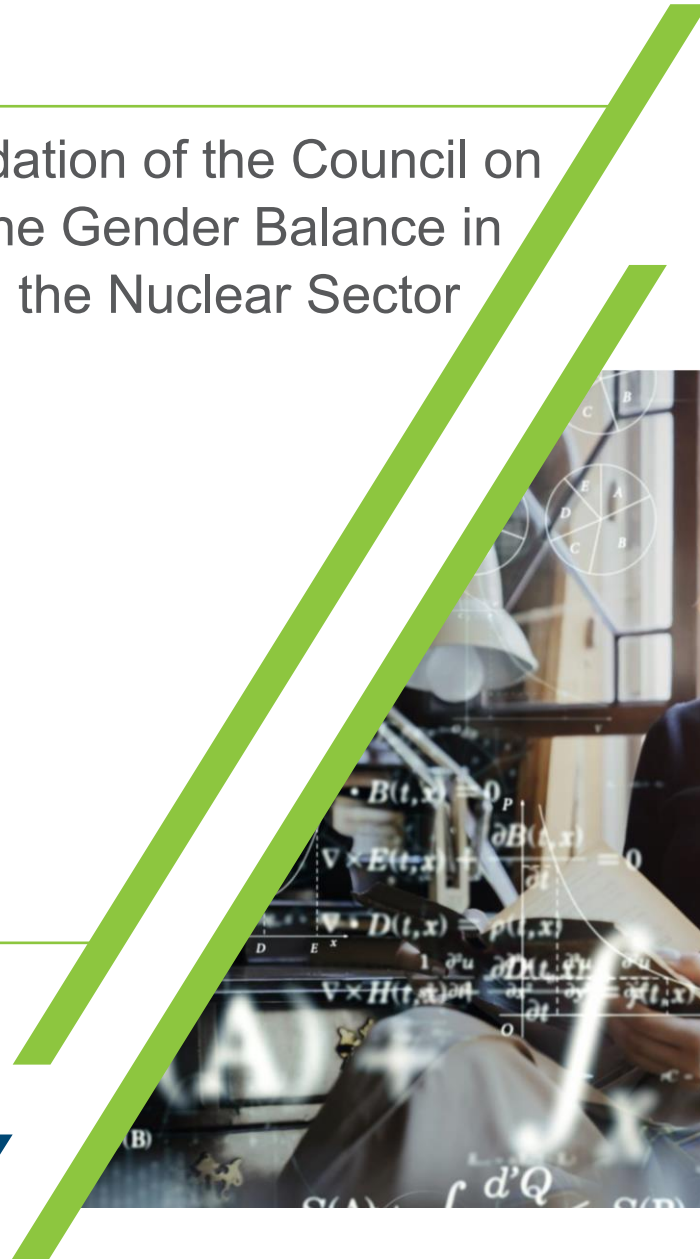




Recommendation of the Council on Improving the Gender Balance in the Nuclear Sector



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Background Information

The Recommendation on Improving the Gender Balance in the Nuclear Sector (the Recommendation) was adopted by the OECD Council meeting at Ministerial level on 8 June 2023 on the proposal of the Steering Committee for Nuclear Energy (Steering Committee) of the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA). The Recommendation aims to establish a single, comprehensive set of principles and policy recommendations to assist governments, other public authorities, and relevant stakeholders in their efforts to design and implement policies that increase the representation of women in the nuclear sector and enhance their contributions, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) roles and leadership positions.

The need for a standard on gender balance in the nuclear sector: building on the OECD's work on gender equality

In 2013, the OECD Council adopted the overarching Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship [[OECD/LEGAL/0398](#)]. It provides an important foundation and approach to guide governmental policy to address gender inequality across sectors. This was complemented in 2015 by the Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life [[OECD/LEGAL/0418](#)]. While many Adherents have made important steps in increasing gender equality in education, employment, entrepreneurship, and in public life, there are persistent gaps in STEM fields. Data collected and published by the NEA in 2023 show that women remain severely underrepresented in the nuclear sector. While some of the observed trends are present in other STEM fields, there are unique factors in the nuclear sector that exacerbate the gender imbalance.

The specificities of the nuclear sector prompted a targeted Recommendation. Unlike nearly every other major industrial area, the nuclear sector is relatively small and very clearly demarcated; it is internationally connected with highly globalised cultures and practices; and, critically for the influence of a Recommendation, it is a sector directly tied to government policies and heavily reliant on government funding. In addition, the major demographic shift underway in the nuclear workforce as senior generations retire and new talent join the sector in response to the resurgence of investment in nuclear technology and infrastructure represents a window of opportunity to dramatically change the long-standing gender imbalance and masculine culture of the sector.

Process for developing the Recommendation

In 2020, the Steering Committee started discussing actions to improve gender balance in the nuclear sector, including collecting data and examining the need for a policy instrument to support NEA members working to enhance the representation and contributions of women. The Steering Committee charted a task group to collect quantitative and qualitative data and to develop an evidence-based policy framework and recommendations. The NEA conducted a public survey of women working in the sector on workplace experiences and possible solutions as part of data collection. The Recommendation was further informed by consultations with senior female executives in the sector, with representatives from the global non-governmental Women in Nuclear (WiN) network, and with a range of OECD policy communities.

Scope of the Recommendation

For the purpose of this Recommendation, the nuclear sector is understood to be the peaceful application of nuclear technologies for the production and uses of nuclear energy, applications of ionising radiation, and related areas. The nuclear sector includes a wide range of organisations, including but not limited to: nuclear power plant operators, nuclear fuel cycle organisations, nuclear regulatory bodies, nuclear public sector entities (for example, the nuclear office of an energy ministry), technical support organisations, new nuclear reactor build sites, decommissioned and decommissioning sites, universities, nuclear research and development organisations, original equipment manufacturers, and nuclear supply chain organisations.

The Recommendation targets the nuclear organisations over which Adherents may have purview, including nuclear agencies, contractors, and funding recipients, as appropriate. It is anticipated that the Recommendation will also be welcomed by the broader nuclear sector, over which many governments exercise direct and indirect influence, and that a wide range of organisations will partner with governments to assist with the implementation.

The Recommendation consists of three pillars and is undergirded by a reporting regime for data and accountability. Each pillar anchors targeted, actionable guidance in order to address the needs and challenges of women in the nuclear sector. The goal of these pillars is to provide an overarching, strategic framework with practical steps to develop co-ordinated and context-specific policies and programmes:



The Recommendation builds upon and complements the existing OECD Gender Recommendations. It does not intend to duplicate or contradict them, but to provide additional tailored guidance for the specific sector of nuclear energy. The different legal instruments should therefore be read in conjunction.

Next steps

The NEA will ensure effective dissemination through its activities and communication channels, including its standing technical committees, relevant stakeholders and networks, and national and international events. The NEA will support Adherents and follow up on the Recommendation's implementation through collecting and mapping data; facilitating the exchange of information and best practices; and developing practical guidance and tools.

The Steering Committee will report to Council on the implementation, dissemination and continued relevance of the Recommendation in 2027, at the same time as for the other OECD Gender Recommendations.

For further information please consult: <http://oecd-nea.org/gender-balance>.

Contact information: gender@oecd-nea.org.

THE COUNCIL,

HAVING REGARD to Article 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14 December 1960;

HAVING REGARD to the standards developed by the OECD in the area of gender equality in employment, education and entrepreneurship, as well as gender equality in public life;

RECOGNISING that women pioneered the nuclear and radiological fields and continue to make vital contributions, but that the underrepresentation of women in the fields of STEM and leadership roles within the nuclear sector highlights the need for particular policy attention to improve gender balance;

RECOGNISING that the nuclear sector has a deeper gender imbalance than many other STEM areas as well as a persistent cultural bias that presents particular challenges to women;

RECOGNISING that improving gender balance could spur the innovation and performance necessary as the nuclear sector, in the view of those countries choosing nuclear energy as part of their strategy, contributes to the global challenge to transform society, policies, technologies and practices to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by mid-century;

RECOGNISING that the nuclear sector is heavily influenced by governments and is a high-impact sector in the view of those countries choosing nuclear energy as part of their strategy in the global effort to mitigate climate change and transition to low-carbon energy.

On the proposal of the Steering Committee for Nuclear Energy:

I. **RECOMMENDS** that Members and non-Members having adhered to this Recommendation (hereafter the “Adherents”) take actions to **attract women into the nuclear sector**. To this effect, Adherents should direct, incentivise or encourage, as applicable, nuclear agencies, contractors, and public funding recipients to:

1. Engage in public communications campaigns to promote improved gender balance and designed to:
 - a) change gender-based perceptions about careers in the nuclear sector, including gender-stereotypical attitudes towards science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) with a view to normalise nuclear science and technology as fields for women and girls;
 - b) explain the social value and impact of nuclear science and technology;
 - c) highlight attractive career opportunities in the nuclear sector;
 - d) showcase women’s leadership and contributions to the nuclear field;
 - e) target communications to convince both women and men as to why improving gender balance benefits the nuclear sector and enriches STEM fields therein, including workplaces and workforces.
2. Undertake specific initiatives and facilitate efforts to enhance the educational pipeline, including to:
 - a) inform students, parents, caregivers and teachers on the value and impact of nuclear science and technology;
 - b) encourage all students, particularly girls, especially those at the early stages of schooling, to pursue STEM studies by:
 - i. creating information packs and/or online educational modules about nuclear science and technology, including women’s contributions to the field, and share or partner with educational establishments and teachers on dissemination;

- ii. introducing students to female career role models in nuclear STEM roles;
- iii. organising career days, mentoring workshops, and other awareness events.

3. Develop, implement and regularly update policies to identify and eliminate gender-based barriers and to improve gender balance in recruitment and hiring, including to:

- a) conduct recruitment campaigns that attract women;
- b) use best practices in gender-neutral job announcement language and hiring criteria;
- c) implement the use of gender-neutral selection criteria, and application reviews and selection panels with improved gender balance;
- d) regularly review policies, practices, and outcomes related to the starting salaries of new hires to assure pay parity.

II. RECOMMENDS that Adherents **retain and support women in the nuclear workforce**. To this effect, Adherents should direct, incentivise or encourage, as applicable, nuclear agencies, contractors, and public funding recipients to:

1. Address impacts related to the conduct of family responsibilities, including to:

- a) provide flexibility that may support employees with family responsibilities outside work, such as flexible teleworking for all staff;
- b) analyse the need for off-normal hours in nuclear positions (particularly those related to the operation of nuclear facilities) and their relationship to career advancement, clearly explain their necessity where required, and develop accommodations or alternate career progression pathways;
- c) offer or facilitate access to childcare, lactation facilities, and other dependent care in the workplace;
- d) offer attractive parental and family leave policies and encourage all employees to take full advantage of these benefits;
- e) develop policies and programmes to support employees returning from parental or family leave to re-integrate into the workplace and to mitigate impacts on career and pay progression;
- f) regularly review the above policies and publish assessments of their impact, including plans to remedy any gaps.

2. Develop appropriate institutional measures to eliminate gender-based harassment in the workplace, to create inclusive work environments and cultures, and to address gender stereotypes and unconscious bias, including to:

- a) provide regular, organisation-wide inclusivity training;
- b) implement targeted strategies promoting allyship and maximising diverse participation, including by men, to foster inclusive work cultures;
- c) conduct independent assessments to identify any patterns of harassment and bias, as well as workplace culture strengths and weaknesses with regards to inclusivity;
- d) develop plans to remedy any adverse assessment findings and build inclusive workplace practices;
- e) encourage other organisations with whom the agency, contractor, or funding recipient engages (such as licensees of nuclear safety regulatory agencies) to promote all appropriate measures to ensure working environments free of harassment and to foster inclusive work cultures.

3. Regularly and independently assess policies and programmes for unequal gender impacts, including but not limited to human resource policies and career development programmes, for example through gender impact assessment tools.

4. Link performance and compensation of executives and managers to implementing measures to promote gender equality, such as in areas covered by this Recommendation, and to build an inclusive work culture.

5. Participate in and promote qualitative national surveys with a clearly defined periodicity on workplace experiences, including regular surveys on perceptions in the nuclear sector regarding:

- a) gender-based harassment;
- b) gender-based discrimination;
- c) unequal gender impacts in the workplace, including regarding compensation and career advancement;
- d) parental and caregiver leave, including organisational support, workplace culture and attitudes, and career impacts;
- e) other gender-based workplace experiences.

III. RECOMMENDS that Adherents **advance and develop women as leaders in the nuclear sector and enhance their contributions**. To this effect, Adherents should direct, incentivise or encourage, as applicable, nuclear agencies, contractors, and public funding recipients to:

1. Identify and address unequal gender impacts for women's career recognition and advancement, in particular to:

- a) provide unconscious bias and inclusivity training for all decision-makers and interviewers for hiring and promotions;
- b) offer leadership and career advocacy training (particularly for, but not limited to, those in STEM areas) that provides a particular emphasis on self-empowerment to all employees with special sessions targeted to female staff and open to all employees;
- c) offer training for managers on supporting diversity in the workplace, including on removing gender-based barriers to advancement;
- d) develop organisational resource groups and support networks of diverse coalitions that include male allies to promote gender equity and foster inclusive work cultures;
- e) conduct regular pay equity reviews to ensure that employees are compensated appropriately based on experience, years of service, scope of work, and position.

2. Participate in national surveys on gender representation in the nuclear workforce on:

- a) salaries (including for new hires and employees returned from parental leave), salary increases, bonuses and promotions, disaggregated by gender, job function, and management level;
- b) gender-disaggregated representation in job functions and levels, including time-in-position;
- c) gender-disaggregated participation in career development and training programmes, especially those considered prerequisites for promotion to the executive level;
- d) career impacts on employees who take parental or family leave, including correlations between time away from the workplace and career progression;
- e) policies on improving gender balance, including pay equity, the availability and use of parental leave, the provision of re-integration support, and how the effectiveness of policies is measured;
- f) qualitative examples of successes and challenges that can be shared as examples of best practices and lessons learned.

IV. RECOMMENDS that Adherents **undertake data collection and analysis, and establish accountability** regarding the effectiveness and implementation of efforts to improve gender balance. To this effect, Adherents should direct, incentivise or encourage, as applicable, nuclear agencies, contractors, and public funding recipients to:

1. Set and publicly issue short-term and long-term goals for the actions proposed in this Recommendation, and participate in national surveys, including surveys and data collection exercises at the international level;

2. Designate a senior executive and identify resources to implement activities.

V. INVITES the Secretary-General to disseminate the Recommendation.

VI. INVITES Adherents to disseminate the Recommendation at all levels of government.

VII. INVITES non-Adherents to take due account of, and adhere to, the Recommendation.

VIII. INSTRUCTS the Steering Committee for Nuclear Energy to:

- a) continue its work of collecting and mapping data received from Adherents through national surveys co-ordinated by the Nuclear Energy Agency to support the implementation of this Recommendation;
- b) continue serving as a forum for exchanging information and best practices and for facilitating and co-ordinating action on increasing the contributions of women to the nuclear sector;
- c) develop practical guidance and tools to support Adherents' implementation of this Recommendation; and
- d) report to the Council on the implementation, dissemination and continued relevance of this Recommendation at the same time as the implementation of the other OECD Gender Recommendations.

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