

“Just energy transitions need to include everyone and be addressed to everyone.”

Katharina Habersbrunner works tirelessly to promote a transition to clean sources of energy that is just and leaves no one behind, including those suffering from energy poverty.

With over 20 years' experience in the energy field, Katharina Habersbrunner is currently project manager and board member of NGO Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF). She coordinates EU-funded projects designed to help lift women out of energy poverty, making sure they have access to essential services such as warmth, cooling, lighting and the energy to power appliances.

Katharina also runs several projects that, as a conscious aim, involve women at all stages of the process of generating, transmitting and distributing energy.

“I am currently responsible for gender and climate projects,” she explains. “We currently have mini-grid projects ongoing in Ethiopia and Uganda, as well as Eastern Europe.”

These projects all promote a socially just transition from a fossil fuel-based economy towards clean, renewable and decentralised energy solutions – aims she has advocated throughout her career.

Sustainable business practices

Growing up on a Bavarian farm, Katharina has always felt connected to the environment and nature. As a teenager she joined an environmental NGO and has campaigned continuously for sustainable energy policies.

Later, working with the private sector enabled her to see the importance of developing sustainable, inclusive business models.

“I recognised the need to include all citizens in sectors such as energy, which tend to be very male-dominated,” she says. “Just energy transitions need to include everyone and be addressed to everyone.”

These convictions were put into practice when she set up a clean energy cooperative in Germany in 2011. The cooperative proved to be financially as well as environmentally beneficial for its citizen members and led to the development of four energy cooperatives and an umbrella cooperative in Georgia in 2016.

An opportunity for change

The long-time campaigner welcomes the ambition of Europe's Green Deal as a possibility to break away from the status quo.

“This presents a chance to allocate resources in a more sustainable manner,” she says.

Katharina also hopes to see today’s young people take action on issues that motivate them to bring the change they want.

“I have learned so much from my engagement in energy issues,” she says. “To achieve change, you need to start with what you can personally change yourself.”

Katharina Habersbrunner is one of 3 women recognised in the **Women in Energy** category of the **EU Sustainable Energy Awards 2020** for their commitment to push energy efficiency into the mainstream, as well engage and empower citizens to play their part in the clean energy transition. The Awards honour outstanding individuals and projects for their innovation in the sustainable energy sector.

The Awards are part of **EU Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW)**, which will take place from 22-26 June 2020 under the theme: **‘Beyond the crisis: clean energy for green recovery and growth’**. This year, participants will enjoy an online, interactive event experience. Highlights include a 3-day policy conference featuring a high-level opening session, the EUSEW Awards, networking activities and side events for participants as well as Energy Days, digital events taking place all over Europe. For the first time, a European Youth Energy Day will be organised on 22 June.