

EGU22-6774

<https://doi.org/10.5194/egusphere-egu22-6774>

EGU General Assembly 2022

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Promoting and supporting gender dimension in the CCUS community – A novel approach by the C⁴U Project

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The C⁴U Project, funded by the European Union H2020 programme, advances carbon capture for steel industries integrated in Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS) clusters. Besides working on the scientific and technological challenges, the project members are committed to integrate social aspects not only as part of their work but also by promoting an inclusive work ethics within the consortium itself. In this respect, actions have been taken on all levels and roles of the project as well as during all its steps to mitigate the imbalance in representation without negatively impacting aptitude or expertise. In addition to raising awareness and furthering discussions among the C⁴U members, providing options for hiring processes, or adjusting speaker lists and the distribution of board roles, a novel approach was conceptualised in the form of an international workshop, as an initiative from within the CCUS community for the community, and hopefully beyond.

This first C⁴U workshop on gender dimension called "Woman in CCUS – Inspire and be inspired" was open to all associated with the field of CCUS and was held in fall 2021. As the free event took place virtually on two half days due to COVID restrictions, scientists, including students and managers, originating from or with affiliation of all continents, registered. Talks and breakout room sessions covered topics such as raise awareness of gender imbalance and ethical concerns, identify reasons behind the still existing inequality, search for countermeasures, the importance and consequence of confidence, as well as private and professional life experience, all with numerous opportunities for discussions. By expressively embracing all genders, career phases, ethnical or scientific backgrounds, we were able to achieve participation with a large diversity also in regard to work environment, e.g. academia, governmental agencies, and industry. Bringing people together using a virtual format and in numerous time zones naturally has its own challenges, especially when communicating on sensitive and personal topics. However, the overwhelming engagement of the participants during, but also already prior to the workshop, revealed that there is a significant need in the CCUS community for an open, personal exchange on gender related topics, by all genders. On this basis, the C⁴U initiative aims to be a seed for an inclusive platform, for a diverse network to get to know role models and at the same time be one oneself, to inspire and be inspired.