UsersTCP | Gender and Energy

Empowering all: Gender in policy and implementation for achieving transitions to sustainable energy.

During 2020, a new UsersTCP Task was developed: *Empowering all: Gender in policy and implementation for achieving transitions to sustainable energy.* The new UsersTCP Task gathers researchers from the fields of gender and energy in a global network to analyse energy policy and technologies from gender perspectives and provide recommendations for policy design and implementation.

The role of gender in energy systems has been undervalued in the past. Yet, research has shown that norms and practices linked to gender have an impact on the development of policies, user systems and energy technologies, and that this can lead to the implementation of inefficient and excluding energy solutions. One central issue is that, often energy policies and technologies are assumed to be gender neutral when, in fact, they are gender blind. This means that they neglect the differential impacts on genders as well as socio-economic and cultural groups. Consequently, policies and technologies are less effective and may have unintended effects, hindering transitions to more sustainable energy systems.

However, although the assumed gender neutrality of energy policy and energy institutions has been questioned by researchers over several decades, the problems of gender-blind energy policies persist. In addition, social science research on user adaption of energy technologies, including gender research, is often ignored when designing new energy interventions. This new international collaboration sets out to bridge this gap between research and practice.

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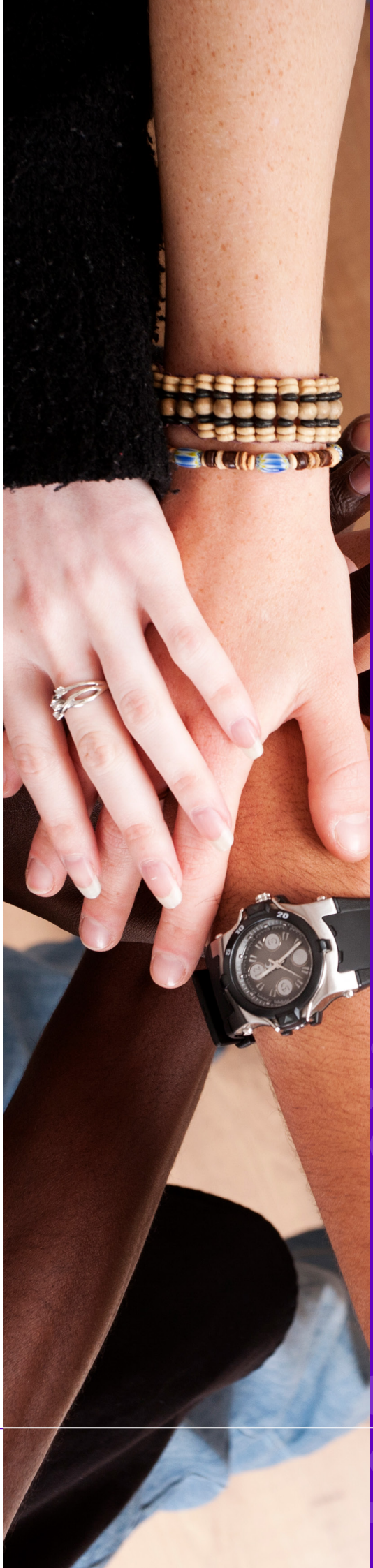
We will do this by carrying out comparative studies between the participating countries starting from three main questions:

- What “best practices” can we learn from earlier work on gender aware policy and technology interventions?
- What cultural and material barriers exist within today’s energy institutions that hinder the formulation and implementation of inclusive and gender-aware policies and technologies?
- How can we use gender perspectives when designing energy technologies and user solutions to ensure they are inclusive and effective?

In addition to case studies and research overviews, we will publish educational materials, design new evaluation methods, and develop models and prototypes for new technology and user support. We will also work with data gathering, in order to fill the data gaps that exists concerning gender. Through stakeholder workshops with the energy policy and industry communities, we aim to find ways to solve the problems that are identified during the course of the project.

In conclusion, the aim of this international collaboration is to make sure that relevant gender research is also implemented in practice. By focusing on interventions and implementations, we will ensure that gender perspectives are applied to support the participating countries in their work to design a more efficient and inclusive energy system, and through this also support ongoing efforts to foster energy transitions. This is particularly pressing now, as countries develop measures to mitigate the social and economic costs of the current COVID-19 crisis.

The work is being led by Sweden, who initiated the Task and will be supporting the role as Task Leader. The Netherlands, Austria and the UK have already started their work in the task, and Ireland has held a tender for participation. Australia and the USA will also be participating in the task.



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