

# More power to European women

## In sheer numbers of women in the nuclear power industry, Europe lags behind the United States.

text Nancy Pick

Women may have an illustrious history in nuclear science (think Madame Curie) but within the nuclear power industry, they remain in the minority.

At Studsvik in the UK, only three women hold technical jobs out of 71 employees. "The nuclear industry is quite male dominated," says Elizabeth Reeves, a waste management consultant at Studsvik's Gateshead office. Reeves holds a master's degree in radiation and environmental protection. "This is not a route considered by most females," she says.

The situation seems particularly disappointing in the UK, where students must choose a career path at a young age. Too few teenage girls are encouraged to pursue engineering and science, say those in the field. Moreover, the UK still does not have a Women in Nuclear (WiN) group.

In other parts of Europe, women are faring better. "When I started work in the nuclear industry 13 years ago, all conferences and meetings were dominated by older men in dark suits," says Beate Scheffler, president

of WiN Germany and communications director for NUKEM Technologies, a nuclear engineering company. "Today, you see a lot of young people, including women."

In Sweden, Monica Bowen-Schrire, a senior advisor on sustainability issues at Vattenfall, says, "The representation of women, especially in management positions, has improved since I joined the industry in 1984." In 2007 she became president of the country's WiN and has seen membership double to nearly 300 members since then.

The French branch of WiN has also grown quickly over the past decade. Its president, Dominique Mouillot, is also president of ONET Technologies, a nuclear engineering company with 2,400 employees. "Thanks to the actions of WiN, we are able to promote the nuclear fields to young women," she says. "But women still more often hold non-technical jobs than technical ones. In my company, 18 per cent of the engineers are women."

In the UK, there exists one niche where women are thriving: radiation protection. "You see a lot of women

getting quite high up, often to head of department," says Pauline Johnson, who joined Studsvik in 2006 as a radiation protection advisor, after many years in the field.

Johnson's position has influenced other women. Elizabeth Reeves decided to join Studsvik in 2007 after hearing a presentation by Johnson, and now Reeves is training to become a radiation protection advisor herself.

And Johnson's own daughter, who studies environmental science at university, has already spent a year working at a nuclear power station. "I think," says Johnson, "she sees how interesting my job has been." ♦

**"We are able to promote the nuclear fields to young women."**

*French WiN president and ONET Technologies president, Dominique Mouillot*



Dominique Mouillot, president of WiN France and president of ONET Technologies



Elizabeth Reeves, a waste management consultant at Studsvik's Gateshead office



Monica Bowen-Schrire, a senior advisor on sustainability issues at Vattenfall



Pauline Johnson, radiation protection advisor



Beate Scheffler, president of WiN Germany and communications director for NUKEM Technologies