. [51, p. 178], and we argue that by also taking intersectionality into account we can move beyond tokenism and begin to identify how diversity can be drawn upon in a more holistic manner. Tokenism, referring to only making symbolic gestures by seeming to include people of specific traits, but only giving them minor

voices or roles (e.g. how people of colour in TV series are often introduced very briefly in supporting roles, but far less as lead actors).

By understanding and taking into account the different individual attributes of people when planning and enacting projects and policies that impact them, intersectionality can thus be used as a supplement to gender mainstreaming actions, in order to get a deeper gendered understanding of the issues at hand. Different identity parameters affect how individuals interact with and shape the research planning, process, engagement and results. As intersectionality has taught us to be aware of, specific groups risk being included based solely on tokenism, having different parts of their identity competing with and overshadowing other parts of their identify, or being excluded altogether. If not aware of this and work to mitigate it, certain views may be missed, and, therefore, decisions may be made based on incorrect assumptions. It has been important for the project to holistically engage with these issues, which lead to the identification of the 5 challenges of inclusive (energy) research.

#### ***4.6. The question left unanswered***

None of the project partners responding to our email survey chose to engage explicitly with the question posed on *how* they dealt with gender as a concept. Considering the other answers provided, and or a lack of willingness or ability to answer this question, it appears clear that gender was mainly understood as a simple binary throughout the SHAPE ENERGY project. To be clear, gender as concept contain a multitude of different understandings, possible constructions and configurations, and is also conceptualized in different ways by different strands of gender research.

The bottom line on this seems to be that without engaging directly with project partners on how to deal with gender as a concept throughout the full scope of a project like this, the likelihood of gender being treated as a simple binary is substantial. This is an issue that also corresponds to several of the challenges outlined above; the lack of translation of gender goals, lack of research tools and training opportunities, and a lack of intersectional focus. In order to move beyond counting numbers and calculating percentages of various participants [4], and avoid tokenism [49, 50, 51] we need to develop innovative, self-reflexive and engaging methods that can have actual impacts both in the short and long term. By unpacking issues pinpointed by intersectionality, we can start to develop processes for researchers and participant of research and innovation projects.

## **5. Conclusions**

This paper has explored how gender perspectives have been attempted to be integrated in an energy-SSH research project and challenges of operationalizing an awareness of gender and

intersectionality issues, as the field of energy research has been identified to be lacking in gender diversity [1, 2, 3]. Overall, gender issues were included in the implementation of the project: in particular it focused on: 1) encouraging women's participation in science and research, 2) addressing women's needs in addition to men and 3) studying the issue of gender itself to gain a better understanding of the role of gender in science and research. However, there were still challenges such as a lack of resources, institutional and organizational inertia against robust inclusion and linguistic difficulties. Addressing these challenges, as well as approaching gender from a broader, intersectional, perspective may help other research projects and groups to become more inclusive in the future.

Having a holistic view of how stakeholders interact with energy issues is key for achieving fair energy futures which take a multitude of citizens' wishes and agendas into consideration. Within energy-SSH research, understanding the users of technology and energy is key. Neglecting gender makes for unsatisfactory analysis, as several voices which might benefit the analysis are not included [4]—but there is also need to go beyond gender mainstreaming as a strategy [11, 12, 13] to make the process of gender equality more rapid and with larger impacts. By addressing diverse representation of both researchers and research subjects, participation in regards to various intersecting identities and giving voice to complex overlapping identities and recognising the interwoven multiplicity of systems and entanglements of power and relations, a gender and intersectionality perspective can open up energy-SSH fields for a broader understanding of how energy is being governed. This can, for example, be by users, producers, intermediaries or associated actors who shape the structural landscapes that consumption and production practices are operating within.

We argue that inclusive engagement can be used as a key component of researcher composition in research projects. By doing research on inclusive engagement, we also encourage a self-reflexive mapping out of intersectionality challenges and their potential as research themes. In this project we did this through: discussions between project partners, the questionnaire we sent regarding stakeholder workshops and now this paper. In the SHAPE ENERGY project, inclusive engagement of researcher compositions was not a focal area per se, beyond the binary counting of men and women researchers (as per EC reporting requirements). Thus, while inclusive engagement was important to some, it was much less important to others as there was not a systematic deployment of inclusive engagement principles project-wide. We would thus encourage SSH researchers on climate and energy issues to actively engage with inclusive engagement in an intersectoral manner pre-, during, and post- projects. Although this article focuses on inclusive engagement regarding gender, the framework is applicable to many other modes of diversity. Inclusive engagement is not a straight-forward or simple issue to implement. In addition to clear goals, there should be clear implementation strategies that can be monitored and reported on (e.g. structuring meetings to accommodate people who have family responsibilities).

Several important concerns are always balanced in the context in question, and ‘inclusiveness’ implies a good balance of these issues. Thus, prioritizing gender alone, or another category would not, by definition, be inclusive, but rather exclusive. Therefore, we are not surprised to see that gender was less prioritized in some of the workshops or in the way SHAPE ENERGY was carried out. To address such imbalances, intersectionality perspectives were found to be useful as an analytical tool—and can be used in similar debates moving forward, by opening up for a wider understanding of individual stakeholders. In order to better facilitate inclusive engagement of gender issues and intersectionality perspectives in research project composition, enactment and evaluation, a thorough understanding of gender issues on multiple levels can be beneficial. By reflecting on the barriers we have identified in this paper, and by implementing the recommendations, we argue that research projects, in energy and climate fields as well as others, can better engage with gender issues.

## **6. Recommendations for inclusive engagement**

How can inclusive engagement be utilized on larger scale? We have defined inclusive engagement to mean the inclusion and engagement of multiple key stakeholders representing key societal groups affected and effecting a concrete real-life issue or topic. With this paper we prompt a larger discussion about how gender is accounted for regardless of the topics or empirical contexts that a particular project may be situated within. Using our conceptualization of inclusive engagement, we have given examples on how to operationalize it by including and engaging key stakeholders prior-, during- and post discussions of the given topic and by providing agency and autonomy both in the owning of problems and the development of solutions. Although the thematic focus of the paper has been focused on energy-SSH, the arguments can be transferred beyond that. What, then, are the implications for how gender perspectives can be utilized across funding programs?

Addressing gender or a related issue involves reviewing how the issue is normally addressed and clearly identifying and, essentially, explaining both the rationale and method of inclusive engagement to all relevant stakeholders. We thus propose the following number of questions that needs to be explored when implementing inclusive engagement as a tool:

1. Is the value of gender perspectives highlighted?
2. Are gender goals translated to the project’s participants and stakeholders in a coherent manner?
3. Are there allocated research tools and training opportunities on gender issues?
4. Are linguistic problems with representation of gender issues taken into account?
5. Are gender perspectives understood in intersectoral contexts?

By implementing these questions, an inclusive engagement of multiple key stakeholders that represent key societal groups can be included and engaged. This can be done prior-, during- and



post discussions of a chosen topic by providing agency and autonomy both in the owning of problems, and the development of solutions.

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