Shaping the Future of Solar Energy

Voices from SolarHub

Funded by
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SolarHub

A Cross-Institutional Collaboration Driving Change

SolarHub brings together a diverse network of leading institutions—universities, research centers, public agencies, and industry partners—working collectively to advance innovation in solar energy. This partnership reflects the strength of our transnational collaboration and our shared commitment to inclusive, interdisciplinary progress.

Brite SOLAR TECHNOLOGIES

CERTH CENTRE FOR RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY HELLAS

EGE ÜNİVERSİTESİ

GÜNDER

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kalyon PV PHOTOVOLTAIC

REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND OF CENTRAL MACEDONIA ON BEHALF OF THE REGION OF CENTRAL MACEDONIA

TÜBİTAK

ODTÜ METU

ODTÜ GÜNAM

Empowering Minds in Solar Research

A Collection of Perspectives from the SolarHub Project Team

Scientific progress thrives on diverse perspectives, collaboration, and innovation. The SolarHub Project is committed to fostering an inclusive research environment where all individuals, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to contribute, lead, and shape the future of solar energy.

This booklet brings together the voices of researchers, engineers, and innovators from across our consortium. Through their insights, they share experiences, challenges, and aspirations in the field of solar energy. From mentorship and leadership to technical expertise and inclusion, these perspectives highlight the collective effort required to drive meaningful change.

We extend our gratitude to all researchers who have shared their thoughts and experiences in this collection. Their insights not only inspire but also pave the way for future generations of scientists and innovators in renewable energy.

Together, let's continue building a more equitable, sustainable, and innovative solar energy sector.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Çağla Akgül

METU

Researcher

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

- Increase targeted access to funding and fellowship opportunities
- Provide support for childcare

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

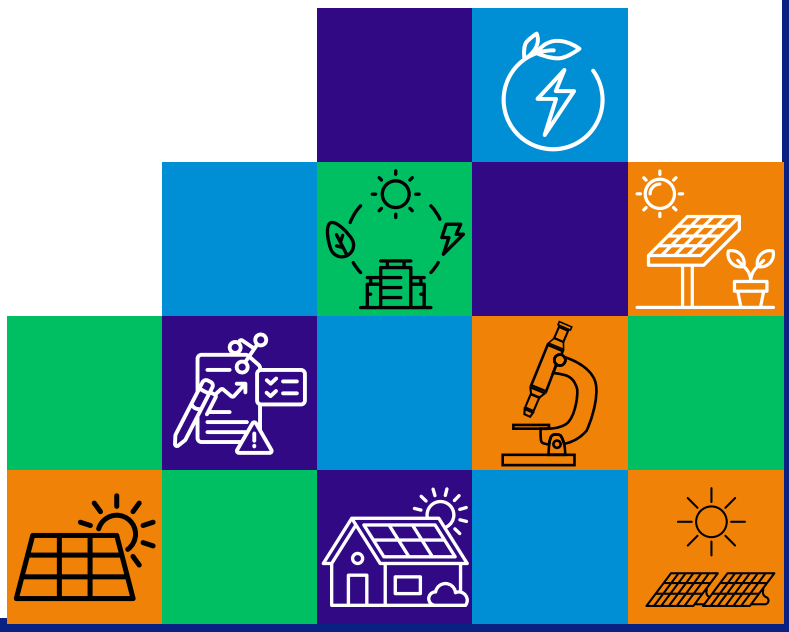
- Build a strong network and stay alert to new opportunities
- Prioritize high-quality education and continuous learning

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

Coming from a background in civil engineering, where challenges around equity are often more pronounced, my experience in the solar energy field has been notably positive. The sector has demonstrated a commendable level of fairness and inclusivity in both collaboration and professional engagement.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project is supportive for inclusion? Are there any practices you think needs change?

Throughout my involvement in the SolarHub project, I felt fully included and valued as a contributor. The collaborative atmosphere and equitable distribution of responsibilities suggest that participation was driven by expertise and commitment, free from any form of bias or exclusion.



Elşen Aydın

ODTÜ - GÜNAM

Researcher

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

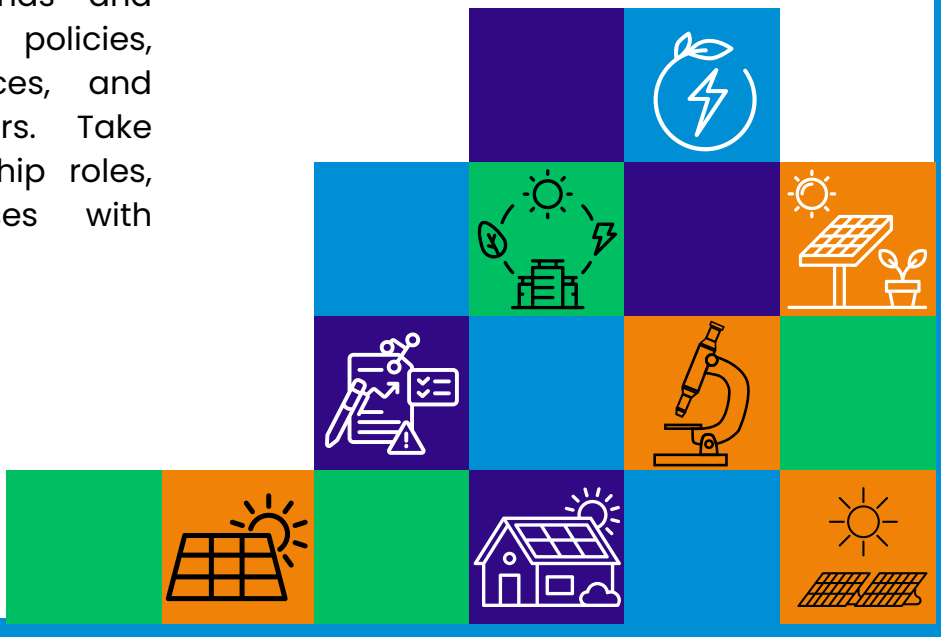
I believe this should happen naturally, rather than being enforced through quotas. From a young age, children should be exposed to the same opportunities and encouraged to explore their interests freely. This is essential in breaking the strict roles that society often imposes based on gender.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

Stay curious, build strong technical skills, and embrace an interdisciplinary mindset. Keep up with industry trends and renewable energy policies, engage in conferences, and connect with mentors. Take initiative, seek leadership roles, and challenge biases with confidence.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Organizations should implement transparent recruitment, fair funding allocation, flexible work options, pay equity, and ensure balanced representation in leadership and public-facing events.



Elşen Aydın

ODTÜ - GÜNAM

Researcher

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

Common challenges include underrepresentation, pay disparity, and limited mentoring. These can be addressed through continuous skill development, networking, and active advocacy for inclusive professional environments.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

SolarHub fosters inclusion by promoting diverse participation, mentoring, and education. It has maintained balanced representation to date and continues to take meaningful steps to enhance inclusivity within the sector.

Ebru Soyyüce Aydın

TÜBİTAK

Researcher

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

Encouraging mentorship programs where experienced researchers guide early-career professionals can significantly help. Additionally, policies that support diversity and inclusion, such as leadership development programs and flexible working conditions, can provide a more equitable pathway to leadership roles.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

Staying updated on developments in solar energy and renewable technologies is essential. Building strong professional networks and engaging in industry events can open new opportunities, while finding a mentor can provide valuable guidance and support in career progression.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Family-friendly policies, such as flexible working hours and parental leave, can help create a supportive work environment, ensuring that individuals can balance professional and personal responsibilities effectively.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

The SolarHub project has a strong representation of researchers from diverse backgrounds, which enriches scientific discussions and innovation. Having balanced representation in research teams and leadership roles ensures a wider range of perspectives in decision-making. To further enhance inclusion, expanding mentorship programs, leadership opportunities, and visibility for professionals in key decision-making roles would be beneficial.

Dr. Ramona Davoudnezhad Apaydın

Kalyon PV R&D Centre

Task Member at WP2 and WP3

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

- Ensuring equal access to funding and research opportunities.
- Implementing institutional policies that promote work-life balance.
- Highlighting diverse role models in science and research.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

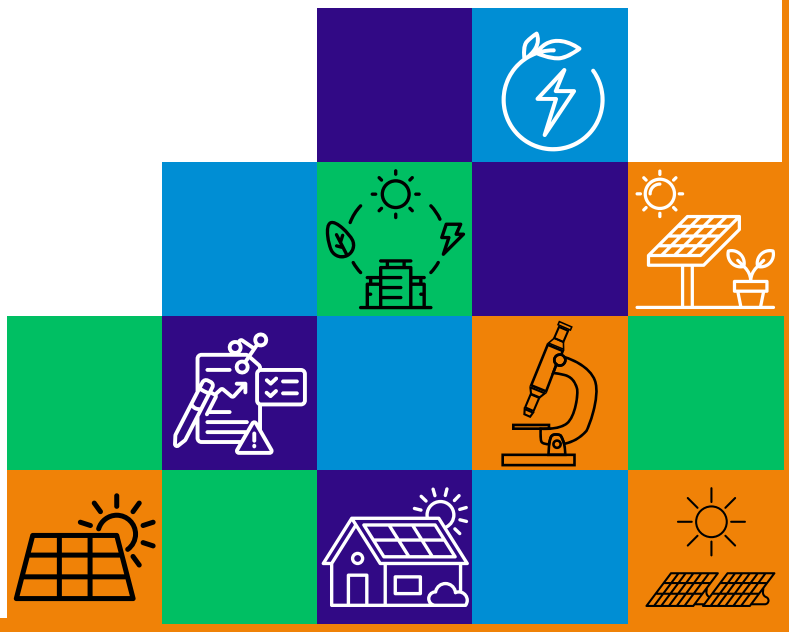
Work hard and be confident in your abilities. The solar energy field offers many opportunities for innovation and growth, and believing in yourself is just as important as technical expertise. Seek out mentors, build a strong network, and never hesitate to take on new challenges.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

- Dedicated funding programs to support underrepresented groups in research.
- Safe and inclusive work environments that promote equal opportunities.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project is supportive for inclusion? Are there any practices you think needs change?

SolarHub is actively improving diversity by engaging researchers from various backgrounds and creating an inclusive research environment.
Increasing the visibility of female scientists and ensuring equal representation in leadership roles should remain a priority.
For example, last year, with the support of the SolarHub project, I had the opportunity to serve as the chairperson for a conference session within the SolarHub program, which was a valuable leadership experience.



Prof. Dr. F. Umut Beşpınar

METU

Researcher

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

Greater representation requires inclusive policies at all levels of education and career development. Institutions must support diverse needs through targeted strategies and foster environments that enable individuals to thrive and progress into leadership.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

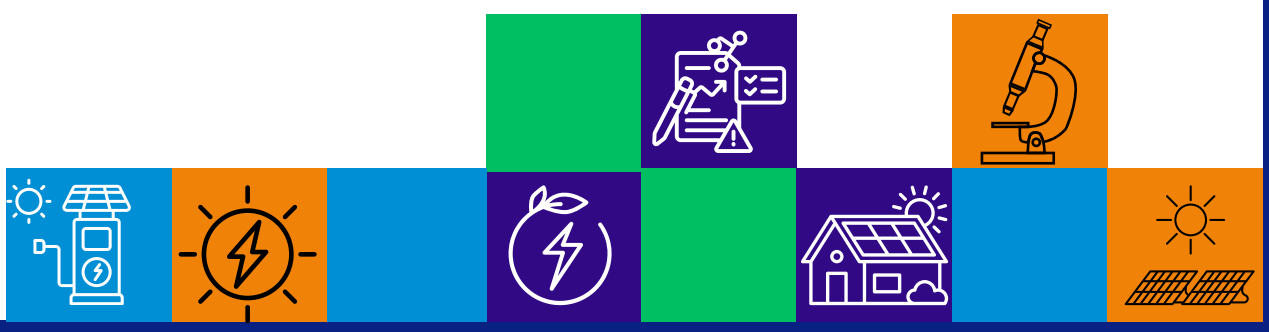
Solar energy is an interdisciplinary field where collaboration is key. Building dialogue across disciplines and developing a shared, inclusive language will strengthen both research and real-world impact.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Institutions should first identify key barriers, then implement measurable strategies focused on inclusive hiring, equitable policies, and continuous education. Monitoring progress is essential to creating a more dynamic and equitable research environment.

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

The field faces common STEM challenges—rapid change, limited resources, and inclusion gaps. These can be tackled through ongoing learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and advocacy for inclusive workplace practices.



Prof. Dr. F. Umut Beşpınar

METU

Researcher

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

From its inception, SolarHub has shown a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion. To deepen this impact, it is essential to pair awareness-raising efforts with concrete, transformative actions that directly challenge prevailing social stereotypes. These efforts will help cultivate a more inclusive and reflective research and working environment.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Neslihan Çolak

Ege University

Researcher

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

- To improve representation in scientific leadership, it is essential to recognize and address structural barriers. Mentorship programs play a crucial role in supporting career progression, while flexible work policies that promote work-life balance can help individuals advance in academia and R&D projects.
- However, achieving diversity in leadership should not be seen as the responsibility of only one group. Raising awareness among all researchers and fostering a supportive work environment are essential steps. Inclusive leadership training and equity-focused initiatives can help build a more diverse academic and professional ecosystem. From my own experience, international collaborations and participation in programs like Horizon Europe significantly contribute to career development.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

- Solar energy is a highly interdisciplinary field, requiring both technical expertise and collaboration across various sectors. Those interested in engineering, materials science, energy policy, and environmental impact assessment can find great opportunities in this industry.
- Engage in mentorship programs to build academic and professional networks.
- Participate in international projects and conferences to expand career prospects.
- Join platforms that support early-career researchers in STEM to increase visibility in the field.
- Develop technical and managerial skills by working across disciplines to strengthen career growth.
- Promoting equity and inclusion in science and engineering is key, and engaging all colleagues in these discussions is an important step toward progress.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Neslihan Çolak

Ege University

Researcher

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

- Introducing special funding programs and scholarships for early-career researchers.
- Increasing representation in leadership roles, ensuring equal opportunities in project coordination, advisory boards, and evaluation processes.
- Promoting institutional policies that support work-life balance.
- Expanding early-stage mentorship programs for students and young researchers in STEM.

For lasting change, equity-focused initiatives should engage all researchers and foster an inclusive work culture.

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

- Underrepresentation in leadership: Some researchers may face skepticism about their expertise, particularly in fieldwork, technical meetings, and project management.
- The glass ceiling effect: Advancing to decision-making positions in academia and research often requires significantly more effort.
- Work-life balance challenges: International collaborations and academic publishing require a demanding workload, making it difficult to maintain balance.

Building strong networks and supportive collaborations is key. Allies who recognize barriers and promote inclusivity can help foster a more equitable research environment.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Neslihan Çolak

Ege University

Researcher

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

SolarHub has taken important steps to promote diversity and visibility in research. However, further improvements could include:

- Providing specialized training and mentorship programs for early-career researchers.
- Encouraging greater participation in leadership and project management roles.
- Organizing equity and inclusion initiatives that engage all researchers in meaningful discussions.

It is particularly important to ensure that diversity efforts are seen as a shared responsibility. Equity in science and research should not be perceived as the concern of one group—it requires the active participation of all researchers to foster an inclusive work culture.

SolarHub

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zeynep Demir

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, TAGEM – Soil Fertilizer and Water Resources Central Research Institute

Researcher

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

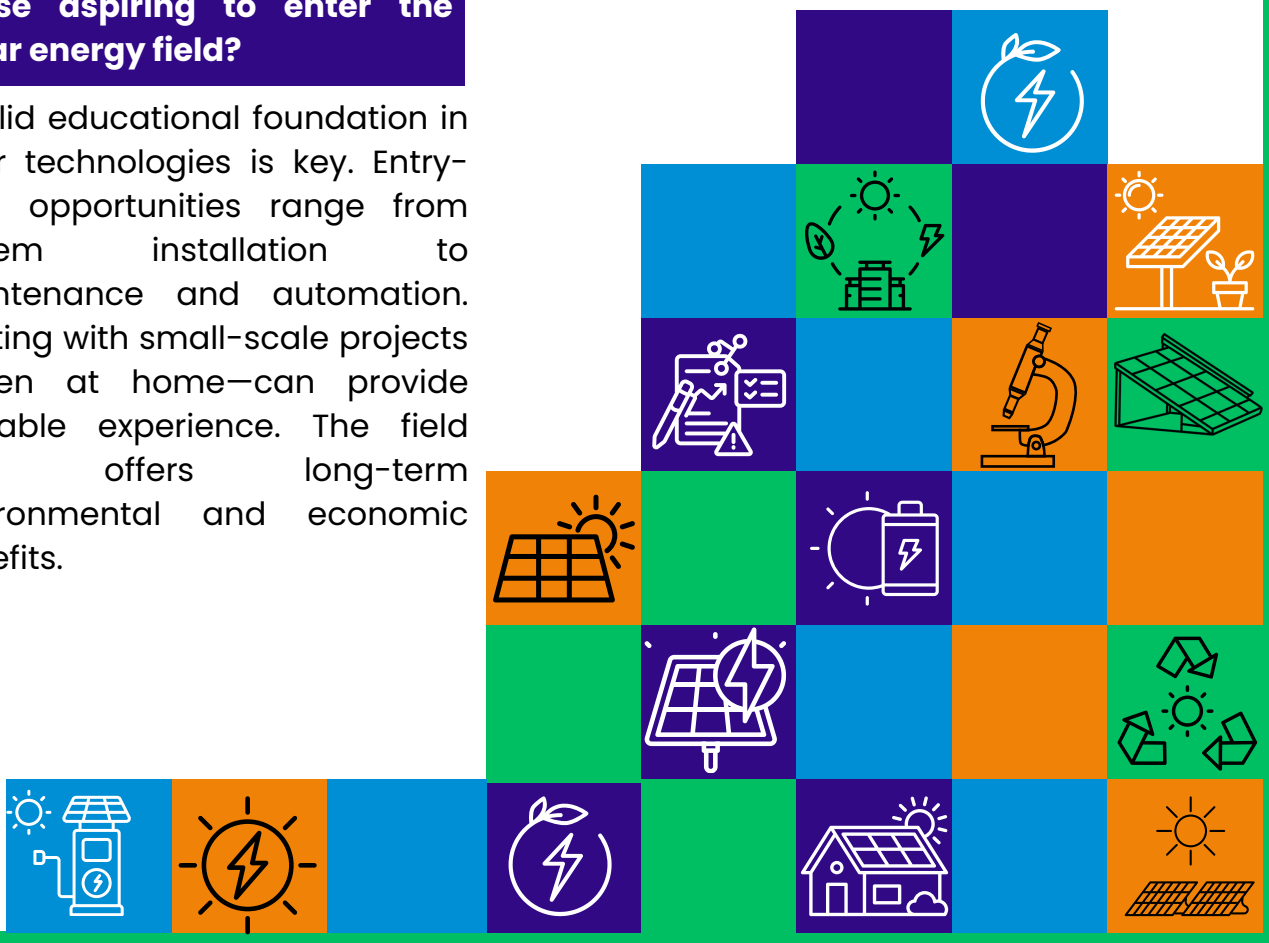
Leadership diversity can be strengthened by offering targeted training, flexible working conditions, mentorship programs, and awareness sessions on bias. Organizations should also publish equality plans grounded in measurable objectives to promote a more inclusive culture.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

A solid educational foundation in solar technologies is key. Entry-level opportunities range from system installation to maintenance and automation. Starting with small-scale projects—even at home—can provide valuable experience. The field also offers long-term environmental and economic benefits.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Institutions can support diversity by providing awareness and training programs, increasing representation in leadership roles, and creating mentoring opportunities. Government support—such as grants, low-interest loans, and renewable energy incentives—can help balance career advancement with accessibility.



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zeynep Demir

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, TAGEM – Soil Fertilizer and Water Resources Central Research Institute

Researcher

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

The sector faces high initial costs, weather dependency, space constraints, and technical complexity. These challenges can be addressed through financial support, training on new technologies, and strong problem-solving capabilities.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

SolarHub contributes to inclusivity through international collaboration, support for innovation, and comprehensive services for researchers and startups. To further strengthen its impact, the project could place greater emphasis on market access, financial sustainability, and expand its focus beyond the agri-food sector.

SolarHub

Zeynep Dilan Deniz

TAT Food

TAT Principal Investigator

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

Leadership development can be strengthened through workshops, seminars, and online courses. Mentorship and coaching support individuals in reaching their goals with greater confidence. Participation in professional networks and joint projects also expands career opportunities. Promoting awareness of equality and offering flexible work models, including remote work, can further support inclusion in leadership.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

Stay curious, observe trends, and connect with experienced professionals. Identify sector-specific needs and engage in targeted training programs to strengthen your expertise.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Incentives like tax breaks, grants, and low-interest loans can support system investments. Institutions can also create structures dedicated to equality, organize professional development programs, and promote coaching opportunities.

Zeynep Dilan Deniz

TAT Food

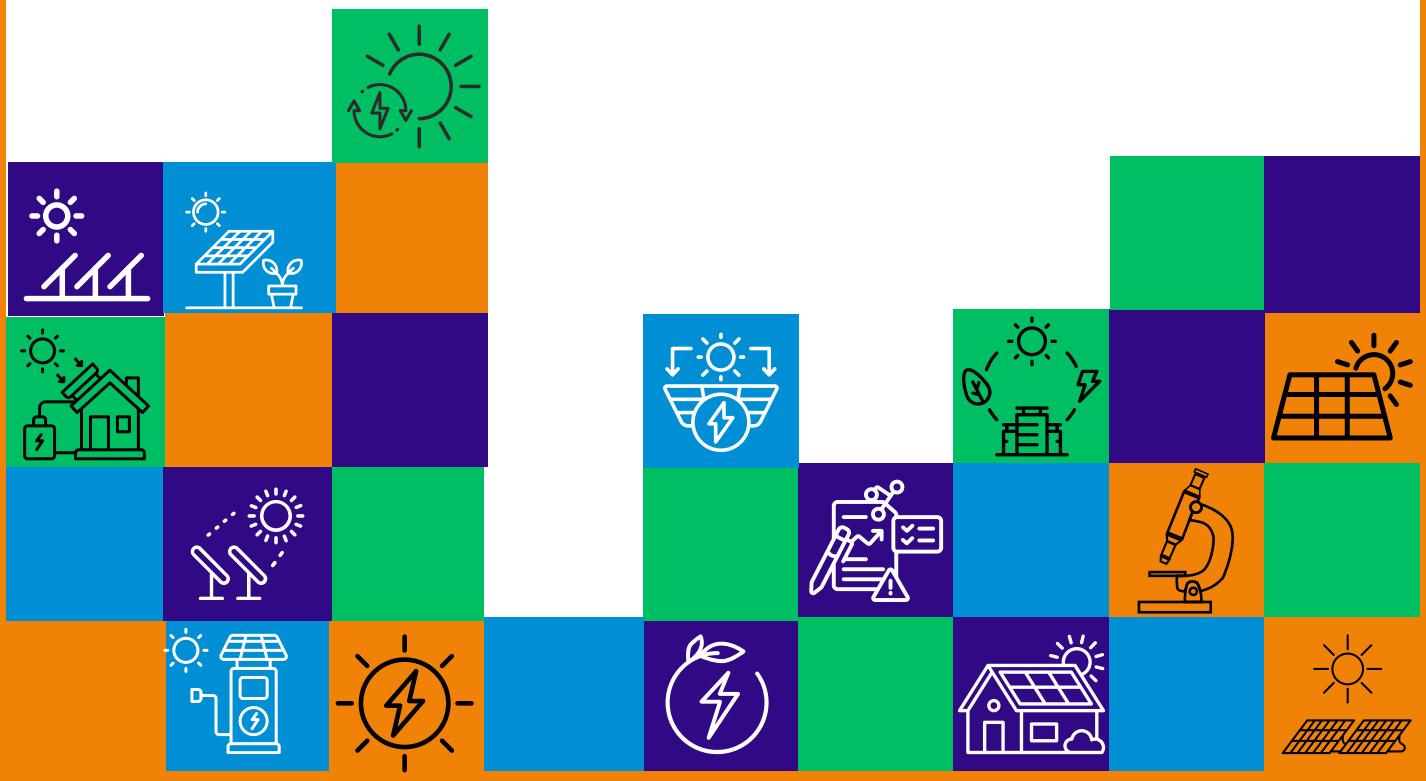
TAT Principal Investigator

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

Challenges include limited leadership access, adapting new technologies, and managing energy efficiency across different climates. These can be addressed through ongoing technical training, connecting with industry experts, and developing solutions aligned with evolving energy trends.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

SolarHub brings together stakeholders from across the innovation ecosystem to foster diversity and synergy. It supports teams with mentoring, technical assistance, and access to advanced R&D infrastructure. The open and collaborative environment contributes to a more inclusive and sustainable solar energy community.



Dr. Vassiliki Drosou

Centre for Renewable Energy Sources and Savings (CRES)

WP Leader

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

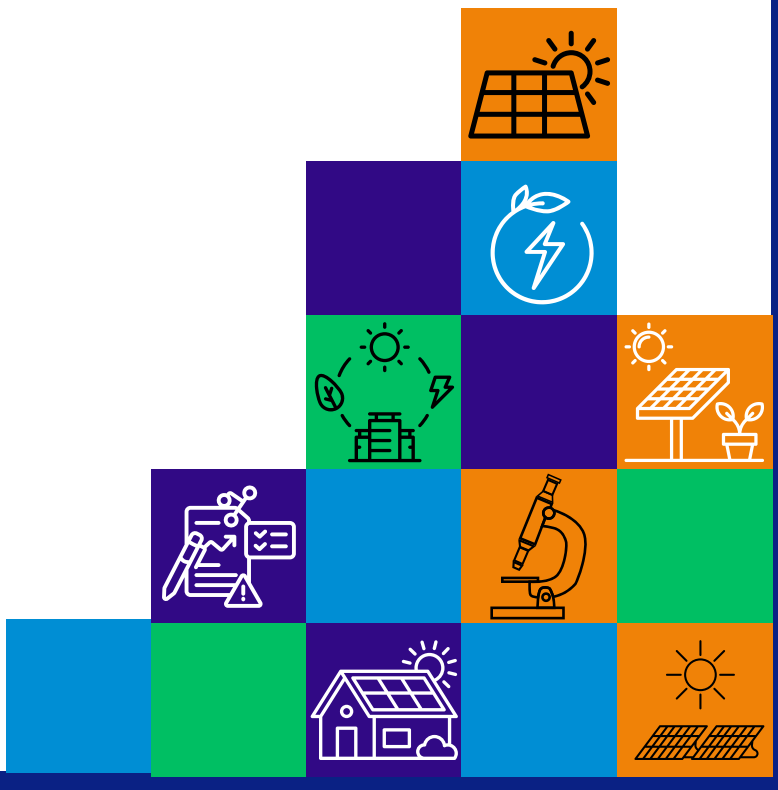
To increase representation in top scientific leadership, we need targeted mentorship and leadership training. At the same time, organizations should implement bias-free hiring and promotion policies and create transparent career pathways. Work-life balance support, inclusive workplace culture, and equitable funding opportunities are also crucial in fostering leadership diversity.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

Anyone aspiring to enter the solar energy sector should build a strong foundation in STEM through education and hands-on experience. Seek internships, mentorship—such as those offered by SolarHub—and networking opportunities with industry professionals. Staying updated on emerging technologies and policies is essential. Confidence, attention to detail, persistence, and a passion for sustainability will help individuals thrive in this growing and impactful industry.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

The most effective measures include equitable hiring and promotion practices, mentorship and sponsorship programs, and family-friendly work policies. Institutions should also foster inclusive workplaces, provide leadership training, and ensure equal access to networking and career advancement opportunities.



Dr. Vassiliki Drosou

Centre for Renewable Energy Sources and Savings (CRES)

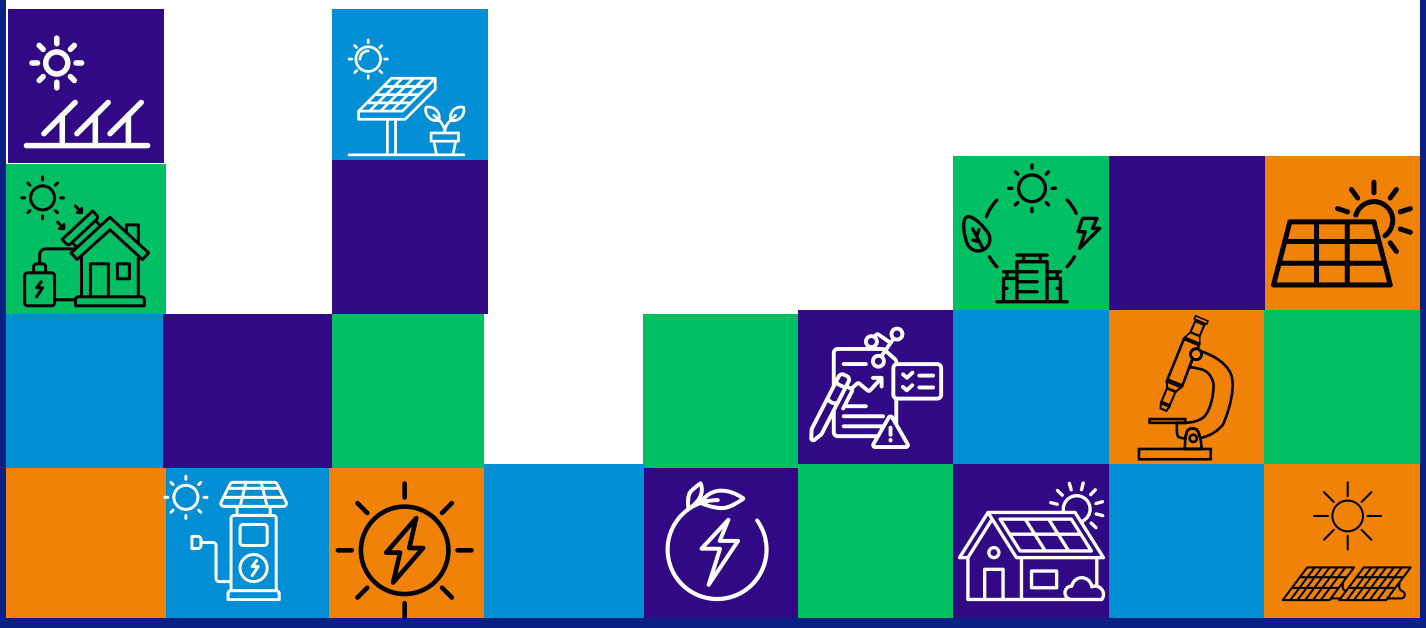
WP Leader

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

Like in many STEM fields, challenges such as bias, underrepresentation in leadership, and limited access to funding or networking opportunities can arise. Personally, confidence, resilience, and engaging in supportive professional communities have helped me navigate and overcome these barriers.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

The SolarHub project fosters inclusion through mentorship programs, researcher mobility activities, and community engagement. It promotes equal opportunities by offering leadership training for new researchers and startups. However, expanding outreach efforts could further encourage more individuals to join and thrive in the field.



SolarHub

Dr. Hande Eryılmaz

ODTÜ - GÜNAM

Project Manager (PM)
Ethics Manager (EM)
Risk and Quality Manager (RQM)

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

- Increase visibility of diverse role models across all levels.
- Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration to break traditional gender roles in specific fields.
- Challenge cultural biases and promote an inclusive mindset in career development.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

- Gain hands-on experience through internships and project work.
- Explore different career paths within core solar technologies and hybrid applications.
- Adopt a systematic and interdisciplinary approach to maximize impact.
- Engage in STE(A)M early on to develop technical and social science competencies.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

- Mentorship and experience-sharing to increase visibility.
- HR policies ensuring balanced representation and a safe work environment.
- Strengthening collaborations between institutions and policymakers to align career opportunities with evolving industry standards.

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

- Institutional and cultural biases can be overcome with leaders who value open communication and who create environments to voice needs and requests.
- Transparency in pay structures and equal career progression opportunities should be prioritized.
- Fostering inclusive environments ensures fair contributions from all professionals and strengthens the sector.

Dr. Hande Eryılmaz

ODTÜ - GÜNAM

Project Manager (PM)
Ethics Manager (EM)
Risk and Quality Manager (RQM)

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

SolarHub fosters inclusion by ensuring equal recognition of contributions and maintaining open communication across teams. The project actively supports early-career researchers through SolarSparks, encouraging collaboration and knowledge exchange across different cultures.

Further strengthening mentorship and leadership opportunities would enhance professional development and career advancement.

SolarHub

Selin Cansu Gölboylu

Kalyon PV R&D Centre

Researcher

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

Encouraging mentorship programs, where experienced professionals guide early-career researchers, can be highly effective. Offering targeted leadership training and increasing visibility for successful role models through industry recognition can inspire more individuals to pursue leadership positions.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

Don't hesitate to put forward your ideas and take initiative in projects that inspire you. Be persistent, continue expanding your knowledge, and actively seek mentorship and professional networks. Your perspective is valuable and can contribute to innovative solutions in solar energy research.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Institutions should adopt flexible working arrangements, such as family-friendly schedules and remote work options. Establishing clear anti-discrimination policies and providing career-development grants or awards for underrepresented groups would also help create a more equitable work environment.

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

One significant challenge is being underestimated or having to prove competence more frequently. To navigate this, I focus on building a strong professional network, working with supportive colleagues, and actively participating in projects that showcase expertise and leadership.

Selin Cansu Gölboylu

Kalyon PV R&D Centre

Researcher

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

The SolarHub project fosters inclusion by valuing diverse perspectives and collaboration. It provides opportunities for all participants to actively engage and contribute. Expanding efforts to highlight achievements and leadership contributions of diverse team members can further strengthen this culture of inclusivity.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pınar Derin Güre

METU
ODTÜ - GÜNAM

Task Leader
METU Principal Investigator

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

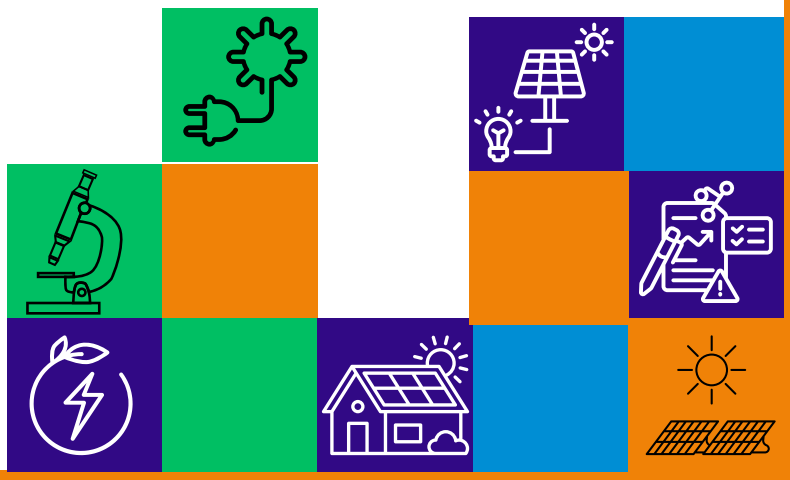
Participation in academic and research networks and projects has historically been uneven across different groups. To promote greater representation in leadership roles, it is essential to increase the economic visibility of diverse researchers and ensure their work is recognized in research circles.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

Solar energy is a field that requires both technical expertise and collaboration across multiple disciplines. Being open to new ideas from different fields is crucial—renewable energy and climate change solutions cannot be developed in isolation. For example, as an economist, I cannot focus solely on my discipline without considering the technical aspects of solar energy solutions. Interdisciplinary collaboration is key to creating applicable and impactful innovations.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

- Dedicated awards and project grants to support underrepresented researchers in leading projects and advancing research.
- Funding opportunities for early-career researchers to encourage engagement in solar energy topics.
- Experience exchange and mentorship programs led by established researchers to provide guidance and create role models.



Assoc. Prof. Dr Pınar Derin Güre

METU
ODTÜ - GÜNAM

Task Leader
METU Principal Investigator

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

Just like in many fields, balancing work and personal responsibilities remains a challenge. Many researchers juggle demanding projects while also managing family or caregiving responsibilities, making it difficult to maintain equilibrium. Although efforts are being made toward greater equity, disparities in workload distribution persist, leading to longer hours, higher effort, and increased fatigue.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

From the beginning, SolarHub has placed a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion. I have not experienced discrimination within the project, but the inequalities present in broader society still impact professional environments.

Achieving recognition often requires putting in extra effort to be seen as equally successful. Many leadership positions in academia and research institutions remain disproportionately held by certain groups, which reinforces structural barriers. However, SolarHub has provided career support, opportunities, and empowerment.

I am proud to serve as METU's coordinator for this project, and it is inspiring to see leadership roles in SolarHub distributed across a diverse team. We don't all start from the same place, but when we finish together, it's important to recognize that some have had to work harder to get there. While SolarHub has been supportive in every aspect, expanding initiatives to further promote diversity and leadership equity would strengthen its impact. We may not be able to change society overnight, but we can set an example for future generations.

Ece Karakuş

METU

Researcher

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

Encouraging individuals from an early age to explore their passion for science, providing equal educational opportunities, creating environments where they can expand their networks and connect with professionals, and ensuring inclusive workplaces can help increase representation in scientific leadership roles.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

I would advise getting involved in internships and workshops, seeking opportunities in research projects to gain hands-on experience, and staying updated on technological advancements in the solar energy field. The most important thing is not to be discouraged by challenges but to use them as motivation to push forward.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Promoting equity in hiring and funding processes and creating inclusive workspaces where individuals feel valued and safe will significantly contribute to a more diverse and successful solar energy sector.

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

Professionals in technical fields may encounter biases about their skills and expertise, particularly in sectors where certain groups are underrepresented. I believe the best way to overcome these challenges is to continuously improve my knowledge and actively promote an inclusive and collaborative workplace culture.

Ece Karakuş

METU

Researcher

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

SolarHub fosters inclusion by creating a collaborative environment where researchers from diverse backgrounds, disciplines, and experiences work together. While I don't see a major need for change, further improvements could include tracking diversity metrics and organizing workshops focused on fostering equity and inclusion in the field.

Chrysanthi Kiskini

Regional Development Fund of Central Macedonia

RDFCM Principal Investigator Partner

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

Increasing leadership diversity requires institutional commitment to equality. Transparent promotion policies and equal access to leadership training ensure that all professionals have the same opportunities to advance.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

Pursue a career in solar energy with determination, actively seek education and professional growth opportunities, and stay engaged in this rapidly evolving industry. Diverse perspectives play a crucial role in shaping the sector's future.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Companies and institutions should adopt policies that promote work-life balance, such as flexible working arrangements and parental leave, making the field more accessible to all professionals.

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

One major challenge is overcoming biases and being taken seriously in a traditionally male-dominated sector. Staying focused on expertise and demonstrating abilities through work helps establish credibility.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

SolarHub actively promotes inclusion by providing a platform for diverse professionals and encouraging equal participation. Expanding mentorship programs could further strengthen its impact.

Kyriaki Kissa

Regional Development Fund of Central Macedonia

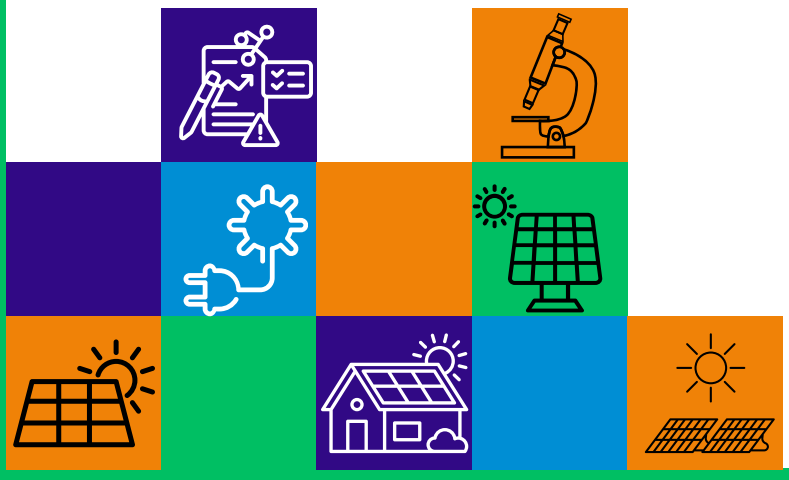
Partner

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

Encouraging mentorship and professional networking is essential for career progression. Strong organizational support systems can empower individuals to take on leadership roles with confidence.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

Building strong technical knowledge, actively engaging with industry professionals, and fostering confidence, perseverance, and continuous learning are key to success in the solar energy sector.



What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Funding programs and grants specifically aimed at supporting diverse research initiatives can help bridge gaps in the industry and encourage broader participation in solar energy projects.

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

Balancing professional responsibilities with personal commitments can be challenging, especially in a demanding field like solar energy. Time management and a strong support system are essential for overcoming these difficulties.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

SolarHub actively promotes diversity, but increasing visibility for underrepresented professionals in leadership roles could further inspire and encourage broader participation.

Dr. Duygu Kuzyaka

ODTÜ - GÜNAM

Task Leader

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

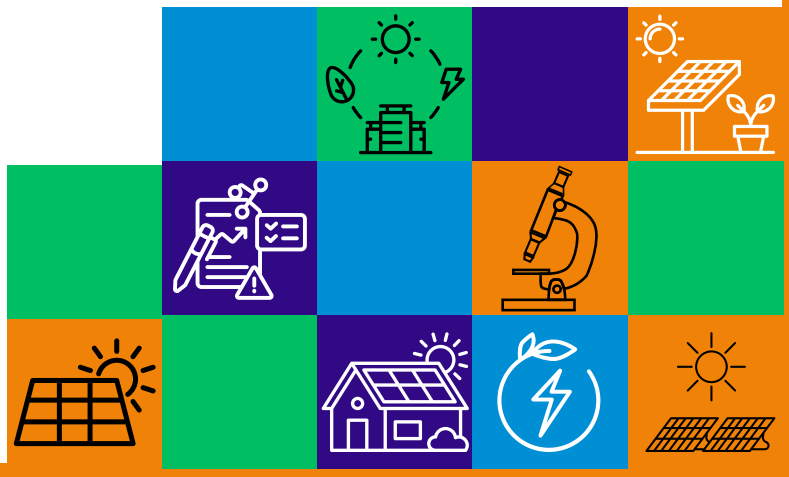
To enhance representation in senior scientific leadership positions, it is crucial to establish targeted mentorship initiatives, ensure equitable access to funding and opportunities, and implement institutional policies that promote work-life balance. Additionally, addressing implicit biases in recruitment and promotion processes and fostering diverse representation within decision-making bodies are essential steps.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

I would recommend that individuals aspiring to enter the solar energy sector actively seek mentorship, develop a strong technical foundation, and engage in extensive networking. Participation in professional associations, industry conferences, and keeping up with technological advancements can provide valuable opportunities. Above all, confidence and resilience are key—challenges may arise, but supportive professional communities can help navigate them.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Policies such as transparent hiring and promotion processes, family-supportive workplace policies, and dedicated funding for underrepresented researchers can create a more inclusive environment. Additionally, institutions should implement anti-discrimination training, ensure equal representation on panels and committees, and promote flexible work arrangements to support retention and career progression.



Dr. Duygu Kuzyaka

ODTÜ - GÜNAM

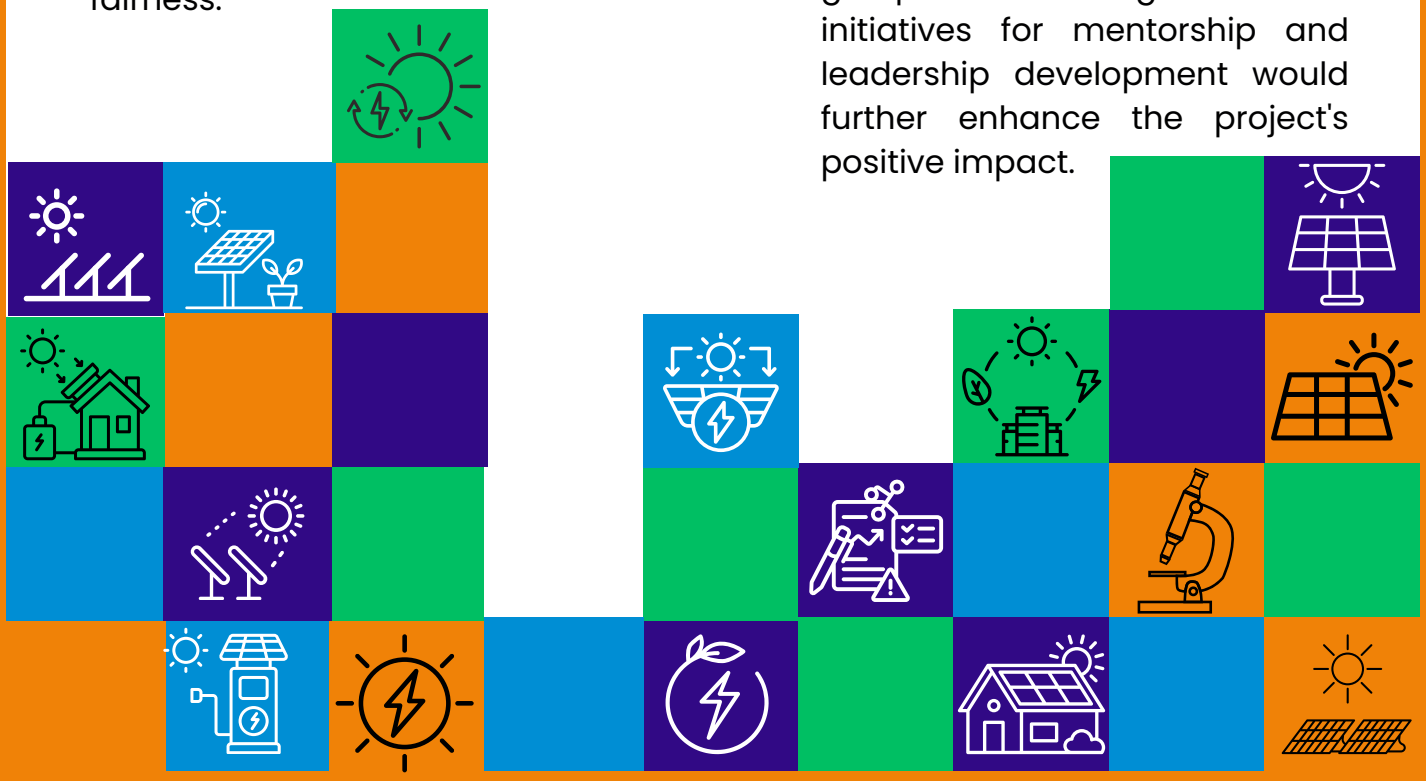
Task Leader

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

One significant challenge is bias in career progression, which can result in being undervalued or facing fewer leadership opportunities. Another obstacle is limited representation in leadership, making it more difficult to find role models and mentors. To overcome these challenges, I focus on building a strong professional network, advocating for inclusion, and actively engaging in initiatives that promote equity and fairness.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

The SolarHub project fosters inclusion by promoting diverse participation, providing training opportunities, and cultivating a collaborative research environment. However, inclusion efforts could be further strengthened by systematically monitoring representation in leadership roles, expanding mentorship programs, and implementing formal policies that support underrepresented groups. Establishing structured initiatives for mentorship and leadership development would further enhance the project's positive impact.



Argyroula Mourtzikou

Brite Solar Technologies

Researcher

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

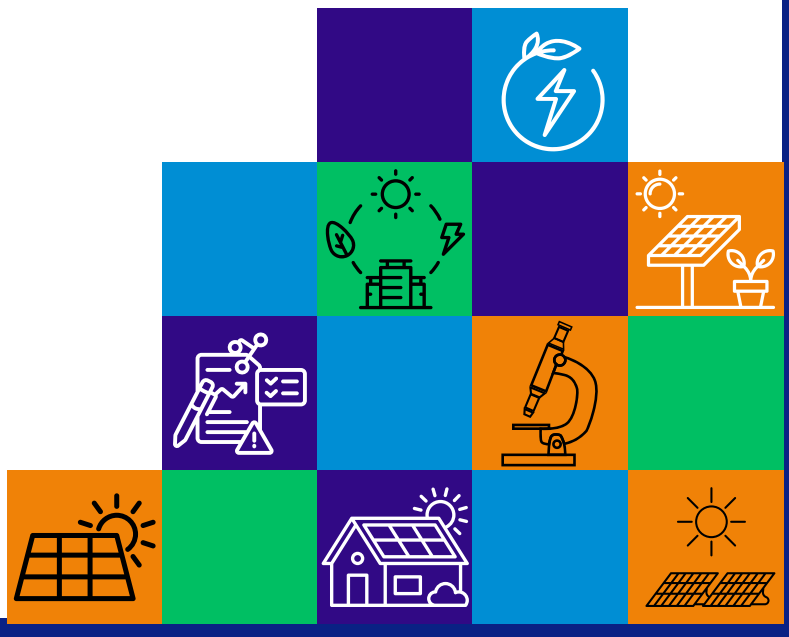
- Encouraging leadership and management training to help professionals develop strategic and decision-making skills.
- Promoting proactive participation in workplace discussions and initiatives to foster confidence and visibility.
- Raising awareness through inclusive leadership seminars and diversity-focused training programs to ensure equitable opportunities for all.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

- Establishing clear diversity goals to ensure balanced representation in solar energy projects, European committees, and research programs.
- Implementing family-supportive workplace policies, such as flexible work hours and accommodations for parental responsibilities, while ensuring safe working conditions for all employees.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

Have self-confidence in both academic and leadership abilities. The solar energy field is rapidly evolving and presents numerous opportunities for professional development and economic growth. Continuous learning and active participation in the sector will contribute to long-term success.



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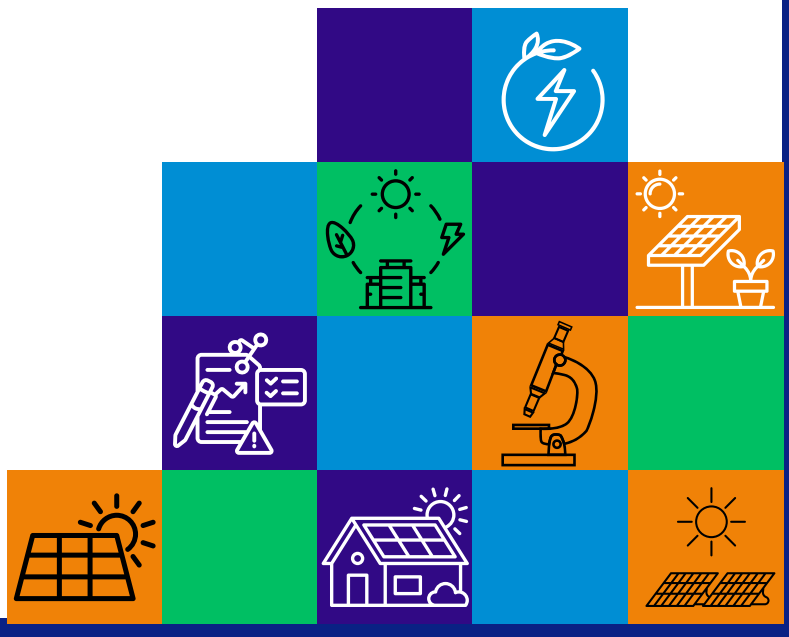


Prof. Dr. Tuba Okutucu Özyurt

İstanbul Technical University

SolarHub Partner, ITU's Principal Researcher for SolarHub

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

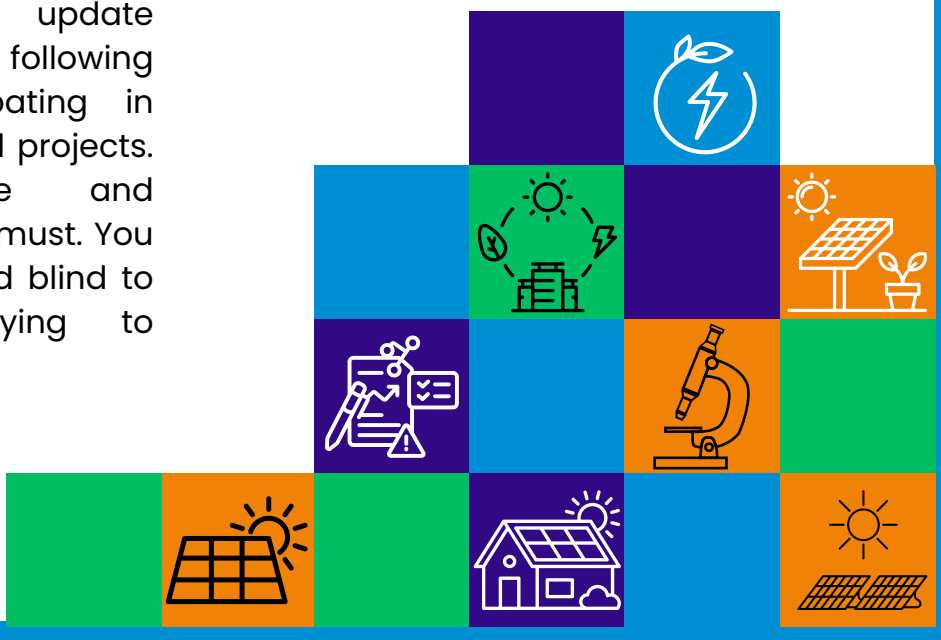
I believe this should happen naturally, rather than being enforced through quotas. From a young age, children should be exposed to the same opportunities and encouraged to explore their interests freely. This is essential in breaking the strict roles that society often imposes based on gender.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

The first thing is to have a good education and solid background. All researchers including women should frequently update themselves by closely following the literature, participating in related conferences and projects. Then self-confidence and believing in oneself is a must. You should also be deaf and blind to those who are trying to discourage you.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Institutional changes should begin at the earliest stages of education rather than being introduced only at the career or leadership level. I feel much stronger and more valued when I am recognized for my qualifications and expertise rather than any demographic characteristic. A true merit-based system that ensures fair and transparent opportunities for all is the best way forward.



Dr. Eleni Papaioannou

Centre for Research and Technology Hellas - CERTH

Task Co-Leader

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

- Strong role models in science and research.
- Mentorship programs to support career progression.
- Balanced representation in scientific boards, evaluation committees, and leadership teams.
- An inclusive environment where leadership is recognized based on skills and expertise.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

- Seek mentorship and build professional networks.
- Connect with SolarHub to explore opportunities in the field.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

- Flexible working policies to support work-life balance.
- Equal opportunities for career advancement at all levels.
- Funding programs to support research projects led by underrepresented groups.

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

Bias and stereotypes can sometimes pose challenges in career progression. Addressing these barriers requires confidence, visibility, and a strong professional network to advocate for equitable opportunities.

Dr. Eleni Papaioannou

Centre for Research and Technology Hellas - CERTH

Task Co-Leader

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

- SolarHub has established an inclusive environment where all researchers contribute equally, and the efforts of all partners are respected.
- Further visibility initiatives through dedicated events could enhance awareness and highlight contributions more effectively.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Selin Pıravadılı

TÜBİTAK

Researcher

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

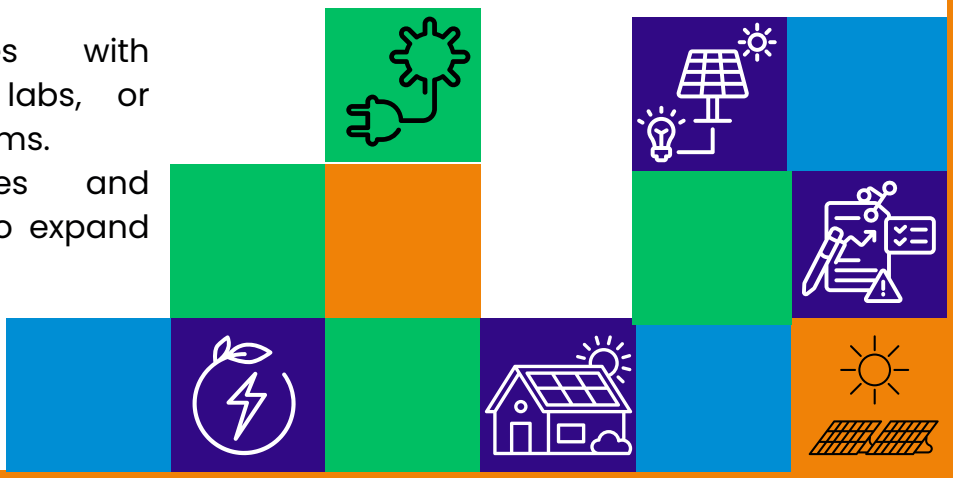
- Encouraging experienced scientific leaders to mentor early-career researchers.
- Facilitating access to high-profile research collaborations and global networks.
- Providing early leadership training to prepare researchers for top roles.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

- Gain experience with simulation tools (e.g., PVsyst, COMSOL, MATLAB) and fabrication techniques.
- Connect with industry leaders and join professional networks focused on renewable energy.
- Seek opportunities with startups, national labs, or renewable energy firms.
- Attend conferences and networking events to expand career prospects.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

- Blind recruitment processes to minimize bias in hiring.
- Establish national funding programs to support underrepresented researchers.
- Encourage remote work, hybrid models, and flexible hours for better work-life balance.
- Conduct regular audits to ensure pay equity in the solar industry.
- Ensure equal representation in panels, conferences, and media coverage of solar energy advancements.



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Selin Pıravadılı

TÜBİTAK

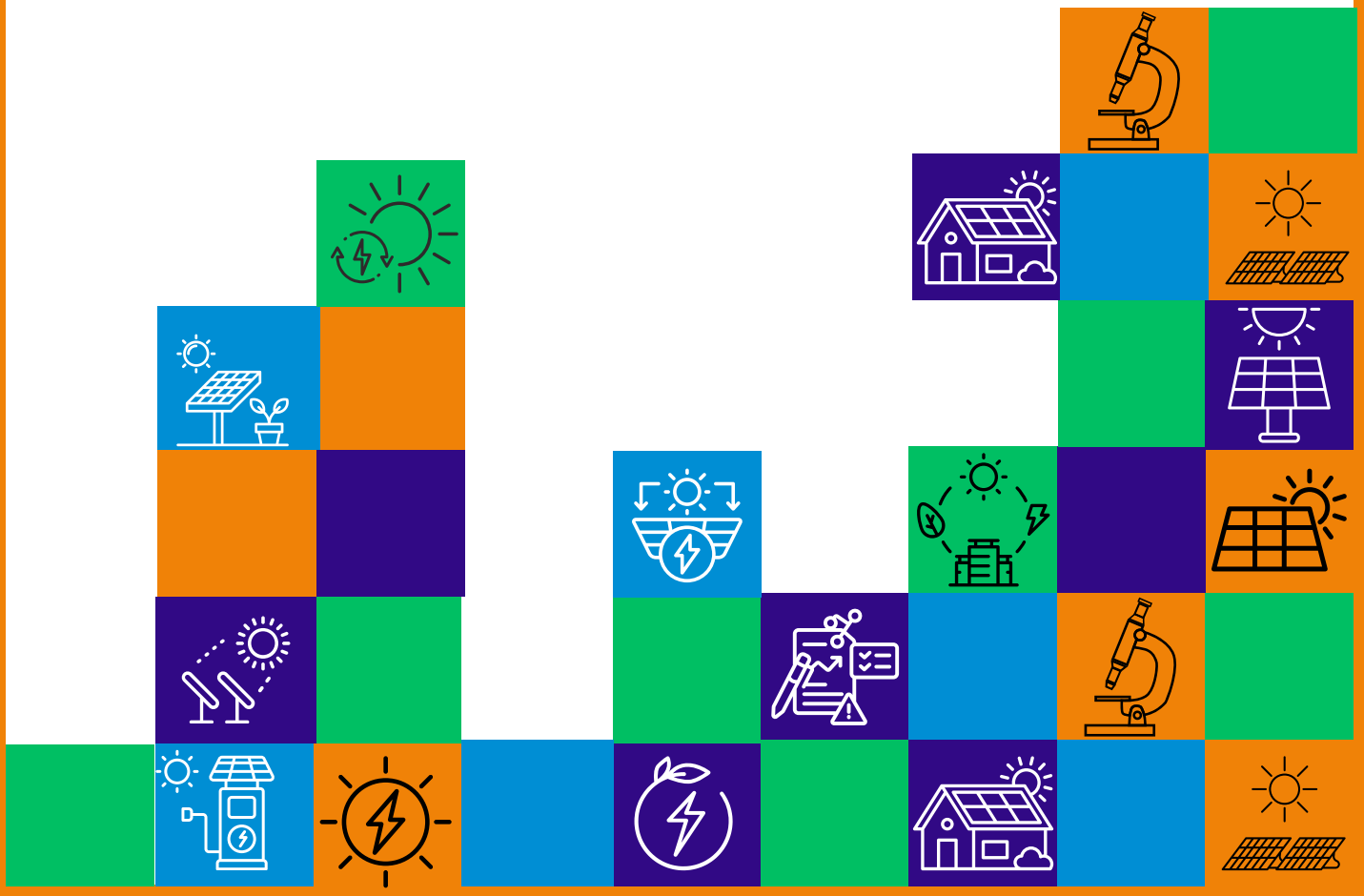
Researcher

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

- Developing expertise, persistence, and assertiveness in career decisions.
- Investing in continuous learning and staying updated with industry advancements.
- Supporting and uplifting qualified colleagues to foster an inclusive environment.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

The SolarHub project has provided valuable collaboration, networking, and experience in EU project management. Strengthening these opportunities can further enhance inclusivity in the field.



Chara Poravou

Centre for Research and Technology Hellas (CERTH)

WP Leader

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

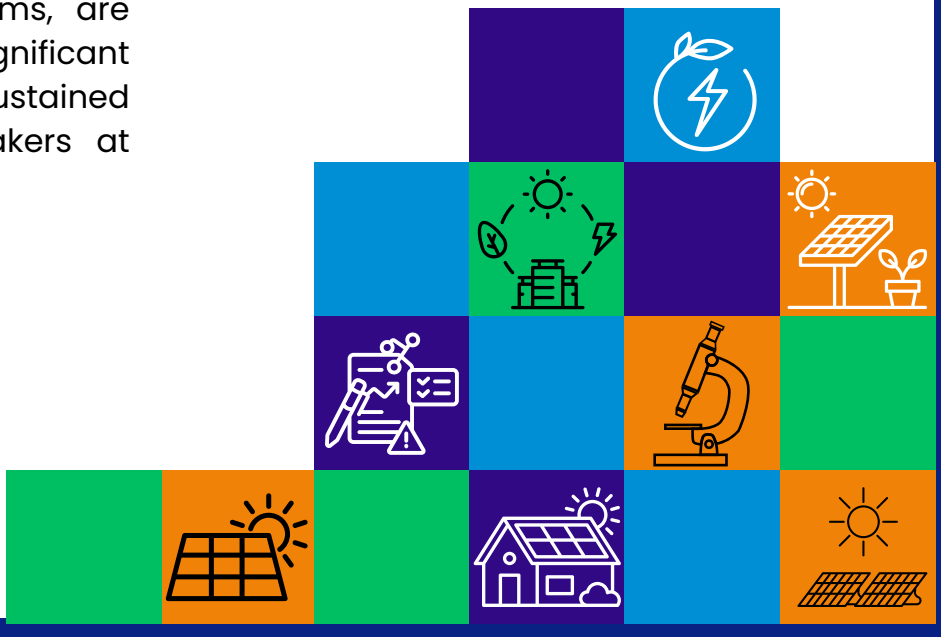
We need to inspire individuals to pursue leadership opportunities and provide competitive initiatives that encourage applications for leadership positions. Visibility, mentorship, and structured support systems can help diversify scientific leadership.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

More equity-focused policies, such as transparent HR processes, diversity committees, and leadership programs, are necessary. However, significant change also requires sustained support from policymakers at the governmental level.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Significant progress has been made toward greater diversity in solar energy, but challenges remain—especially in leadership roles. Many professionals feel the need to overperform to prove their value. It is essential to confidently highlight achievements and advocate for institutional change that supports equal opportunities.



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In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

SolarHub provides training programs that empower researchers from diverse backgrounds and fosters networking opportunities within its ecosystem. Expanding these efforts can further strengthen inclusion and representation across the sector.

Krystallia Theodosiou

Brite Hellas SA

Researcher

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

Here are several strategies to increase the representation of individuals in top scientific leadership roles:

- Mentorship Programs: Establishing mentorship initiatives where experienced leaders guide and support early-career researchers can help them navigate their careers, overcome challenges, and build confidence.
- Diverse Hiring Panels: Ensuring that hiring and promotion committees include diverse perspectives can reduce bias and promote fairer representation.
- Leadership Development: Providing targeted training programs can equip researchers with the necessary skills and confidence to take on leadership positions.

By fostering an environment that encourages diverse participation in leadership roles, we can create a more equitable scientific community.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

- Stay curious and well-informed: The solar energy sector is constantly evolving.
- Embrace continuous learning: Ask questions, seek mentorship, and never hesitate to expand your knowledge.
- Develop a broad skill set: In addition to technical expertise, knowledge in areas like engineering, chemistry, physics, data analysis, and environmental science can be beneficial.
- Understand the business aspect: Learning how solar energy moves from research to real-world applications can provide a competitive edge.
- Stay purpose-driven: The work in solar energy plays a crucial role in combating climate change and advancing sustainability. A strong sense of purpose can help maintain motivation even during challenging times.

Krystallia Theodosiou

Brite Hellas SA

Researcher

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

Here are some key policies and institutional changes that could foster inclusion in the solar energy sector:

- Flexible and Family-Friendly Work Policies:Parental leave: Institutions should provide equitable, paid parental leave for all caregivers, ensuring career continuity.
- Remote work and flexible hours: Hybrid work models can help professionals balance personal and professional commitments.
- Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion:Diversity targets: Setting clear representation goals for hiring, leadership roles, and decision-making bodies.
- Anti-discrimination policies: Establishing strong workplace policies to promote inclusivity and equity.

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

- Underrepresentation in leadership → Seek mentorship and leadership training.
- Bias and stereotypes → Build strong networks and engage in inclusive initiatives.
- Work-life balance challenges → Advocate for flexible policies.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

SolarHub promotes diverse participation and interdisciplinary collaboration. Expanding leadership opportunities and mentorship programs can further strengthen inclusion.

Betül Şekertekin Torun

Kalyon PV R&D Centre

How can we increase the number of individuals in top scientific leadership roles?

- Transparent hiring and promotion processes to ensure fairness.
- Equal access to research funding and flexible work arrangements to support career progression.
- Mentorship and leadership training programs to foster professional growth.
- Increased visibility of diverse role models in leadership positions.
- Inclusive policies that support work-life balance without career setbacks.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

- Build a strong foundation in STEM through education and hands-on experience.
- Stay updated on industry trends, policy changes, and technological advancements.
- Engage in networking, mentorship, and professional organizations for guidance.
- Develop problem-solving, project management, and communication skills.
- Explore different career paths, from R&D to project management and policy-making.
- Advocate for inclusion and diversity while seizing growth opportunities.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

- Flexible work policies (parental leave, remote work, adjusted hours).
- Mentorship and training programs to counter bias and encourage leadership.
- Equal access to funding and resources for all researchers.
- Networking and career development programs to foster professional connections.
- Anti-harassment policies to ensure workplace safety.
- Support for entrepreneurs through dedicated funding and business development initiatives.

Betül Şekertekin Torun

Kalyon PV R&D Centre

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

- Challenging stereotypes by trusting in skills, seeking mentorship, and demonstrating expertise.
- Balancing work and personal responsibilities by advocating for flexible policies and building strong support networks.
- Negotiating salaries and demanding equal pay to address disparities.
- Securing funding as an entrepreneur through targeted grants and supportive networks.

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

SolarHub promotes diversity in solar energy and sustainability, bringing together professionals from various backgrounds. It offers education, capacity-building, and collaboration opportunities. To further improve inclusivity, the project could:

- Set clear goals for equal participation across all groups.
- Ensure equal access to resources for all team members.
- Expand mentorship and collaboration programs to break barriers in the sector.

Esen Erkan Yıldız

International Solar Energy Society – Turkish Section (GÜNDER)

WP Leader
GÜNDER
Principal Investigator

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

- Enhance visibility, mentorship, and funding to support career progression.
- Foster diverse perspectives to encourage innovation and leadership.
- Expand training and networking opportunities to strengthen presence in academia and industry.

What advice would you give to those aspiring to enter the solar energy field?

- Challenge biases by advocating for inclusion and diversity.
- Increase the visibility of diverse leaders to inspire future professionals.
- Embrace change and contribute to a more balanced and equitable sector.

What policies or institutional changes would best support diversity in the solar energy field?

- Expand training, mentorship, and professional development programs.
- Improve working conditions that promote work-life balance.
- Strengthen policies that create equal employment opportunities for all.

What are some key challenges in the solar energy field? How do you navigate them?

Bias in technical and leadership roles creates barriers to credibility and career advancement.

- The glass ceiling effect limits leadership opportunities and access to key discussions.
- Unequal pay and exclusion remain obstacles that require structural and cultural shifts.
- The best approach is to focus on excellence, advocate for fairness, and speak out against injustice to drive positive change.

Esen Erkan Yıldız

International Solar Energy Society – Turkish Section (GÜNDER)

WP Leader
GÜNDER
Principal Investigator

In which ways do you think the SolarHub project supports inclusion? Are there any areas for improvement?

SolarHub fosters inclusivity by providing a fair platform for diverse professionals. To further improve accessibility:

- Engage more underrepresented groups to ensure balanced participation.
- Enhance language accessibility for non-English speakers.
- Continue strengthening mentorship and leadership programs.

These steps will help SolarHub remain a leader in inclusive and impactful innovation.

Empowering Minds in Solar Research

As the SolarHub continues to advance research and innovation in solar energy, it also stands as a testament to the power of diverse perspectives and inclusive collaboration. The insights shared in this booklet highlight not only the challenges faced in scientific and leadership roles but also the resilience, expertise, and determination that drive meaningful change.

By fostering mentorship, equal opportunities, and inclusive policies, we can create a future where talent and dedication are the defining factors of success—regardless of background. Let this be a call to action for institutions, researchers, and organizations to work collectively toward a more equitable and sustainable solar energy sector.

Together, we are shaping the future of innovation, leadership, and inclusion in renewable energy.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the all contributors for sharing their experiences, knowledge, and vision.

Discover more about the SolarHub!

https://horizonsolarhub.eu/en/

Connect with us!

March 2025