

# Women in Energy 2.0

Gender Diversity in the CEE-SEE Energy Sector



BCG



WoNY  
women in energy



Boston Consulting Group partners with leaders in business and society to tackle their most important challenges and capture their greatest opportunities. BCG was the pioneer in business strategy when it was founded in 1963. Today, we work closely with clients to embrace a transformational approach aimed at benefiting all stakeholders—empowering organizations to grow, build sustainable competitive advantage, and drive positive societal impact.

Our diverse, global teams bring deep industry and functional expertise and a range of perspectives that question the status quo and spark change. BCG delivers solutions through leading-edge management consulting, technology and design, and corporate and digital ventures. We work in a uniquely collaborative model across the firm and throughout all levels of the client organization, fueled by the goal of helping our clients thrive and enabling them to make the world a better place.

Women in Energy, WoNY, is a non-profit association founded in Budapest in 2017. Its aim is to increase the proportion of women leaders in the energy sector, not only in Hungary, but also in the CEE countries. The objective of WoNY is to support the growing professional community of women in the field of energy, enable women to reach top decision-making positions and bring women's board mandates to a visible level.



# Table of Contents

|          |                                                                                  |           |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Preface</b>                                                                   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Executive Summary</b>                                                         | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Context</b>                                                                   | <b>9</b>  |
| 3.1      | The COVID-19 Pandemic                                                            | 9         |
| 3.2      | The Russian Invasion of Ukraine, and the Following Energy Crisis                 | 9         |
| 3.3      | The Increasing Importance of the ESG perspective                                 | 10        |
|          | Insider's Insight: Claudia Viohl                                                 | 11        |
| 3.4      | Companies With Diverse Leadership Perform Better                                 | 12        |
| <b>4</b> | <b>The Energy Sector in CEE-SEE</b>                                              | <b>13</b> |
| 4.1      | More Women in Energy Today Than Yesterday – Still Far From Enough                | 13        |
| 4.2      | In a Volatile World, Diversity is Taking a Back Seat                             | 15        |
| 4.3      | Financial Incentives Could Affect Perceived Importance of Gender Diversity       | 16        |
| 4.4      | Women's Share of the Workforce Still Decreases Through the Ranks                 | 16        |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Attracting Women to the Energy Sector</b>                                     | <b>18</b> |
| 5.1      | Energy is Becoming Less Intimidating – but the Image Remains Primarily Masculine | 19        |
| 5.2      | Reasons for Joining the Industry Have not Changed – Security and Success         | 20        |
|          | Insider's insight: Anita Orbán                                                   | 21        |
| 5.3      | Visibility and Role Models are Key to Changing Minds                             | 22        |
|          | Insider's Insight: Michaela Chaloupková                                          | 23        |
| 5.4      | Best Practices for Attracting Women to Energy                                    | 24        |
| 5.5      | Recommendations                                                                  | 25        |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Retaining Women in the Energy Sector</b>                                      | <b>26</b> |
| 6.1      | Security and Work-Life Balance Become Pivotal                                    | 26        |
| 6.2      | Offered Policies are not Aligned with Employee Priorities                        | 27        |
| 6.3      | Men and Women Face Similar Obstacles – Impact Varies                             | 30        |
|          | Insider's Insight: Judit Haraszti                                                | 31        |
| 6.4      | Best Practices for Retaining Women in the Energy Sector                          | 32        |
| 6.5      | Recommendations                                                                  | 33        |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Promoting Women to Senior Leadership</b>                                      | <b>34</b> |
| 7.1      | Perspective on the Lack of Female Leadership is Aligning Between Women and Men   | 34        |
| 7.1.1    | Different views on necessary support                                             | 35        |
| 7.1.2    | Asking for Promotions Still Comes Easier for Men                                 | 35        |
| 7.1.3    | Gender-biased Promotion Processes                                                | 35        |
| 7.1.4    | The Number of Qualified Women Is Still a Source of Conflict                      | 36        |
| 7.1.5    | Gender-Based Flexibility Bias Persists                                           | 36        |
| 7.1.6    | Men Question the Ambition of Women for Leadership                                | 37        |
| 7.2      | Agreement on Qualities for Promotion                                             | 38        |
|          | Insider's Insight: Kateřina Bohuslavová                                          | 39        |
| 7.3      | Best Practices for Promoting Women to Leadership Roles                           | 40        |
| 7.4      | Recommendations                                                                  | 41        |
| <b>8</b> | <b>How to Move Forward?</b>                                                      | <b>42</b> |
| <b>9</b> | <b>Appendix</b>                                                                  | <b>43</b> |
|          | Note To The Reader                                                               | 43        |

# 1 Preface

This report, prepared by Boston Consulting Group and the Women in Energy Association, intends to give an overview of the gender balance in the energy sector in CEE-SEE. The goal of the study is to understand the status, dynamics, and perspective of the female workforce in this sector through the lens of women's career lifecycle, and to share best practices and give specific recommendations on how to increase gender diversity. We also intend to review changes in gender diversity (including changes in views and perspectives around gender diversity) compared to our last Women in Energy Report, published in 2018.

Our study is largely based on proprietary research consisting of a survey covering almost 4,000 employees working in 10 countries including Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine. The questionnaire included questions related to the importance and perception of gender balance and gender diversity in the

energy sector, career progression and career tracks, personal preferences, and expectations from a workplace, perceived managerial qualities of male and female managers, questions regarding the overall position of women in the energy sector, and the impact of COVID on work. Furthermore, we conducted a quantitative and qualitative market research covering 85 energy firms headquartered in the above 10 countries, focusing on female participation rates and gender diversity programs.

In the report, we examine the three major stages of female careers in the energy sector: channeling women into the sector, providing them with long-term career opportunities, and increasing female participation in senior leadership.

Boston Consulting Group and the Women in Energy Association hope that this report will contribute to female empowerment and increased female participation in the energy sector in the CEE-SEE Region.





## 2 Executive Summary

Since this study's last edition in 2018, extraordinary events and changes have shaped the world, including the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing energy crisis, and a slowdown of economic growth worldwide. Due to the landlocked geography of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Southeastern Europe (SEE), and their physical proximity to Russia, the effects of the crises were amplified.

These events have contributed to three key trends that have shaped the energy sector as a whole and have had a major impact on the role and position of women in the industry.

### Increasing Importance of the ESG Imperative

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors have become increasingly important for companies and investors alike. As stakeholders demand greater transparency and accountability from businesses, ESG performance has emerged as a key driver of long-term sustainability and financial success. Within the ESG framework, diversity and inclusion are increasingly recognized as critical components of a company's overall ESG strategy, putting a welcome pressure on companies to prioritize diversity and inclusion in their hiring and promotion practices.

As financial institutions and investors have increasingly prioritized diversity and inclusion metrics in ESG assessments, the situation of women in energy has improved overall. Female representation in the workforce increased from 26% to 28% from 2018 to 2022. More importantly, women accounted for 27% of senior management in 2022, a nine percentage-point increase from 2018 levels, and the number of energy company CEOs within the region more than doubled: from 4% to 9.5% meanwhile.

Despite advancements in overall representation and the diversity topic becoming a pivotal element of ESG commitments, challenges persist. While ESG reporting and diversity Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) help with getting the numbers they need; the next challenge is about gaining as much as possible from the numbers. As women in energy proceed with their careers, their participation rate still decreases at senior levels. According to our survey, both men and women think there are not enough qualified women in the industry to be promoted to senior levels.

While the masculine image of the sector is changing, the industry still appears to prospective employees as male-dominated. Moreover, companies fail to follow the changing values of their employees and consequently their policy offerings do not match the needs of a diverse workplace.

The following gender diversity challenges can be observed on different career levels:

- fewer women choose a highly technical university education (e.g., engineering) compared to men
- the industry struggles to attract talented female employees for entry level jobs (while 41% of STEM<sup>1</sup> graduates are women, only 26% of new joiners in the energy sector are female)
- companies have problems offering the right benefits to retain their female employees as they reach mid-career
- companies fail to offer comprehensive promotion options to qualified women who have ambitions to reach senior leadership positions

<sup>1</sup>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

## The pandemic's impact on the way of working

Today, it is clear that the pandemic has dramatically upended the career trajectory of working women. While both women and men were impacted by the increase in time spent on caregiving duties during the pandemic, the distribution of work within households was found to be unequal. A BCG survey<sup>2</sup> found that women carried out an outsized share of the caregiving duties: roughly 44% of women caregivers spent more than 20 hours a week on these duties, compared with 33% of men caregivers.

**Naturally, the additional burden of caregiving duties has an impact on careers, both short term via a shift to flexible or reduced working hours and long term via potentially lower promotion opportunities.**

## Contradictory vectors of the energy crisis

The energy crisis ensuing in wake of Russia's attack of Ukraine can be seen as having initiated two contradictory developments on the role of women in the energy sector.

On one hand, in times of crises, diversity topics are tend to be pushed to the back burner. Understandably, economic pressures do not foster an environment for the industry to keep investing in diversity. BCG research has shown that in the aftermath of economic crises, progress on diversity & equity initiatives generally stalls. In the 2008 US recession, the share of ethnic minorities in management fell by 11% in industries most affected by the downturn, and the share of women in management fell by 4%.

Our survey has found that the issue of women's equity and inclusion in the energy sector is already taking a back seat on the industry's agenda. Respondents have indicated that the importance of gender diversity is currently secondary both for managers and executives. It has also become secondary for employees since they tend to focus more on their own health and that of their family, as well as on their ability to make ends meet.

Historical evidence<sup>3</sup>, however, shows that companies with inclusive workplaces – defined as those where key employee groups, women and people of color reported positive experiences at work – were far less affected by the global financial crisis. For instance, from 2007 to 2009, the S&P 500 index declined by more than 35%, but the stock price of inclusive companies actually increased by 14%.

On the other hand, as companies and governments grapple with the challenges of transitioning to more sustainable energy sources, diversity and inclusion have emerged as important considerations in the sector.

**One key focus areas has been the increase of diversity and inclusion in the renewable energy workforce.** As the renewable energy sector continues to grow, there is a need for a skilled and diverse workforce to design, build, and maintain renewable energy infrastructure. By prioritizing diversity and inclusion in their hiring and promotion practices, renewable energy companies can benefit from increased innovation, productivity, and better decision-making.

<sup>2</sup>Boston Consulting Group – The Pandemic's Lasting and Surprising Effects on Women in Tech, 2022

<sup>3</sup>Boston Consulting Group – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Still Matter in a Pandemic, 2020



## Key findings of our report:

1. The proportion of women entering the energy sector is 13 percentage points lower than the proportion of female STEM graduates (41%) in CEE and SEE. The share of women continues to fall for mid-level and senior positions: less than 10% of energy company CEOs are women in CEE. While gender parity at STEM degrees is improving at universities, the lack of gender diversity at all career stages in the energy sector can be attributed to the persistent low attractiveness of the sector to women and to policies that do not address gender equality issues adequately.
2. Energy firms need to promote engineering and STEM degrees to female high school students to increase the pool of candidates for entry level jobs. As concrete measures, firms can offer scholarships to female high school and university students, partner with local women's communities and societies in STEM-related subjects, organize and host different events (e.g., workshops) and competitions. These initiatives would strengthen the energy companies' brand and reputation and could also decrease the industry's manly image.
3. The culture and the image of the energy sector is slowly changing among its own employees. Most sector employees would encourage their daughter to work in the industry, but many still see it as male-centric (with respondents saying "there are better places for women" or "women have lower chances to succeed in this sector"). Until these perceptions persist in the energy sector, the industry is unlikely to lose its male-dominated image in society.
4. To attract more ambitious and talented women, who could later go on and fill positions in senior leadership, energy firms need to make sure that every step of the career cycle can be reached gender-neutrally. If women do not see female role models who demonstrate that it is possible to succeed as a woman in the sector, few ambitious women will choose this career track.
5. The newest generations to the workforce have started to appreciate long-term job security and work-life balance as the most valued aspects of their job for women and men alike, in all age groups in the CEE energy sector. This represents a considerable change for young energy sector employees. Five years ago they selected a challenging and fulfilling work environment, and learning and development opportunities as the most important aspects of their jobs. This change in priorities is most likely to have been driven by recent global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.



6. Most respondents to our survey (40% of women and 53% of men) argue that the key reason behind the lack of gender diversity in leadership positions in the energy industry is the lack of qualified women in the industry. To solve this issue, more women need to join the industry at the graduate level, so that more qualified women can climb the corporate ladder. In other words, more female students need to choose a career in energy, and the talented women need to be promoted to managerial positions with opportunities to gain experience and develop into senior leaders.
7. While progress has been made over the past five years – since our first study, the CEE energy sector cannot be satisfied or become complacent with the results.

Considering the changes and developments outlined above, building and maintaining the diversity of talent remain mission-critical for the future of the sector. **Being more inclusive towards women is not a matter of choice, but it is a key business imperative in today's world.** Companies with diverse boards and C-suites achieve significantly better financial performance<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, diversity within a corporation's workforce increases day-to-day KPIs and the overall satisfaction of employees<sup>5</sup>.

8. With **strong commitment and presence across all levels of management**, real and long-term culture change can be achieved in the energy sector, contributing to the long-term success of the industry.



<sup>4</sup>The CS Gender 3000 in 2021: Broadening the diversity discussion, Credit Suisse, 2021

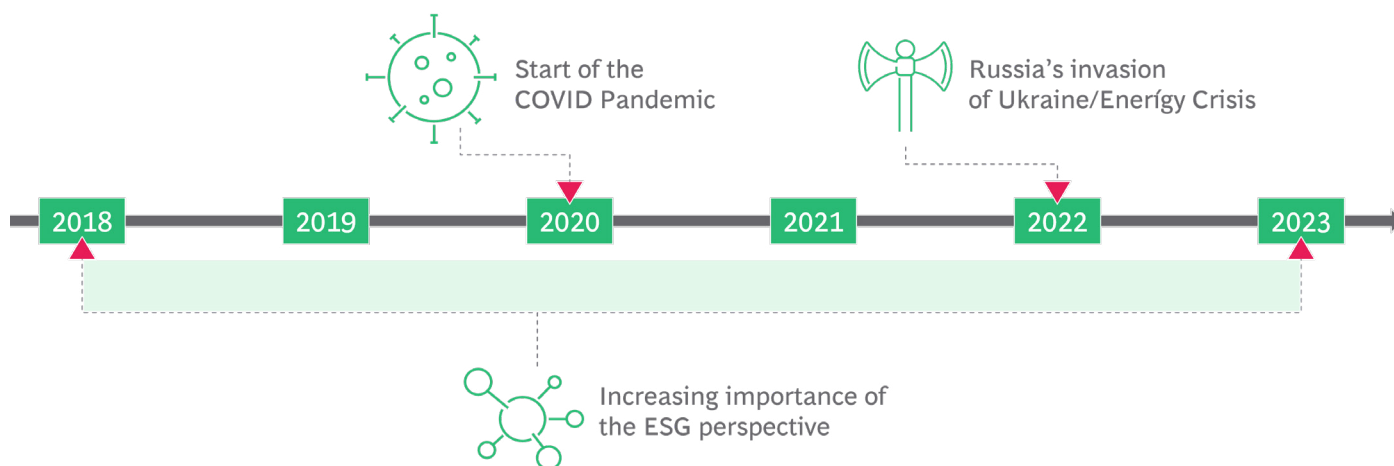
<sup>5</sup>Internal Talent Mobility Programs Can Advance Gender Equity. Do Yours?, BCG, 2022



## 3 Context

In the course of the past five years – since the study’s previous 2018 edition, extraordinary events happened that have shaped the world around us in ways we could not have previously imagined. The

key trend-setters were the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the resulting energy crisis, and the ever-growing importance of ESG imperatives.



### 3.1 The COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic had different effects in the short- and long-term as to the status of women in the workplace as well as to companies’ attitude toward the ways of working, their policies, and working conditions.

As the short-term impact of the pandemic, women became their families’ main caregiver, carrying out the majority of the caregiving duties, BCG found in a survey. While only 33% of men indicated that they spent more than 20 hours a week taking care of their family members, this ratio for women were 44%. Naturally, as women needed extra time

for these duties, their working hours have been reduced, as well as their possibilities for potential promotions, or career trajectory changes.

In the long-term, since employees were unable to physically be in the office for work, but their duties and productivity did not decrease, companies’ attitude towards work from home, and other flexible working options have changed. This allows women, to be able to focus on their careers, while also being the caregiver of the family, which previously was an indicated reason for not promoting women to senior leadership positions.

### 3.2 The Russian Invasion of Ukraine, and the Following Energy Crisis

The energy crisis has also had contradictory effects in the short- and long-term as for diversity at the workplace.

As the short term impact of the invasion, focus on diversity took a back seat as people became more concerned about their own and their families’ lives, health, and livelihood than workplace equality. During times of economic crises, progress on diversity and equality initiatives generally stalls, BCG research shows. This became evident during the 2008 recession in the US, when ethnic minorities’ and women’s share in management

positions both took a hit.

A long-run impact of the invasion, however, is that the ensuing energy crisis and the consequent sanctions on Russian energy products have pushed a slate of countries to focus on energy transition and speed up the transition process. This brings an increased focus on renewable energy, IT roles, and AI development, requiring more technical and soft skills that are less male dominated, than traditional energy industry roles that required some form of heavy physical work.

### 3.3 The Increasing Importance of the ESG perspective

Environmental, social, and governance, or ESG, investment has been around since 2004. Its importance increased during 2012-2013 in the U.S. and gained momentum during 2018-2023 in CEE. Pushing these standards have both negative and positive effects on women in the energy sector.

On the upside, setting standards for equal opportunities has increased women's share in the workforce and resulted in women gaining leadership positions. This positive effect has been achieved through regulation and hard-set quotas.

On the downside, pushing a cause for 20 years with some but not extraordinary results can leave a bad taste in people's mouth. For example, setting hard quotas could mean promotions are not necessarily merit-based after a certain point, especially if the pool of women candidates is small. Also, introducing regulations without actual follow-through measures leaves an impression that the efforts do not matter anyway.



<sup>8</sup>(The World Bank, 2021)



### Claudia Viohl

CEO & Chairperson of the Board  
at E.ON Czech Republic

Claudia Viohl is an experienced executive with an extensive background in the energy industry. She obtained an MBA degree from the University of Oldenburg in 1997 and started her career in consulting. Later, she held various leadership positions at Ruhrgas and E.ON, including Vice President (Head of Corporate Office) and Senior Vice President (Chief Procurement Officer / Supply Chain). In 2021, she was appointed as CEO and Chairperson of the Board at E.ON Czech Republic. She also serves as a member of the Supervisory Boards of E.ON Energie Deutschland GmbH (Germany), E.DIS AG (Germany), EG.D, a.s. (Czech Republic) and ŠkoEnergo, s.r.o. (Czech Republic). Furthermore, Claudia is member of the Board of the German-Czech Chamber of Industry and Commerce.



“

#### **Q1. Did you have a role model available to you during your career?**

No and yes. I have been a professional for more than 25 years now, and for more than 20 of those years I have worked in the energy industry – an industry that has experienced and is still experiencing major changes. Thus, during this time full of change, of course, I have got to know many impressive personalities who had outstanding skills and strengths but certainly also some of the “weaknesses” that sometimes accompany such strengths. For this reason, I have always tried to orient myself on the positive characteristics of these personalities and to adopt some of them in my own leadership behavior. After all, everyone should treat everyone the same way they would like to be treated themselves. I am deeply convinced that we can be successful only if our employees also believe in what we want to achieve as top leaders and see in us a role model. For me, being a role model means above all being personally prepared to work on yourself again and again and to learn a bit more every day. Especially in these fast-changing times full of complexity, this is indispensable.

#### **Q2. How do you approach your responsibility to provide a positive role model of women's leadership in Energy?**

Well, first of all, I remain faithful to myself as a woman. Just because the energy industry is still very much dominated by men, we as women should not tend to adapt unreflective to male behavior. Our strength lies in ourselves, after all. For this reason, I have also decided to be very active in the exchange and to act as a role model.

That's why I help other women for example to find their preferred ways of living and working by being a mentor, sparring partner, challenger, and bridge builder/door opener, whatever is needed. On top, of course, I always work closely and open-minded, together with my male colleagues and try, whenever there is an opportunity, to have a constructive but critical dialogue about the different perspectives of men and women and the values behind them. I hope that if each of us contributes a little every single day and sees diversity as something positive and exciting, the discussion on the role of women will no longer be needed.

”

### 3.4 Companies With Diverse Leadership Perform Better

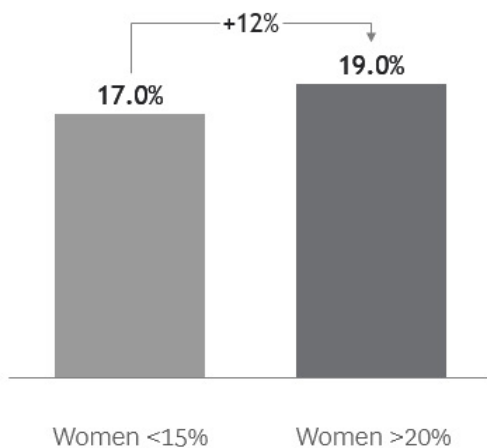
The push for diversity cannot stop as it is important for both social causes and as it also helps the companies bottom line. Studies show that having gender diverse leadership has multiple benefits. During normal circumstances, companies with gender diverse leadership have a higher EBITDA margin than companies where senior leadership is dominated by men<sup>6</sup>.

During economic hardships, a diverse leadership helps the company recover quicker than their counterparties' homogenous leadership. This is shown on Exhibit 1, where employees rated female leaders better than their male counterparts, and the difference got bigger during the pandemic<sup>7</sup>.

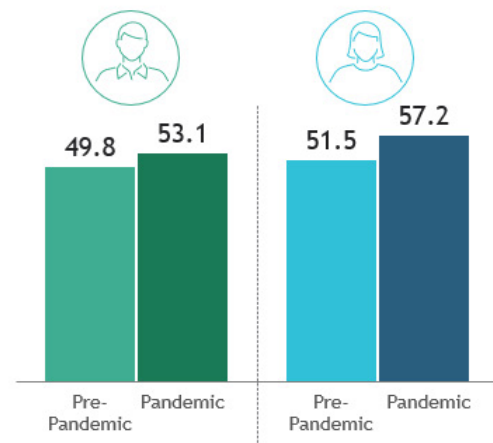
**Exhibit 1**

#### Companies with gender diverse leaderships perform better and recover quicker

EBITDA margin based on female participation of senior leadership



Women were rated as even more effective leaders during crisis<sup>1</sup>



1. Based on the evaluation of 19 competencies of 820 leaders (454 men and 366 women)

Note: Study conducted in 2014, after the financial crisis in 2007-2009, based on 3400 companies across all industries

Source: Credit Suisse Research Institute: The CS Gender 3000 in 2021: Broadening the diversity discussion; Harvard Business Review: Women are better leaders during a crisis

The reasoning behind this is that people with similar backgrounds have likely faced similar obstacles, thus they will most likely offer similar solutions. They make similar decisions, and have similar levels of risk aversity. Meanwhile, having

a leadership made up of people with different backgrounds likely come up with a wider range of options as possible solutions due to their experience with having faced a wide range of problems in their lives.

<sup>6</sup>(Credit Suisse, 2021)

<sup>7</sup>(Zenger & Folkman, 2020)



# 4 The Energy Sector in CEE-SEE

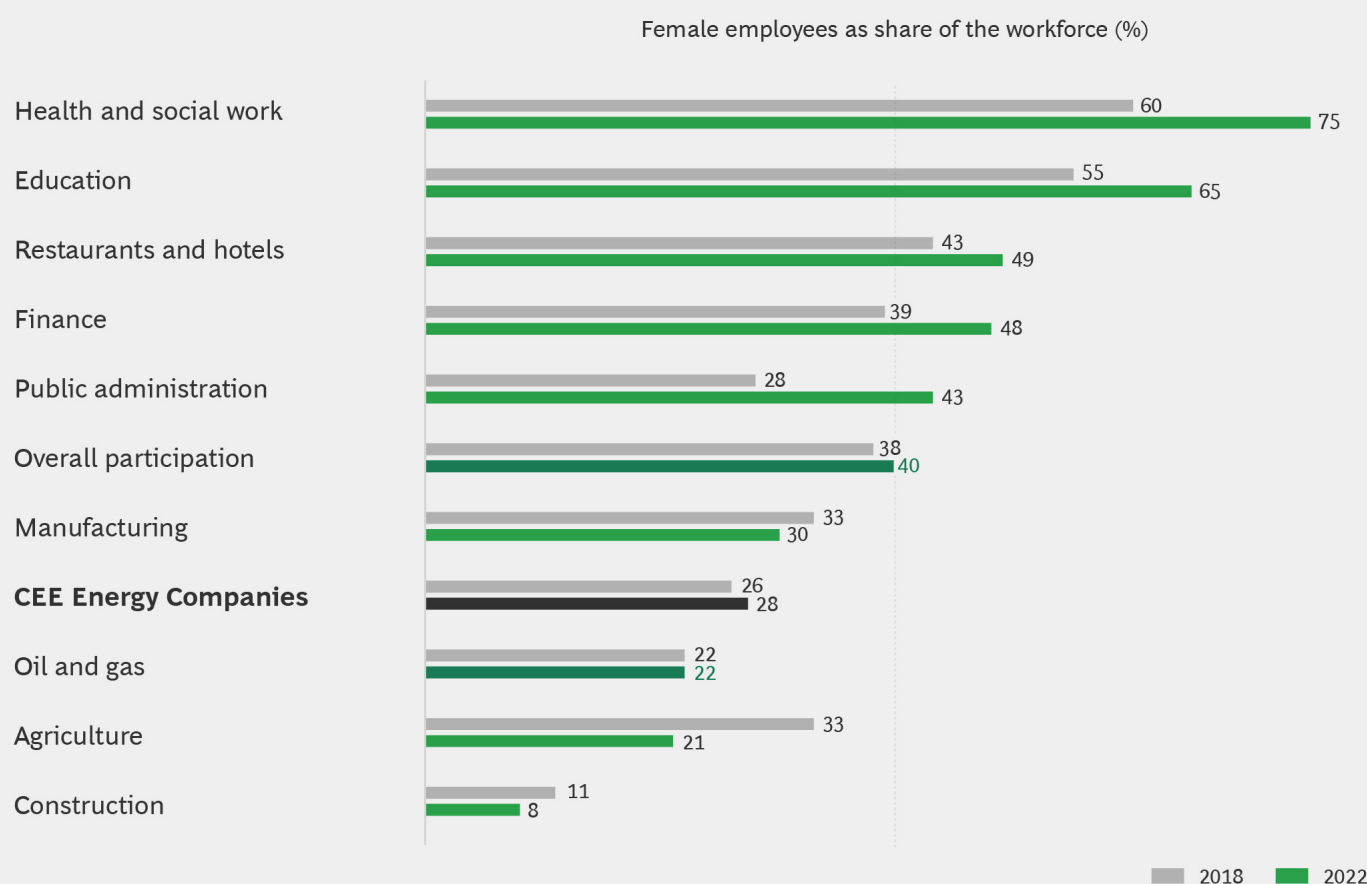
## 4.1 More Women in Energy Today Than Yesterday – Still Far From Enough

Despite the growing pressure on companies to advance gender diversity and create inclusive workplace cultures, the CEE region still lags Western Europe. According to the Global Gender Gap Index<sup>8</sup>, which ranks countries based on gender-based gaps in access to resources and

opportunities, only one CEE country (Serbia) made it to the top 20 list in terms of gender equality while the rest finished in the middle of the pack, with Hungary ranking last from the CEE region at in 99th place.

Exhibit 2

Women's share of the workforce declined in primary sectors such as agriculture and construction, but increased in services



Source: Untapped Reserves 2.0 Study; BCG Analysis

Nevertheless, growing demand for ESG reporting and accountability has prompted companies to prioritize gender diversity and inclusivity. This shift is reflected in various aspects of corporate life, including communications that highlight ESG objectives and targets them both internally and externally. Furthermore, transparency about

the journey towards achieving ESG goals is increasingly common in regular sustainability reports. Companies are also aligning the incentive systems of C-suite executives with ESG targets to reinforce their commitment to advancing gender equality and inclusivity.

<sup>8</sup>(World Economic Forum, 2021)

The adoption of ESG incentives varies widely by region and industry sectors globally.

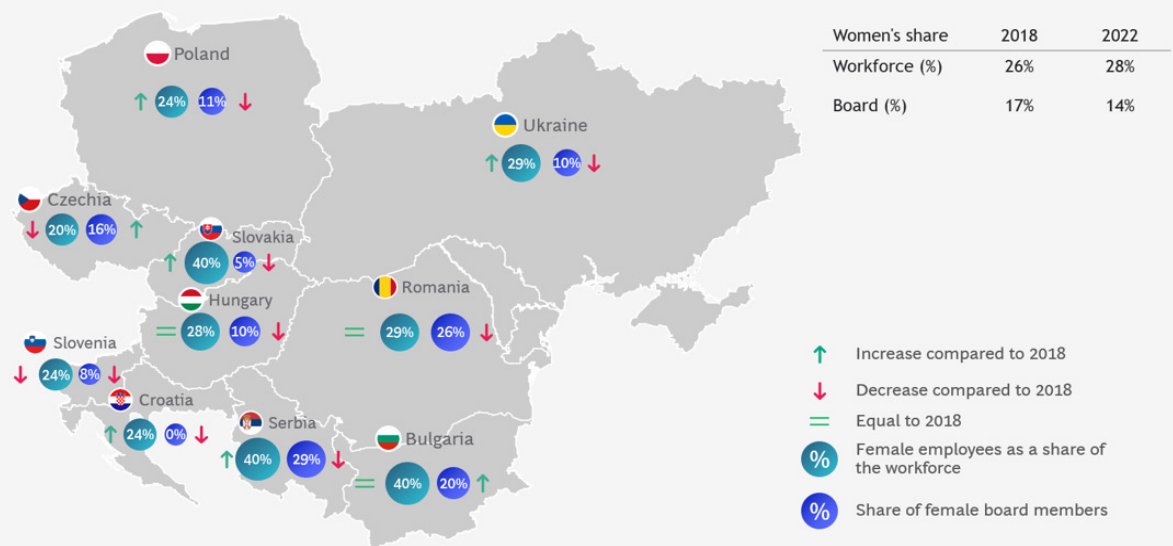
The largest penetration, however, can be observed in Energy, likely driven by regulatory requirements. According to the Refinitiv database<sup>9</sup>, 48% of the 945 companies observed in the energy sector have adopted ESG incentives, while the Industrial sector is in second place with its adoption rate of only 35%. The public sector is in the last place with a 17% adoption rate.

However, the apparent strong push for ESG in energy has not so far resulted in significantly

improved female workforce participation rates in the sector. Globally, the share of female employees within the oil and gas sector's workforce remained at a constant level of 22% while the overall share of women across all sectors increased by 2 percentage points from 38% to 40%<sup>10</sup> in the past five years. Other sectors of the economy experienced a more significant increase, most notably in healthcare, education, and public administration, with over 10 percentage-point increases. CEE energy companies increased their share of female employees by only 2 percentage points, to 28%.

### Exhibit 3

While women's share increased in the workforce, their share decreased on board of companies



More worryingly, the share of women in board positions has decreased in the region. The share of female board members at CEE energy companies decreased in eight out of the 10 countries examined, and increased only in Czechia and Bulgaria.

A positive development is that compared to 2018, women have achieved a higher representation in senior management positions (23% vs 14%) in the CEE energy space, indicating some advancement on diversity in management as well as a growing pool of potential future experienced executive women in the making.

<sup>9</sup> ESG database, 2022

<sup>10</sup> (The World Bank, 2021)

## 4.2 In a Volatile World, Diversity is Taking a Back Seat

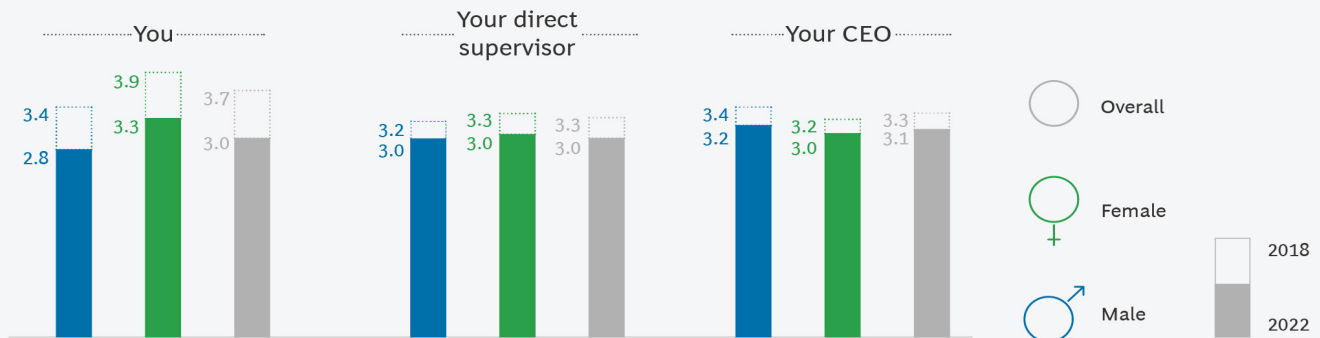
Gender diversity is still perceived as an important issue. Due to recent events, however, its importance has declined in the overall priority list. In the face of the COVID pandemic, Russia's

invasion of Ukraine, the recent economic turmoil and energy crisis, participants of the survey prioritize issues closer to home, such as their own and their family's health and financial stability.<sup>11</sup>

Exhibit 3

### Both men and women feel that gender diversity is less important than 5 years ago

Note: Participants rated their perceived relative importance to different persons on a scale 1-5, where 1 is not important and 5 is very important



Source: WONY 2.0 Survey

Women care more about gender diversity on a personal level, and they perceive gender diversity to be somewhat less important to their managers and CEOs. Men tend to consider gender diversity as less important on a personal level than women, and perceive it as more important to their managers and CEOs than to them.

This suggests a fundamental mismatch in the perception and perhaps in the experience of

men and women. Women do not actually feel that gender diversity is a priority topic at their companies, whereas men see it as topic a more important for their executives than for themselves.

This could mean that the previous years' trend of promoting ESG targets from the top down is yet to be translated and embedded into the fabric of corporate culture.

<sup>11</sup>Results from the market research conducted by BCG for this study  
BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP - WONY | WOMEN IN ENERGY IN CEE-SEE 2.0



### 4.3 Financial Incentives Could Affect Perceived Importance of Gender Diversity

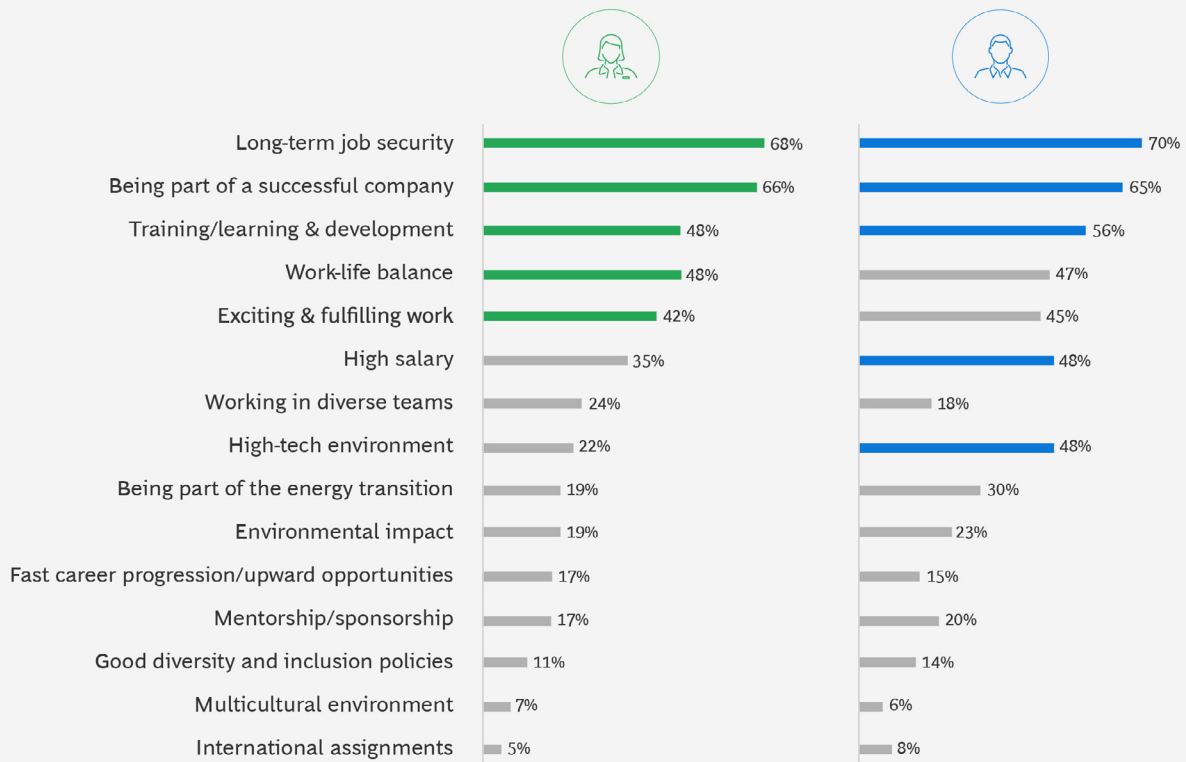
As shown on Exhibit 5, employees in more senior positions on the corporate ladder place an increasing importance on gender diversity, with male board members an exception to this general trend. Similar to the findings from Exhibit 4, the self-reported importance of gender diversity has decreased compared to 2018 at every level, suggesting that in the tumultuous global context, women's position in the workplace takes a back seat in agendas regardless of seniority and sex.<sup>12</sup>

The only exception to this trend is at the executive level. This could be explained by the fact that, as ESG has become a requirement rather than an option to most investors, more and more companies tie C-level executives' compensation and bonuses to D&I metrics. While this guarantees that women's issues are spearheaded by top management, it does not in itself ensure the engagement of the company's employees.

Exhibit 5

#### Reasons for Joining the Energy Industry Are Similar Across Genders

Note: Participants selected the main reasons for joining the energy industry



Sources: BCG analysis, WONY 2.0 Survey

### 4.4 Women's Share of the Workforce Still Decreases Through the Ranks

Female participation rates are low and still decreasing at every stage of the career lifecycle as can be seen in Exhibit 6. Even though women have higher representation in senior management

and CEO positions compared to 2018 (23% vs 14% and 10% vs 4% respectively<sup>13</sup>), the share of women occupying these positions is still decreasing through the ranks<sup>14</sup>.

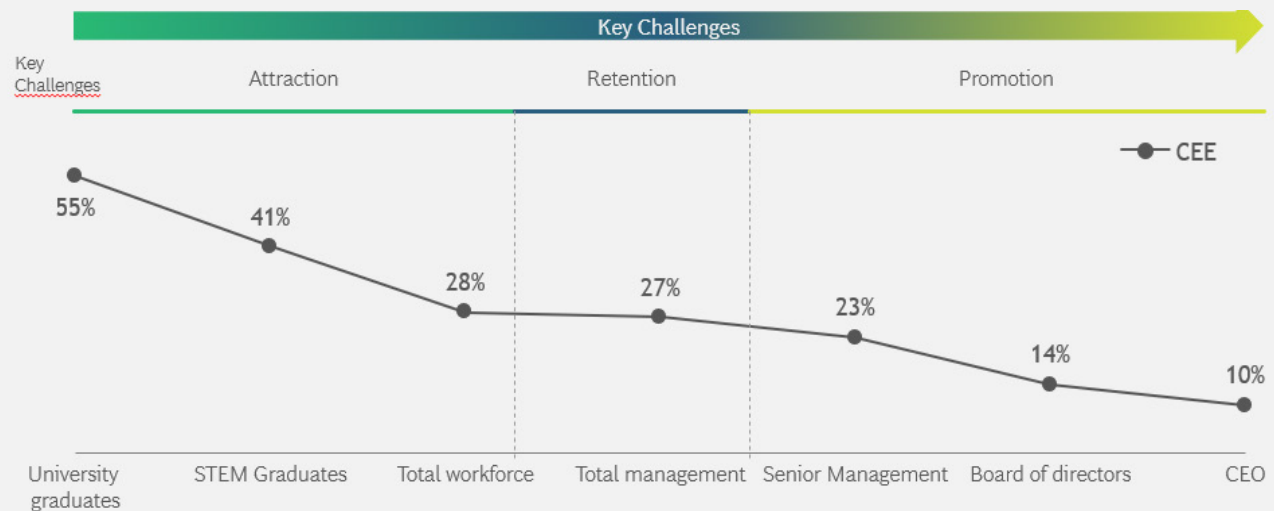
<sup>12</sup>Results from the survey conducted by BCG for this study

<sup>13</sup>(Boston Consulting Group and the Women in Energy Association, 2018)

<sup>14</sup>Results from the market research conducted by BCG for this study

Exhibit 6

## Women's share of the workforce still decreases through the ranks



At different career levels, employers face different challenges, namely: attracting young women to the energy sector, retaining experienced workers, and promoting women to senior leadership roles. We will dive into each of these challenges in the following chapters.

As the data show, the retention of women is fairly strong in the energy sector in the CEE region: their representation falls only 1 percentage point when it comes to management positions versus their representation in the total workforce. This tends to roll over to senior management positions too, with a decrease of 4 percentage points.

However, there is a problem with female employee attraction in the energy sector. Even though 41% of STEM program graduates are female, only 28% of the total workforce in the energy sector are female, representing a serious, 13% decline.

As positions become even more influential, such as board membership and CEO roles, the share of women continues to decrease. While 23% of senior management positions are held by women, only 10% of the CEE energy companies are headed by one.

There is a small fraction of CEE energy companies that have women in their CEO roles. These companies include Veolia, Lotos, EMS, Energa, Petrol, E.ON Czech Republic, Petrom, and Electrica.

## 5 Attracting Women to the Energy Sector

Diversity in any sector starts in the classrooms and at entry level roles. To ensure there is gender balance across all levels, companies first need to ensure a balanced intake of male and female applicants. To achieve this, three key challenges need to be tackled: the manly image of the industry, the overall low attractiveness of the energy sector to women, and the ratio of women taking part in engineering programs. While the masculine image of the sector is changing, there is

slow development in the number of female STEM graduates and entry level employees in the sector.

Due to the urgent need to transition to a more sustainable energy system, several new skills and expertise will be needed in the energy sector, which are traditionally considered less male-dominated, such as data analytics, cybersecurity, energy efficiency, and policy & regulation. The need to reach new talent pools could provide a further impetus to double-down on women's recruitment.





## 5.1 Energy is Becoming Less Intimidating – but the Image Remains Primarily Masculine

The image of the energy sector is changing – the perception is becoming more accommodating to gender diversity.

Today, both men and women are more likely encourage their daughter to work in the energy sector as the overall image of the industry has become less masculine in recent years – at least for those with first-hand experience.

Approximately 90%<sup>15</sup> of survey respondents would encourage their daughters to work in the energy compared to only 80% in 2018<sup>16</sup>. Energy companies therefore need to broaden their recruitment base and attempt to reach also the young women who do not have a direct connection to the sector.

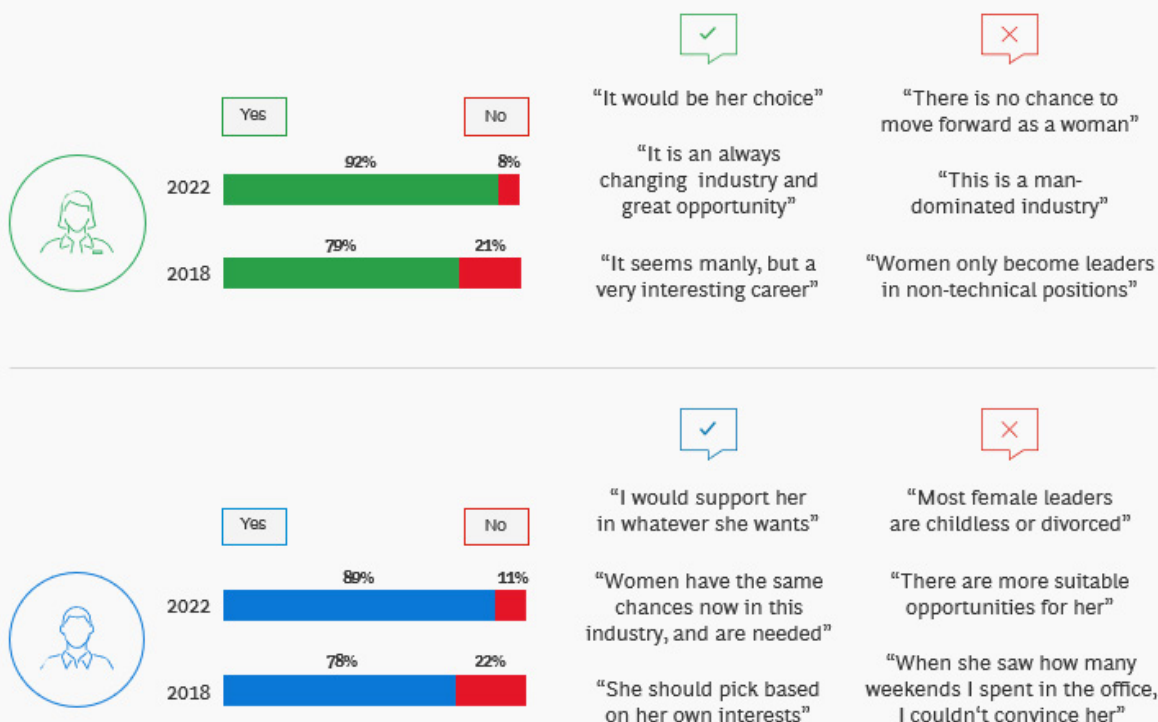
The respondents who would not support their kids in pursuing a career in energy mentioned several reasons:

- Skills or interest mismatch: “there are more suitable opportunities for her”
- Lack of overall diversity and opportunities “this is a man-dominated industry”
- Work-life balance “when she saw how many weekends I spent in the office I couldn’t convince her”

Exhibit 7

### More men and women would encourage their daughter to work in the energy industry

Note: Share of answers to the question: Would you encourage your daughter to work in the energy sector? Participants answered yes/no, and were given an opportunity to explain their answer



Sources: WONY 2.0 Survey

<sup>15</sup>Results from the survey conducted by BCG for this study

<sup>16</sup>(Boston Consulting Group and the Women in Energy Association, 2018)

## 5.2 Reasons for Joining the Industry Have not Changed – Security and Success

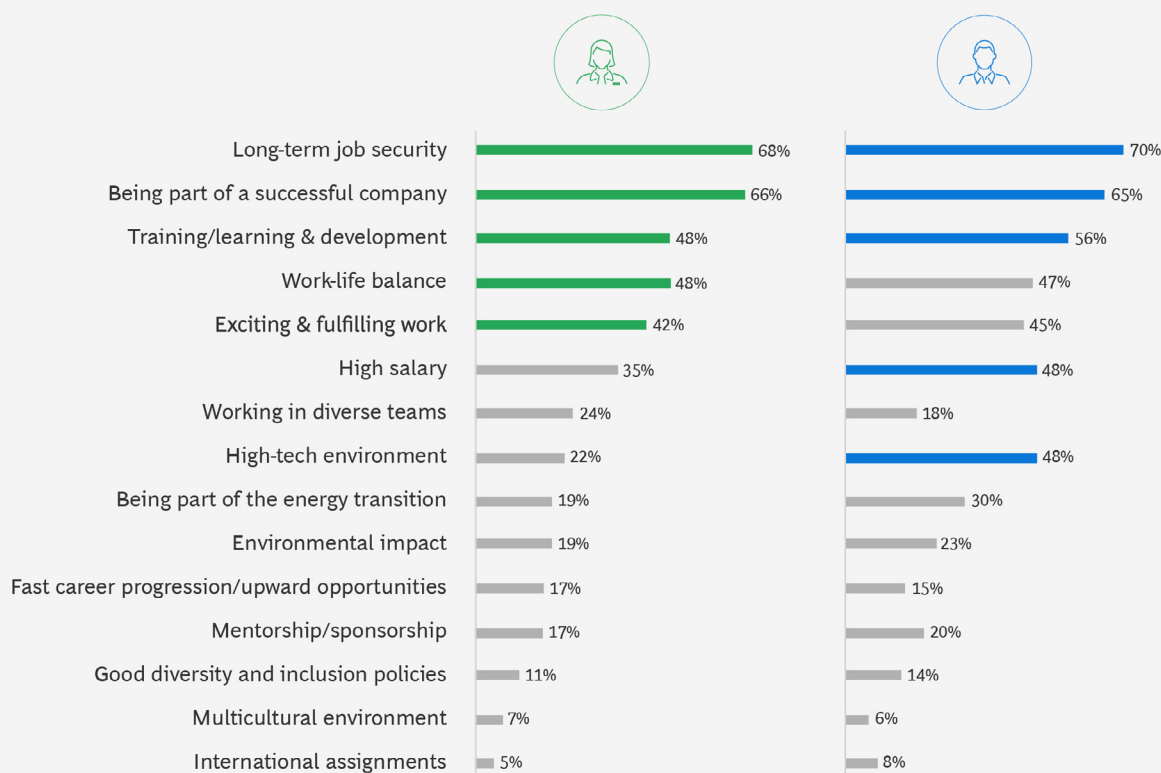
We asked recent joiners to tell us about the reasons for their decision to choose the energy sector over other industries. As can be seen from Exhibit 8, the most decisive factors for recent joiners (both men and women) were long-term job security, the motivation to become part of a successful company and the training and learning & development opportunities offered.

A good work-life balance, and doing exciting and fulfilling work are aspects slightly more important for women, while men value a high salary and a high-tech environment to a larger degree, as shown on Exhibit 8.

Exhibit 8

### Reasons for joining the energy industry are similar across genders

Note: Participants selected the main reasons for joining the energy industry



Sources: BCG analysis, WONY 2.0 Survey



## Anita Orbán

Director of Public Affairs at Vodafone Group

Anita Orbán is a senior executive with experience in the energy sector, as well as public and external affairs, who has an academic background in international relations. She served as the Ambassador-at-Large for Energy Security and as the Chairwoman for Regional Energy Cooperation of the Danube Countries in the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2010 and 2015. She also worked as Chief Advisor to Cheniere Marketing and Supply from 2015 to 2017, and then as the VP of International Affairs at Tellurian Inc from 2017 to 2020. Since 2021, she has been working at Vodafone Hungary, as Director of External Affairs until January 2023 and currently as Group level Director of Public Affairs. Since 2022, she has also been a Non-Executive Director at the Czech chemicals company Draslovska, now serving as Chairwoman of the HR and Remuneration Committee.

“

**Q1. Why did you join the energy industry?  
How does it compare with the other industries you have worked in?**

I joined the energy industry because of its strategic nature. As I did my PhD in international relations, the geopolitical implications of energy supplies have always fascinated me. I work in the telecommunications industry now which is similarly complicated and also involves a lot of strategic and geopolitical considerations. Without my years in energy I would find it really difficult to navigate in the telecommunications sector.

**Q2. What expectations did you have before joining the sector? How did those expectations hold up, were there any surprises that you have encountered?**

I had heard before that the energy sector is considered as one of the most complicated industries, nonetheless its complexity surprised me. What was also a pleasant surprise that this sector is changing and developing with incredible pace which always presents new opportunities to grow. I think never a dull moment in the energy industry!

”



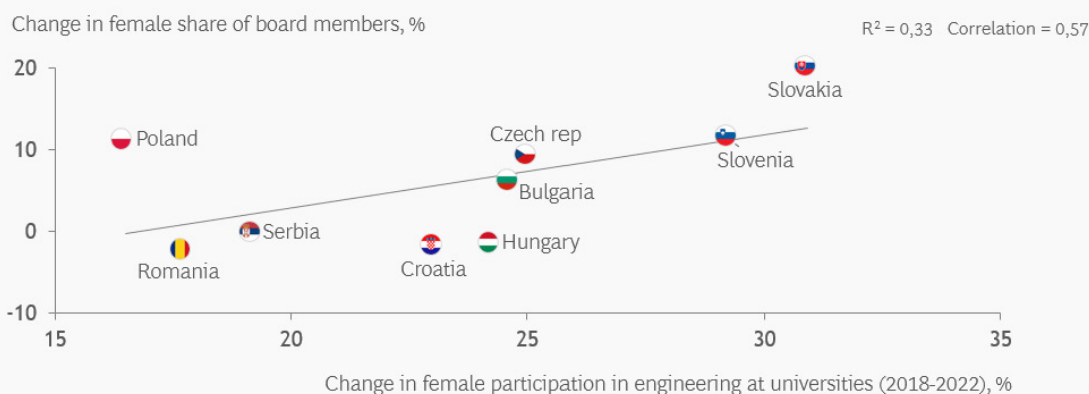
### 5.3 Visibility and Role Models are Key to Changing Minds

To attract young professionals to energy companies, the industry first needs female engineering graduates that are fit to step into the required roles. For women, one of the key reasons of not pursuing an education in engineering is the lack of representation. Female executives serve as the most visible advocates, highlighting gender diversity in the sector and the career possibilities within. Without a clear perspective ahead showing that it is indeed possible for women to excel in this sector in top positions, engineering programs are not even on the list of options for many young women.

Seeing successful role models increases the willingness to participate in engineering programs. Our analysis in Exhibit 9 shows that there is a correlation of 57% between the change in the share of female board members and the change in women's participation in engineering degrees at universities across the 10 CEE and SEE countries assessed. The explanatory power (R-squared) of the relationship is 33%, in other words, the visibility of female role models is an important driving factor behind women's decision to attend engineering majors at university.

Exhibit 8

#### The more female role models there are, the more women choose to study engineering at university



Note: Company data (change in women's share of board members) is based on largest oil & gas and utility companies  
Sources: BCG analysis; OECD; Regional companies' websites and annual reports

Successful role models increase the willingness of women to take part in engineering programs, increasing the talent pool of women for technical roles and leadership positions at a later stage.

Therefore, it was a main driver for us to seek out current female leaders in the energy industry, include their spectacular life stories as well as their take on different topics in the applicable sections throughout this study.



### Michaela Chaloupkova

Member of Board of Directors at ČEZ

Michaela Chaloupková is a Czech businesswoman with a doctorate in law and an MBA from the University of Pittsburgh's Katz Graduate School of Business. She has held various positions at CEZ Group, currently serving as Chief Administration Officer and a Member of the Board of Directors. Her responsibilities and achievements include introducing centralized purchasing, managing human resources on group level and driving the implementation of diversity and flexibility principles. She has been actively involved in sustainable entrepreneurship and corporate responsibility since holding a former position of Sustainable Development Leader at CEZ.

“

**Q1: Do you agree that it is mainly the lack of support and lack of confidence in their qualifications and the lack of flexibility that hinders women in progressing their career further in the energy sector? What is your personal experience?**

I believe women representation in higher-level positions in the energy sector in the Czech Republic is a much more complex issue. Apart from the above mentioned, it can also be the lack of networking opportunities, which may lead to their invisibility when it comes to career advancement. That is why I support our internal programs designed specifically to address women's needs and requirements. Not only do they help us to sustain women in the workplace and empower them, but they also help create the networking possibilities that are extremely important in such a male-dominant environment.

From my personal experience, I find it crucial to encourage men to be part of the gender equality discussion. Gender equality can never be reached without their active participation and better understanding. This can be the way to eliminate hostility that women are more likely to face in the energy sector.

**Q2: What is your advice for women who would want to progress in their career, but feel that they do not have enough credibility and/or support and/or confidence in their qualifications?**

My advice would be to be yourself, reach out and present your qualities, work on your visibility. Don't wait for the opportunity to come, be curious and active and find one. It can also be helpful to take the advantage of the tools and platforms already in place designed to reinforce equality in companies. Always look around and you may find your role models, as a source of inspiration and courage.

”

## 5.4 Best Practices for Attracting Women to Energy

The following companies, both regional and global, may serve as an example for attracting women to the sector.



### Regional energy companies



Aims for **gender balance** in the group of candidates  
Gender balance in the selection and **evaluation committees**



**Active collaboration** with 90+ universities and schools  
**Target** of a minimum 40% ratio of **female graduate hires** and targets the participation of female interviewers

### Global energy companies



Organizes **workshops and talks** with renowned female role models from the world of science  
**Involved over 20,000 female STEM** students with their initiatives



Collaboration with the "Elles bougent" organization, which **engages their employees** with middle and high school **students**  
At Engie, **250+ female engineers** and technicians **speak regularly** in schools

### Non-energy companies



Provides ongoing **unconscious-bias training** to their interviewers and recruiters and ensures involvement of female interviewers  
Targets possible female university candidates with various backgrounds with their "**Women Academy**" **workshop series**



With Act 2 **Unstereotype Initiative**, Unilever has been working for several years to break down stereotypes associated with the company, as well as with their brands

Source: Women in Energy BCG Study 2022

Let's have a closer look at some of these companies:

- **Enel** invests significantly in directing the talent of women towards the STEM world, with initiatives in the last six years, involving over 20,000 female students. In Italy for instance, Enel continued the "Tech Talk" cycle of inspirational digital meetings with domestically and internationally renowned female role models from the world of science, culture and entrepreneurship. In Brazil, Enel continued the volunteer program "Mujeres de Energia" aimed at female university, high school and technical students, and in Spain the STEM workshops "Orienta-T" and "Ella te cuenta" were held aimed at young people<sup>17</sup>.
- **CEZ** ensures that men and women are equally represented during recruitment on both sides, whenever this can be implemented. As an example, CEZ aims for gender balance in the group of candidates for a position, and also in the selection and evaluation committees in all rounds of the selection process<sup>18</sup>.
- **MOL Group** and its operating companies actively collaborate with 17 universities, 26 vocational and secondary schools, and 50 elementary schools to attract more candidates and have adopted a target of a minimum 40% ratio of female graduate hires. Furthermore, MOL defined its EVP as community, career, stability, which was launched in 2021 and has been utilized in recruitment campaigns<sup>19</sup>. Similarly to CEZ, MOL also targets the participation of female interviewers at all stages of the selection processes. In 2021, a female interviewer was present in more than 95% of the cases.

<sup>17</sup>Enel Group Sustainability Report 2021

<sup>18</sup>CEZ Sustainability Report 2021 <sup>19</sup>MOL Group Annual Report 2021



## 5.5 Recommendations

To channel more women into entry level jobs and hence increase the share of women in the total workforce, companies could either promote the energy industry, or increase their own visibility and attract women to the corporate brand.

### Organizing Events to Promote the Energy Sector

The most important task is to raise awareness of the job opportunities in the energy sector and show potential candidates what it is like to work in the industry. This could help reduce the manly image that many still associate with the energy industry. Showcasing the positive reasons behind new joiners' choice to work in energy could also encourage more female candidates to pursue a career in the sector.

### Targeting Schools With Events

By organizing various events in schools, young women could be steered toward choosing engineering as a career, increasing the candidate pool for energy companies in the future, which, in turn, could lead to a higher share of women in new joiners, the total workforce and in management positions as female hires progress in their careers.

Sending female presenters to these events would put a role model in front of high school girls, help diminish societal biases they may have about the role of women in the workplace, or the types of careers that a woman should have and could, therefore, open new horizons for them with career options they never considered.

Energy companies could independently organize such events to guide girls and young women on their future education and career decisions, while building their brands and reputation. Alternatively, industry associations, or government agencies could also organize such events to increase the share of women studying and then pursuing a career in the technical fields.

### Recruiting Targets

Some companies use recruiting targets to try to increase the share of female workers in their organization. This has some drawbacks but could help eliminate negative bias towards women when hiring. Some companies which have already been using this technique include Shell, which has a target of at least 50% of college graduates hired to be women, or MOL, which has a target of minimum 40% for the share of female graduate hires.

### Widening Recruiting Pools

In the face of industry disruptions and changes, companies in the energy sector must broaden their recruitment strategies to maintain and enhance their market position. This strategic shift presents an opportunity to improve gender diversity within the organization, provided it is approached with proper procedures and objectives. Diversifying the recruitment pool can yield several advantages, including increased diversity among employees, positive cultural transformation, and improved employee satisfaction. Moreover, this approach can facilitate access to new markets and technologies, providing a potential competitive advantage.

### Highlighting the diversity of skills required

In today's dynamic business landscape, employees' diverse skills and qualities are critical to driving organizational success. Hiring professionals from different industries can enrich the skillset diversity and provide a competitive edge to employers. A diversified skillset among employees can foster collaboration across teams, enhance overall productivity and quality of products and services, and bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to the company. Such initiatives can help organizations stay ahead of the curve in a constantly evolving market.

## 6 Retaining Women in the Energy Sector

After the application process, the next challenge for increasing the share of women in the industry is to retain the women that are already part of the workforce. Companies need to find the right measures for implementation as the priorities of both men and women are shifting.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women has been most relevant on retention. There is no doubt that the overall workload has increased for women due to additional caregiving

responsibilities. Several studies show that it was generally women who took the lion's share of the new tasks. However, the degree to which women's careers have been impacted by the pandemic largely depends on company policies, the work environment, and corporate culture.

Having learned from the pandemic, it is now time to reshape the future of work in the energy industry with the specific aim of fostering an environment that also helps women thrive.

### 6.1 Security and Work-Life Balance Become Pivotal

Previously younger men and women mostly valued a challenging but fulfilling work environment, training/learning & development, having exciting and fulfilling work, and being part of a successful company as the most important aspects of their job<sup>20</sup>.

Responses on the most important aspects of the job have changed markedly in our current study, likely driven in part by the impact of the pandemic on people's work, lives, and priorities. Men and women in all age groups, including the younger

generations, now rank work-life balance and job security as the most valued aspects of their work, as shown in Exhibit 10<sup>21</sup>.

There are some differences between the other top priorities for men and women (ranked 3rd place and below). Women value training and development opportunities, and having exciting and fulfilling work, whereas men, especially younger men, prioritize high salaries and working for a successful company.

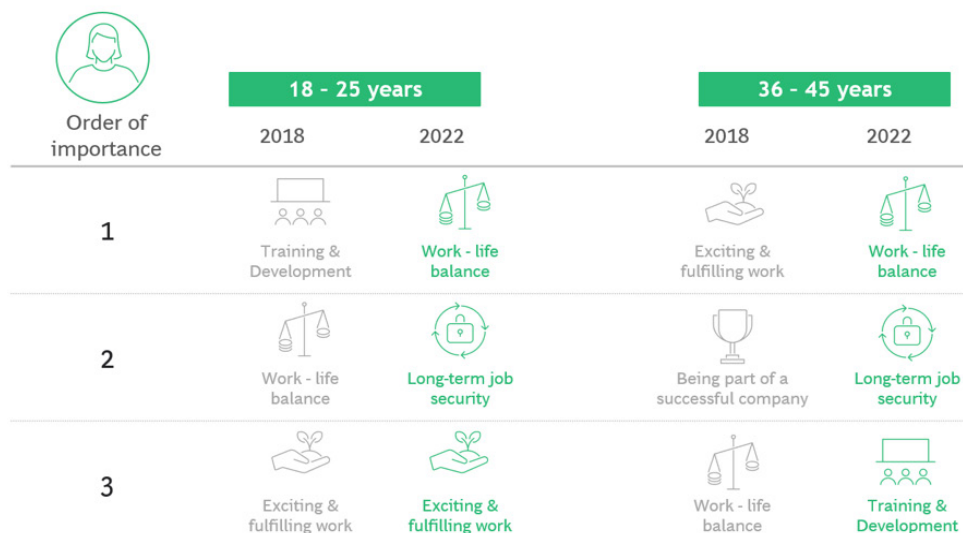


<sup>20</sup>(Boston Consulting Group and the Women in Energy Association, 2018)

<sup>21</sup>Results from the survey conducted by BCG for this study

Exhibit 10

## Work-life balance and long-term job security are the most important aspects of jobs



Source: Women in Energy BCG Study 2022

The survey responses show that the most important aspects of the job for women have changed since 2018. Work-life balance has become the most important aspect for the younger generations, while that used to carry a higher importance for the older generations. This is most likely an outcome of the pandemic as it has shown employees that flexible working options are more sustainable in the long-term.

Also, long-term job security has not even been in the top 3 as the most important aspect for the younger generations. In 2022, that has climbed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> place on the list. A possible explanation could be the energy crisis, which has led to economic hardships, people losing their jobs, and hiring freezes, making employees appreciate job security.

## 6.2 Offered Policies are not Aligned with Employee Priorities

Companies offer an increasing number of policies aimed at promoting gender diversity. Most companies apply these selectively, often excluding key elements. The most frequently offered policies are equal opportunity, maternity and paternity leave, and equal pay – policies which are in most countries a norm, or even a legal requirement. These are offered to more than 50% of the employees we surveyed (to 67%, 65%, 60% and 57% of employees for equal opportunity, maternity leave, paternity leave and equal pay, respectively).

But policies that could improve diversity such as job-sharing programs, women's networks, LGBTQ networks, and ombudspersons are offered only to

7%, 11%, 3% and 15% of the employees surveyed, respectively.

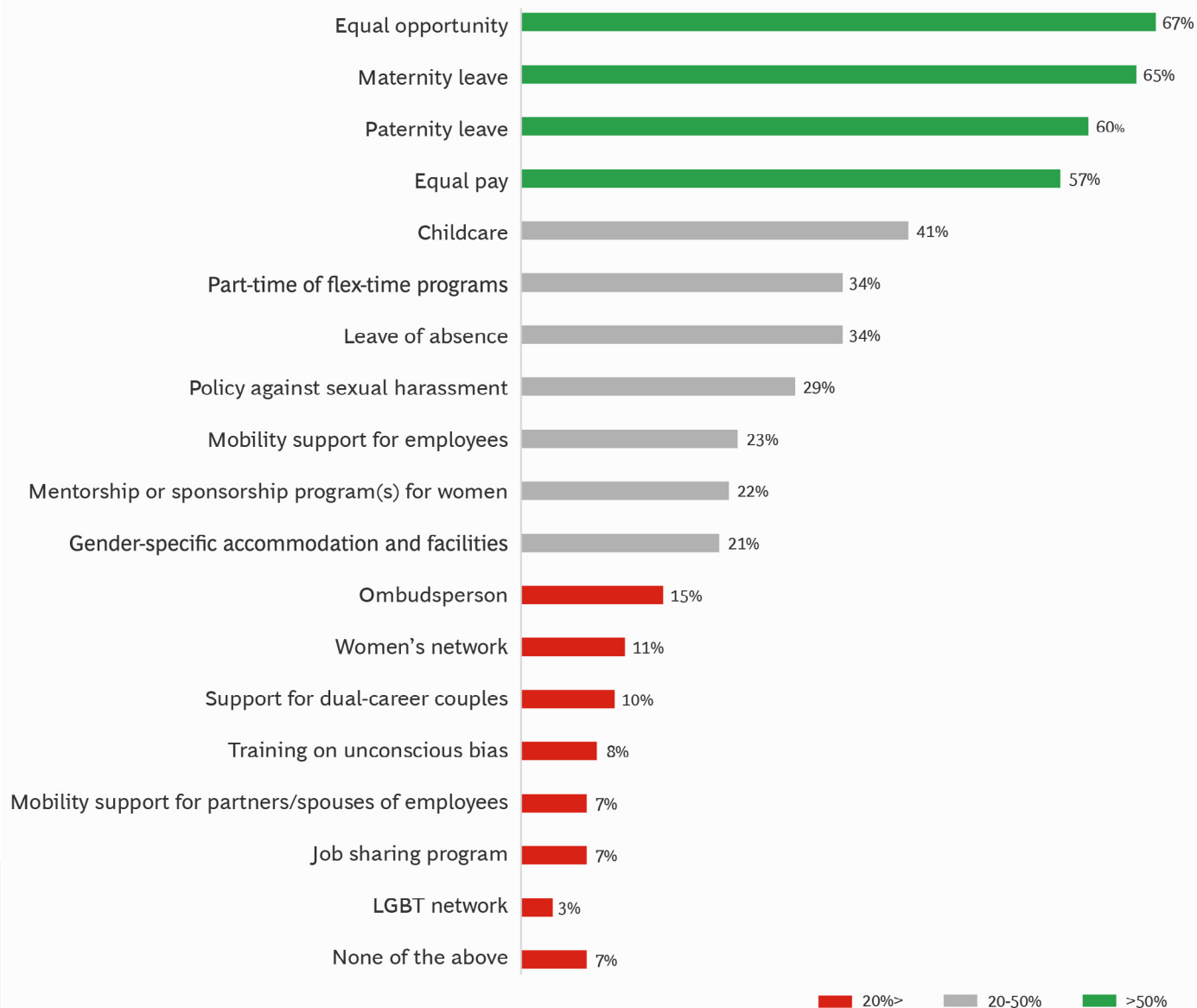
Interestingly, the penetration of some of the benefits generally lauded as the greatest contributions of the pandemic to the workplace such as part- and flex-time programs or leave of absence opportunities, is relatively low, even though these can greatly contribute to a better work-life balance for both women and men since it allows them to periodically balance the responsibilities between work and family. Offering flexible work options more widely could allow CEE energy companies to retain their experienced staff more easily.



Exhibit 11

## Most policies that promote gender equality are not offered at the majority of companies

Note: Participants had to select whether the specific program exists in their company or not



Source: BCG Analysis; WONY 2.0 Survey

In addition to the mismatch between the policies offered and employees' priorities, a key problem is that employees do not make use of the policies that are already available to them. Of those BCG surveyed, 57% of the women and 58% of the men said that they have never used the policies offered or have only used them a few times (see Exhibit 12). Only 13% of the women and 11% of the men said that they make full use of all the policies offered<sup>22</sup>.

Most respondents (62% of the women and 71% of the men) said that they have not used such policies as they felt they did not need them<sup>23</sup>.

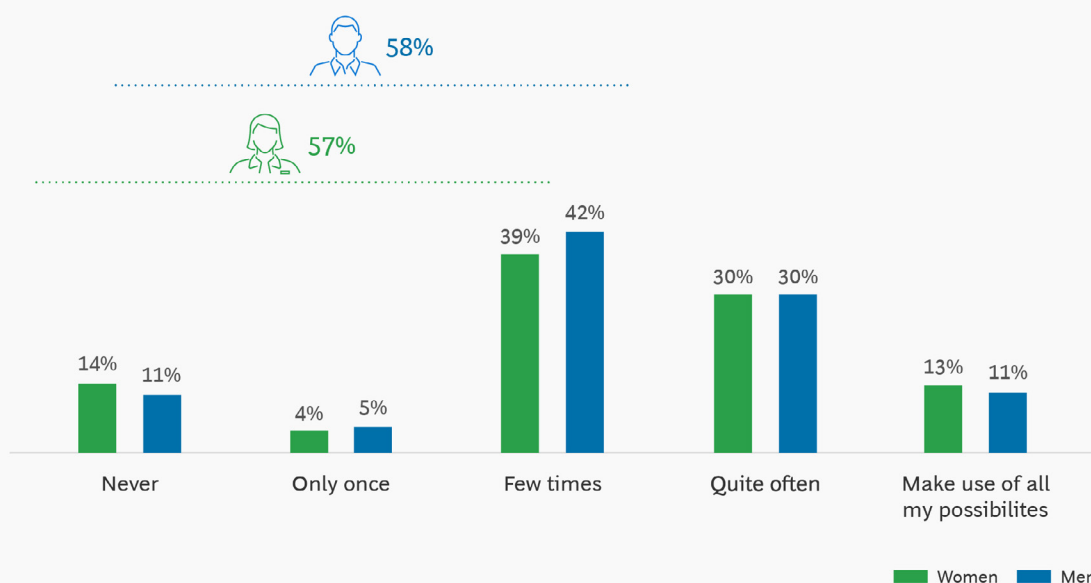
This suggests that companies need to better tailor their policies on offer to fit the wishes and needs of their employees.

Moreover, companies need to be aware that the use of policies depends on company culture and the attitude and example of the leadership team. The famous "No rules rules" ethos of Netflix's company culture rests on the responsibility of the company's leadership in role-modeling desired behaviors. Their unlimited vacation policy only works if senior management sets an example of taking leave and thus creates an environment where employees feel comfortable with taking time off.

**Exhibit 12**

## 57% of women and 58% of men do not regularly use company policies offered

Note: Participants were asked how often they use the policies offered by their companies



Source: BCG Analysis; WONY 2.0 Survey

Based on Exhibit 12, it seems that CEE energy companies did not draw the consequences of the pandemic for the new way of working. They offer policies that do not promote flexible work, even though one of the biggest lessons of the pandemic regarding the future of work was that people prefer flexibility in their way of working. They would love to see their companies trusting them with getting

the job done while having bigger freedom in their schedules or place of work when possible. A lot of energy companies still stick to a strict, at least 4-day minimum to be spent in the office. Obviously, some technical roles cannot allow work from home structures, but these policies could be custom-made by job titles, and responsibilities.

<sup>22</sup>Results from the survey conducted by BCG for this study

<sup>23</sup>Results from the survey conducted by BCG for this study

### 6.3 Men and Women Face Similar Obstacles – Impact Varies

Employees' perception of the obstacles that they face during their career advancement looks the same for men and women, including as an example a lack of technical experience or knowledge (selected by 19% and 12% respectively), or lack of support from senior leaders (12% for men and 15% for women), though this has become less important since 2018<sup>24</sup>.

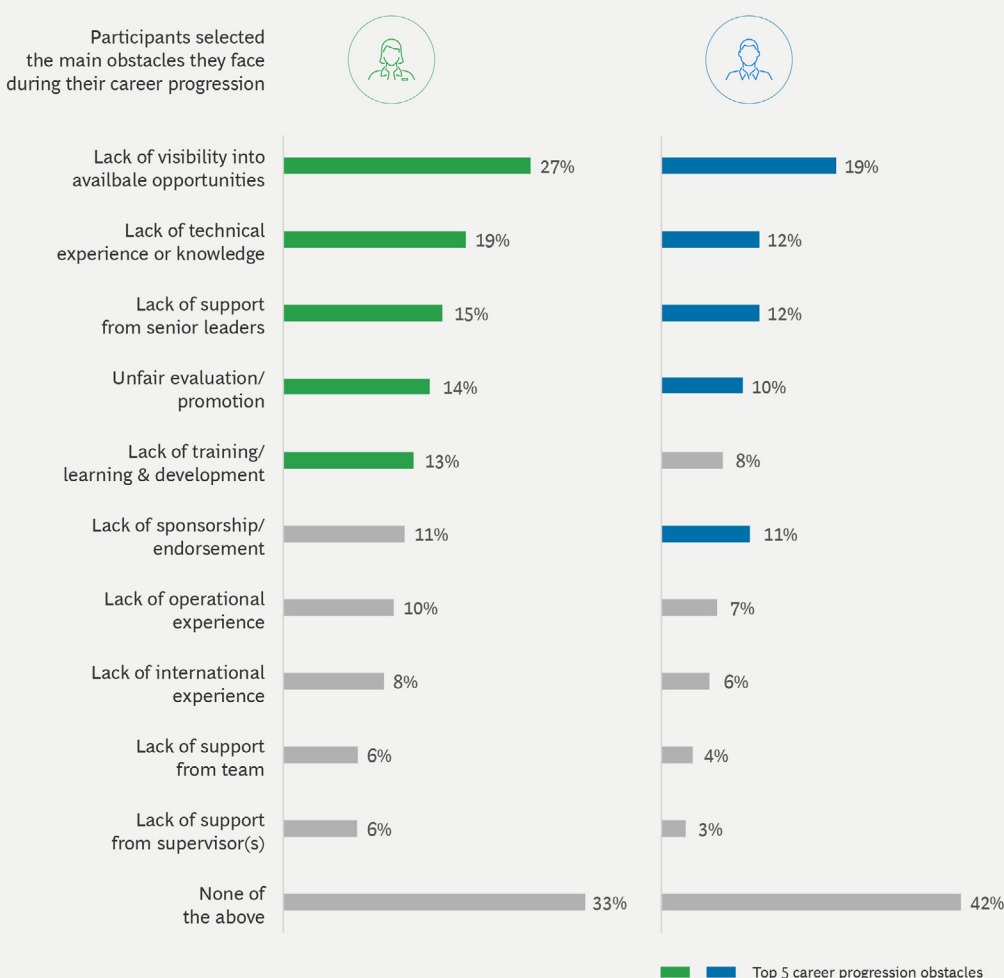
While women and men both state that a lack of visibility into available opportunities is their biggest obstacle, women see this as a greater obstacle than men (27% of women selected it as a key obstacle compared to 19% of men).

In fact, a greater share of women face each obstacle during their career progression than men, the results have shown. This indicates that while women and men face similar obstacles in their career progression, **women face obstacles to a greater extent than men.**

Exhibit 13

#### Women and men see the obstacles they face similar in nature

Note: Participants selected the obstacles they face during their career progression



Source: BCG Analysis; WONY 2.0 Survey

<sup>24</sup>Results from the survey conducted by BCG for this study



## Judit Haraszti

CEO of E.ON Distribution System Operator (DSO)

Judit Haraszti is a Hungarian executive with extensive experience in energy, finance, and customer relations. She earned a degree in Land Surveying Engineering from the Forestry and Wood Sciences University and an Engineering Economics degree from the Finance and Accounting College in Hungary. Judit started her career in utilities in 1994, and joined E.ON Hungary in 2002, where she held several management positions in E.ON's supply and distribution businesses, including Head of Accounting, Head of Billing, and Head of Customer Contact Center. She is currently the CEO of E.ON ÉDÁSZ (electricity DSO in Hungary) and the deputy CEO of several of E.ON's Hungarian distribution network subsidiaries).

“

**Q1: How are you responding to the change in employees' values and needs over the past years? Do you see different requirements between men and women?**

In the past years we all experienced how a worldwide crisis could change our life from one day to the other. We successfully managed work, school, and every life event of the whole family from home. So now it is natural that after this, every one of us is looking for balance independently from our gender. We also see that in families with little children fathers take more part in the daily logistics and the so-called invisible work. I think it is now more important than ever that companies provide flexible work opportunities for men and women as well because honestly, I do not think that this basic need would be so much different.

**Q2: Which have been the most successful policies implemented to promote women in energy in your experience?**

We at E.ON do not believe in programs focusing specifically on women, we believe in talent. My personal opinion is that the most successful approach is to create diversity in talent programs and leadership teams so that the participants— may they be men or women, or different in any other human characteristics— can benefit from their collaboration, and so create an open and inclusive mindset within the company.

”



## 6.4 Best Practices for Retaining Women in the Energy Sector

Here are some best-practice examples of retaining skilled female employees.



### Regional energy companies

#### **e-on** Romania

Introduced co-leadership, which gives managers greater flexibility to manage their professional and private lives

#### **CEZ GROUP**

Offers flexible working hours, company kindergartens, and day camps for children  
Employees can take advantage of workshops and courses while on parental leave

### Global energy companies

#### **RWE**

Access to **flexible and mobile working** arrangements, with additional assistance provided to families with children  
Some locations offer **parent-child offices** and on-site daycares

#### **ENGIE**

Wide set of initiatives, including providing **daycare center** spots at specific locations and offering **extended parental leave**

### Non-energy companies



AI-driven Unlocked platform offers a wide range of **career development opportunities** for employees  
Expanded flexibility and well-being offerings, introduced 4 **“work from elsewhere” weeks**, **meeting-free days**, and end-of-week flextime

#### **BCG**

Offers wide range of well-being programs, including opportunity for **flexible working capacity**, flex leave, **cool down days** for recharging, and possibility to work from other EU country

Source: Women in Energy BCG Study 2022

- **Unipetrol** established the position of the Ombudsperson to whom people can report inappropriate behavior of colleagues, various forms of harassment and bullying, corrupt behavior or any other acts causing harm to the company and its employees. The Ombudsperson also deals with violations of corporate values and acts as a mediator<sup>25</sup>.
- **E.ON** introduced the promotion of co-leadership, in which two part-time managers share a leadership position, giving them greater flexibility in balancing their professional and private lives<sup>26</sup>.
- **CEZ Group** offers flexible working hours, company kindergartens, and day camps for children, and maintains contact with employees on parental leave and offers them support when they return to work. They can keep in touch with the company and take advantage of workshops and courses while on parental leave and after returning to work<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>25</sup>Unipetrol CSR Report 2021

<sup>26</sup>E.ON Romania Sustainability Report 2021

<sup>27</sup>CEZ Sustainability Report 2021

## 6.5 Recommendations

### Keep in Touch With Changing Trends

Employers need to stay up to date regarding the changing values of their employees. For instance, people now appreciate long-term job security and work-life balance more than before, likely due to the instability they experience in the world around them. Companies need to track these changes and adjust their behavior accordingly to retain their employees. Companies that excel in these areas might also be able to snatch employees from competitors.

### Survey Employees About Their Needs

Companies offer a wide variety of policies as a tool to retain their employees. But, if about 60% of the employees of both genders are not using these policies, then there is a misalignment in what the employers versus the employees think is important. Companies should ask their employees what they think are important and offer policies accordingly to retain them.

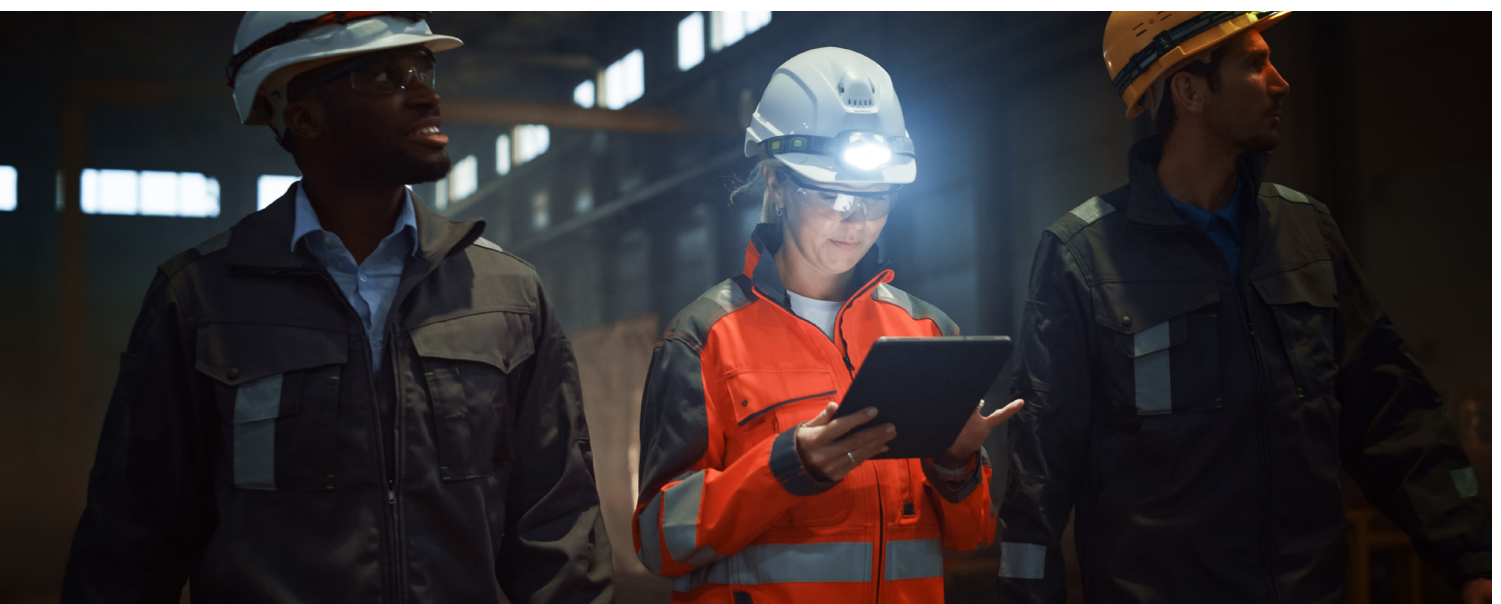
### Make the Available Policies More Visible

Some employees may not be using the policies offered because the policies are not visible enough to them, in other words, if employees do not know about the policies, they will not be

able to use them. Making unit managers more educated about the policies so they can actively recommend it to employees could help increase engagement. Such a decentralized approach could also lower costs e.g., by reducing the number of company-wide campaigns needed to raise awareness. Moreover, the company culture and the attitude and example set by leadership should reassure employees that they can take advantage of policies, without any adverse impact on their careers.

### Ensure That Mentorship Programs are Visible and Available to All Prospective Participants

Some respondents answered that career progression programs are only offered to women who are already part of the leadership team. It appears that some companies have attempted to take steps in the right direction but started with the women whose opinions were already heard. Making these programs visible and available to women at lower levels of the company hierarchy could help these women progress at the company faster and provide them with the opportunity to develop their leadership skills and advance to senior leadership roles in the future.



<sup>28</sup>Results from the survey conducted by BCG for this study

# 7 Promoting Women to Senior Leadership

Women who stay with a company for a long time are just as likely to have a desire to become executives as men, yet women make up a tiny fraction of senior leadership positions, such as top management, C-level, or board members. Their representation in these positions is also lower than

the share of women in the sector's workforce or in mid-management. Finding the reasons behind this requires a deeper dive into the employees' perception of the situation, and the differences in what women and men see as the main reasons for the lack of women in leadership positions.

## 7.1 Perspective on the Lack of Female Leadership is Aligning Between Women and Men

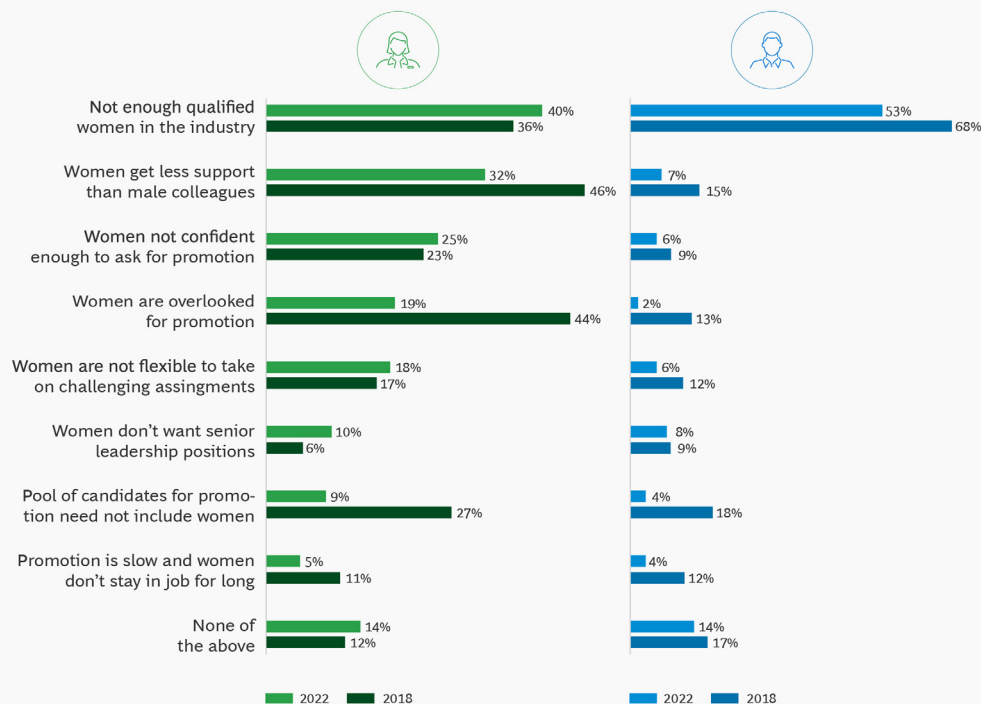
The opinion of women and men differ on the main reasons behind the lack of women in senior leadership roles. Their views, however, are slowly aligning – the differences of their views decreased compared to the 2018 survey, as shown on Exhibit 14. In 2018, 68% of men thought the main reason for the lack of female leadership was that there were not enough qualified women in the industry,

while women cited less support to women compared to men as the main reason (46% chose this option)<sup>29</sup>. In 2022, men and women both thought the main reason was the lack of qualified women, but the ratio of men who cited this reason decreased by 15 percentage points to 53% compared to the 2018 survey (and for women it increased from 36% to 40%).<sup>30</sup>

Exhibit 14

### The perception gap behind the lack of female leadership is narrowing

Note: Participants were asked what they see as the main reason for lack of women in senior leadership roles



Source: BCG Analysis; WONY 2.0 Survey

<sup>29</sup>(Boston Consulting Group and the Women in Energy Association, 2018)

<sup>30</sup>Results from the survey conducted by BCG for this study

There are five areas where the perception of women and men differ substantially (10%+ difference). These different views and beliefs could create frictions which could hinder women in succeeding in their career paths and securing potential promotions.

- Women receive less support (32% of women vs. 7% of men)
- Women are not confident enough to ask for promotions (25% of women and 6% of men)

- Women are overlooked for promotions (19% of women and 2% of men)
- There are not enough qualified women in the industry (40% of women vs. 53% of men)
- Women are not flexible enough to take on challenging assignments, e.g., that require relocation (18% of women and 6% of men)

We explore each of these five areas in turn below.

### 7.1.1 Different views on necessary support

The lack of support for female leaders remains a contentious issue, according to recent survey data. In 2018, 46% of women identified the lack of support as the primary reason for the lack of women in senior positions, but only 15% of the men who shared this view. The disagreement remains in 2022 as 32% of women but only 7% of men consider the lack of support as the critical issue.

These findings suggest that there may be insufficient education and awareness-raising efforts in leadership circles to promote diversity and inclusivity. Additionally, women might attach greater importance to support from colleagues and leaders than men do.

### 7.1.2 Asking for Promotions Still Comes Easier for Men

The findings suggest that female employees are less confident than their male counterparts when it comes to seeking promotions, according to the majority of women surveyed. This trend persisted over the past five years, with 23% selecting this option in 2018 and 25% in 2022. However, men appear to have a different perception, with only 9% identifying this as an issue five years ago and

6% in the most recent survey. The results imply that there may be a need for greater support and encouragement from colleagues and employers to empower women to advance in their careers. This may be particularly relevant in industries that are believed to be male dominated such as the energy industry.

### 7.1.3 Gender-biased Promotion Processes

Gender bias in promotion processes remains a contentious issue, with 44% of women in 2018 and 19% in 2022 citing the failure to consider women for promotions as a key reason for the lack of female leaders, compared to only 13% of men in 2018 and 2% in 2022. While the decrease in both gender's perception indicates progress, there is still an underlying gender bias in the workplace that

needs to be addressed. The significant decrease in men's perception of the issue could prolong this gender bias due to the continued lack of awareness regarding the potential barriers women face when it comes to promotions.



### 7.1.4 The Number of Qualified Women Is Still a Source of Conflict

While fewer men now cite the lack of qualified women as the key reason for the lack of female leaders (53% now vs. 68% in 2019), most men continue to cite this as the primary reason. This suggests that men may have the potential underlying bias or perception that women are less qualified than men.

Conversely, women's perception has shifted towards a greater focus on the lack of qualified women, with the percentage increasing from 36% in 2018 to 40% in 2022, making the primary reason cited by for female respondents. This could indicate a lack of confidence in their own skills, knowledge, and achievements compared to male colleagues.

### 7.1.5 Gender-Based Flexibility Bias Persists

Employees think that being flexible helps moving one's career forward and being inflexible due to family-related duties is mostly associated with women.

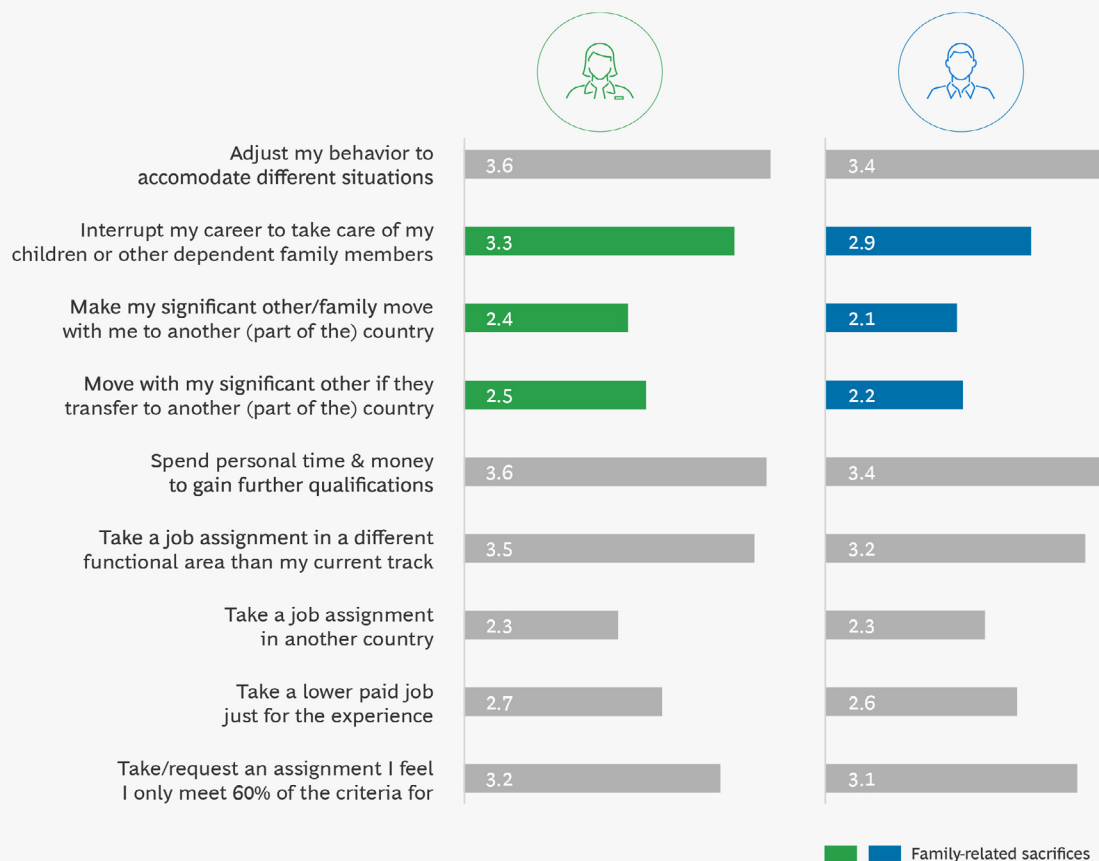
Of those polled, 18% of female and 6% of male responders said that one of the key reasons for the lack of women in senior leadership is

that women are not flexible enough in taking challenging assignments. However, based on our detailed survey, women proved to be more willing to change and adjust their behavior in all evaluated dimensions, ranging from **family-related sacrifices to taking on different roles in the company** than men.

Exhibit 15

### Women are more willing to change and adjust their behavior than men in all evaluated dimensions

Participants evaluated how likely would they make different decisions (1=would never take this to 5=absolutely)



### 7.1.6 Men Question the Ambition of Women for Leadership

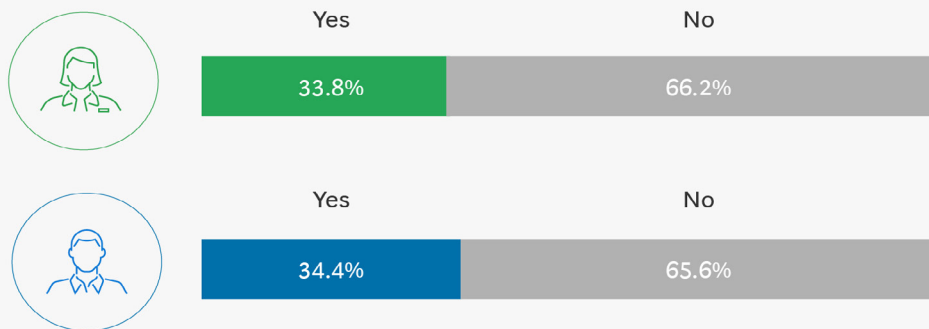
Men tend to think that women do not want to be in leadership positions. However, our survey showed that women and men have almost identical aspirations in terms of becoming executives (see Exhibit 16). Combined with our findings on perceptions around women getting less support

than men, and women being overlooked for promotions, this finding suggests that **there is a fundamental mismatch in the perception of men and women about women's level of ambition, intentions, and promotion opportunities in the workplace.**

Exhibit 16

#### Women and men have similar ambitions to become executives

Note: Participants were asked if they want to become executives later in their career



Source: BCG Analysis; WONNY 2.0 Survey



## 7.2 Agreement on Qualities for Promotion

Despite having different views about the causes behind the lack of women in senior leadership positions, women and men agree on the key qualities needed to be promoted to senior positions: having technical expertise, being an extremely high performing individual, and having field experience are the three most important qualities according to both men and women. For men, being an engineer or having similar technical education is higher on the priority list. Women highlight the importance of having sponsors in higher-up levels, suggesting that women may need more support from leadership to land promotions than men<sup>31</sup>.


The perception of having sponsors/endorsers in higher-up levels is the one that changed the

most since 2018. From being the most important quality according to women and the second most important one according to men, it fell significantly in the eyes of both women and men<sup>32</sup>.

Having field experience was not in the top five qualities for women or men in 2018 but has emerged as one of the most important factors in our current survey. However, field or “offshore” experience is typically only relevant to technical jobs, and previous years’ studies have shown women are significantly underrepresented in these roles. If this is in fact an important quality for promotion, as respondents suggest, this may present another hurdle to women in landing leadership roles.

Exhibit 17

### Women and men agree on the **Top 3** qualities to be promoted to senior level

|                 |  |                                                                    |  |                                                                    |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> |  | Have technical expertise                                           |    | Have technical expertise                                           |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> |  | Must be extremely high performing individuals                      |    | Must be extremely high performing individuals                      |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> |  | Have field experience or worked for offshore in remote location(s) |    | Have field experience or worked for offshore in remote location(s) |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> |  | Have financial expertise                                           |    | Be an engineer or have similar technical education                 |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> |  | Have sponsors/endorsers on higher-up levels                        |    | Have financial expertise                                           |

Note: Participants were asked what they see as top qualities to be promoted to senior leadership roles

Source: BCG Analysis; WONY 2.0 Survey

<sup>31</sup> Results from the survey conducted by BCG for this study

<sup>32</sup> (Boston Consulting Group and the Women in Energy Association, 2018)

<sup>33</sup> (Boston Consulting Group and the Women in Energy Association, 2018); (Boston Consulting Group and the World Petroleum Council, 2017)

### Kateřina Bohuslavová

Chief Sustainability Officer and the Head of ESG Office of ČEZ Group

Kateřina Bohuslavová is a Czech businesswoman and Chief Sustainability Officer at CEZ, the largest energy company in the Czech Republic. She leads the ESG Office, where she promotes data-driven and science-based approach to tackling sustainability issues. She represents CEZ Group in the Executive Committee of the Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability Council of the Conference Board, a global nonprofit think tank, and in the Expert Team for Sustainability of the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic. She also serves as the Vice President of the Czech Business Council for Sustainable Development. She was awarded the ESG Officer of the Year during 2022/2023 Women in Governance, Risk and Compliance Awards. Kateřina graduated from Oxford University and Charles University in Prague. She joined CEZ Group in 2021.



#### Q1. How do you view the impact of ESG on women in energy – net positive or neutral?

ESG promotes measurable targets and outcomes. So, we can look at Sustainability Reports of energy companies and see hard data. We can ask: Do companies have diversity targets? What percentage of women work in the sector, and how many hold managerial positions? ESG does not allow companies to shy away from these questions; on the contrary, it shines light on these topics. In this respect, I view the impact of ESG as positive. But that does not mean that I like what I see. The numbers for women in energy are low, and we still have a long way to go.

#### Q2. Given the decline observed in the importance of women topics in recent years, what measures could help keep diversity high on the agenda for both CEOs and employees?

With talent scarce, it would be unwise to ignore half of the population when looking for prospective employees. Unfortunately, women with technical backgrounds are still rare. So, we need to make STEM disciplines more attractive for women, and we must start at a young age. I believe that educational programs for girls are crucial. CEZ Group's portal The Word of Energy provides resources for all ages from preschoolers to university students, and our Summer University in nuclear power plants attracts about 20% of female students. We know that sustainability matters to women and sustainable energy is key for the future. Changes won't happen overnight, so let's start now to create a positive momentum for future generations.



### 7.3 Best Practices for Promoting Women to Leadership Roles

We believe the following companies have implemented exemplar policies for promoting women to leadership roles.



#### Regional energy companies



The career and succession management procedure is an **objective and unbiased system**, named "Procedure for Managers". It **ensures representation** of all important competencies and areas of activities



Creates learning opportunities, **knowledge sharing, skills development** for both women and men to step into their highest leadership potential. In this program 57% of mentees are women

#### Global energy companies



Provides women with accelerated development programs, including **Powering Women Mid-Career**. In 2023, the company unveiled the revamped Powering **Women Senior Career program**



**"Fifty-Fifty"** initiative action plan to achieve managerial parity by 2030 at Group level

#### Non-energy companies



Investing in Women initiative includes programs such as mandatory diverse hiring slates and interviews **or expansion of life event services**. As a result, the share of women in senior leadership positions increased from 33% to 44% between 2015 and 2018



Provides career support and guidance through the **Senior Leader Development Roadmap**, which includes Corporate Mentoring Program, Senior Leaders Development Assessment Center and Senior Executive Program

Source: Women in Energy BCG Study 2022

Let's deep dive into some of these policies:

**At INA**, the career and succession management procedure is carried out for all managerial positions and since it is an objective and unbiased system, it ensures representation of all important competencies/areas of activities needed to achieve efficient and professional performance of successors in the applicant's future managerial roles. Using the mentioned Procedure for Managers, and for employees of operative companies, "Employee Performance Management System in INA Group", a system for identifying and developing talents, is carried out both for managers and other employees. This tool also helps ensure gender diversity in executive, management, and supervisory bodies. The ratio of promotions and the ratio of talents by gender is in line with the ratio of employees gender<sup>34</sup>.

**CEZ Group launched** launched new programs for women to develop their managerial skills in addition to their already existing programs. Women in Focus is a development program for women in management positions and focuses on their personal and professional growth<sup>35</sup>.

**At OMV Petrom**, the Cross Company Mentoring Program (7<sup>th</sup> edition) creates learning opportunities, knowledge sharing, skills development for employees with different backgrounds and level of experience and it develops new support networks<sup>36</sup> across different functional areas of the company, empowering both women and men to step into their highest leadership potential. In this program, 57% of the mentees are women.

<sup>34</sup>INA Annual Report 2021

<sup>35</sup>CEZ Sustainability Report 2021

<sup>36</sup>OMV Petrom Sustainability Report 2021

## 7.4 Recommendations

### Build on Existing Programs and Assist Women in Setting Their Ambition

Differences in men and women's perception of the reasons for the lack of women in leadership have decreased in the last five years, which shows that companies are on the right track. While men have become less biased towards women, it seems that the gap is closing because women do not face the same obstacles as much as before. For instance, fewer women cite the failure to consider women for promotions or the lack of support for women as key reasons for the lack of female leaders.

### Provide Learning and Mentorship Opportunities

When companies provide learning opportunities to their employees, those with a greater need for these learning opportunities tend to participate. For instance, OMV Petrom's mentoring program is open to all staff, yet women, who face more obstacles in landing promotions, make up the majority of the participants. Hence, even without targeting specific groups, such as women, launching learning and mentorship programs will still benefit women and foster gender diversity over time.

### Focus on Giving Women an Equal Chance to Acquire Field Experience

As both men and women mentioned field or offshore experience as an important quality for promotion to senior positions, both genders should have equal opportunities in acquiring them. However, women are underrepresented in the technical roles that provide field experience, making it more difficult to women to get promoted to senior leadership positions. Short-term rotation programs and immersion experiences could equalize access to field experience and level the playing field between the genders. Companies should be aware of this issue of the imbalance in field experience and should set goals to reduce this obstacle for women, either by reducing the need for field experience to fill senior positions, or by actively supporting women in obtaining field experience.

### Engage Men in Senior Leadership Roles

Identifying the key opinion leaders is key to implementing any form of change. Lasting change can be achieved by engaging not just the women, but also men in senior leadership positions, as much of the company looks to these men for guidance. Establishing ownership at this level must be a priority, as these men have influence on all stages (attraction, retention, promotion) of advancing gender equality in the workplace.



## Andrea Istenes Solti

Country Chair, President of the board at Shell Hungary

Andrea Istenes Solti is a Hungarian executive, with 20+ years of international leadership experience and 7+ years of board experience. She has graduated with a masters's degree in International Business from Corvinus University in Budapest in 1992. She has broad experience in mergers & acquisition, outsourcing, offshoring and in managing emergency response. As Country Chair she is driving the business development in energy transition and activities that grow the reputation. She is an employee-centric leader, manager of international teams and team leads with high engagement level, and passionate about developing talents, mentoring and developing diverse and inclusive workplace. Andrea is an active supporter of social responsibility, she is the President of the Hungarian Business Leaders Forum, member of the Women in Energy Association, and Member of the Advisory Board of the Institute of Directors Hungary.

## 8 How to Move Forward?

What should companies' key priorities be to move closer towards gender equality?

In 2022, the main threat is the growing disinterest of both employees and leaders, a result of external factors such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the energy crisis, and of internal aspects such as a loss of credibility due to constant pressure without significant achievements.

To address the growing disinterest towards gender equality, companies need to move from high-level promises to day-to-day actions.

- Involve employees for better-tailored solutions
- Set measurable action plans to implement changes
- Ensure ownership is present on all levels

The key to advancing gender equality in the workplace is to continue to implement the measures and global best practices set out by various studies and past research, but at the same time move towards a more actionable phase of this implementation. To ensure that all employees get the support they require, make it a priority to communicate transparently and involve employees of all levels in setting out tailored next steps. The increased engagement of employees is also crucial as both external and internal factors contributed to the loss of ownership in recent years.

As the quotes below show<sup>37</sup>, even if a growing number of policies are in place at many companies to promote gender diversity, the trust in these policies is falling. Companies first need to regain trust and restore credibility to create ownership of gender diversity topics at all levels of the organization.

### To create ownership on all levels, companies need to restore credibility

- Ensure that policies are implemented and followed → “The company is referred to as a family-friendly workplace, but after three years of maternity leave, I did not get back my original position.”
- Make possibilities available and visible to all →

“In the company, the female mentor program only applies to women who are already in a leading position.”

- Ensure credibility at all occasions → “I was on a “women’s” career program where three men talked about the situation of women.”
- Engage male employees → “Unfortunately, in my experience, male and female colleagues are not treated as equal partners at this company. Some men almost never allow women into a communication “cigar room”.”
- Engage young women early on → “This will not be done by forcing quotas for women. It would be more expedient if girls were given more support in the education system to move toward the natural sciences.”

The first step is moving away from high-level promises to day-to-day actions in favor of gender diversity to ensure that policies are both implemented and followed through. A key measure here is the involvement of at least one member of the senior leadership team to ensure that the implementation of policies become and remain a priority. Making policies and opportunities available and visible to all is crucial in reaching a growing share of employees, while ensuring credibility is essential to retaining their continued engagement.

The key to achieving lasting and visible change lies within focusing on more than just female employees. Engaging the men in the organization facilitates more open and diverse discussions, while it also advances equality in the family. For example, offering parental leave opportunities regardless of gender creates a safer and more balanced environment that enables retaining experienced professionals.

Energy companies also need to look outside of their organization and start engaging young professionals and students early on. Providing more support to encourage women to study engineering and other technical fields at university will over time enable a more diverse and consistent inflow of young professionals, which is crucial to achieve lasting change.

<sup>37</sup>Results from the survey conducted by BCG for this study



# 9 Appendix

## Survey Methodology

The survey questionnaire consisted of questions related to the importance and perception of gender balance and gender diversity in the energy sector, career progression and career tracks, personal preferences, and expectations of a workplace, perceived managerial qualities of male and female managers, questions regarding the overall position of women in the energy sector and the impact of COVID on work. The online survey was filled out by over 3,900 respondents working in 10 countries.

## Market Research Methodology

The market research for the study covered 10 Central and Eastern European countries: Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine. Company data of 85 large energy firms operating in this region was collected, including the female FTE percentage, female management and senior management FTE percentage, and female board membership ratio. Qualitative analysis was also conducted regarding gender equality, gender balance, and gender diversity programs of the firms.

## List of External Sources

Boston Consulting Group and the Women in Energy Association. (2018). Women in Energy: Gender Diversity in the CEE-SEE Energy Sector. Budapest: Boston Consulting Group.

Boston Consulting Group and the World Petroleum Council. (2017). Untapped Reserves: Promoting Gender Balance in Oil and Gas. Boston: Boston Consulting Group.

Boston Consulting Group and the World Petroleum Council. (2021). Untapped Reserves 2.0. Boston Consulting Group.

Eurostat. (2022). Education Database.

OECD. (2022). Education Database.

The World Bank. (2021). Labor force, female. Retrieved from The World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.FE.ZS>

UNESCO. (2022). Education Database.

World Economic Forum. (2021). Global Gender Gap Report. Geneva: World Economic Forum.

Regional Energy Companies' Annual Reports

Regional Energy Companies' Sustainability Reports

## Note To The Reader

### About the Authors

Zsófia Beck is a Managing Director and Partner at the Budapest office of Boston Consulting Group. She is leading BCG's Energy and Climate&Sustainability Practices in CEE, and a core member of BCG's Global Energy Practice with major focus on electricity and gas utilities, strategy, and operational development.

Andrea Pánczél is the founder and Chair of the Women in Energy Association. She has tremendous media experience and has been the communication director at some of the largest energy companies in CEE.

### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the approximately 4,000 industry professionals who responded to the survey, and the senior industry executives and market experts whom they interviewed.

We also acknowledge the contributions of BCG's Péter Holoda, Csilla Szalay, Anna Jávorka, Patrik Széll, Ambrus Bárány, Fruzsina Tóth, László Gerő, Margit Fehér, Zsuzsanna Gerencsér.

### For Further Contact

If you would like to discuss the report, please contact:

#### Zsófia Beck

BCG Budapest

+36 30 332 2431

[beck.zsofia@bcg.com](mailto:beck.zsofia@bcg.com)

#### Andrea Pánczél

Women in Energy Association

+36 70 373 5206

[andrea.panczel@whitepaperconsulting.hu](mailto:andrea.panczel@whitepaperconsulting.hu)



