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Inclusive leadership is not a trend, it is how resilient industries are built

This week, Women in Solar+ Europe (WiSEu) shares insights from a panel at Solar & Storage Live España 2026, examining how inclusive leadership and psychological safety drive innovation, collaboration, and resilience in the energy transition. Leaders from consulting, sustainability, and multi-energy organisations discussed the growing importance of different viewpoints, trust, and human-centred leadership for navigating complexity and strengthening teams in the evolving Solar+ ecosystem.

By Women in Solar+ 29 May 2026

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During Solar & Storage Live España 2026, WiSEu hosted a panel on how inclusive leadership, psychological safety, and diverse perspectives strengthen teams and organisations throughout the energy transition. As the sector faces pressure to accelerate deployment and manage complexity, speakers emphasized that leadership culture is now a strategic necessity, not a “soft topic.”

Jesús Alijarde, General Director of Ibersyd / Cerfo, described leadership as generating environments of trust where people feel safe enough to speak honestly, regardless of hierarchy. “People are not robots,” he said. “Nobody comes to work and forgets about their family, their problems, or what is happening outside.” For Alijarde, strong companies are built when employees become comfortable challenging decisions openly. “The best environment for me as an entrepreneur is when someone in the company can tell me: ‘Jesús, you are making a mistake.’ Showing your team that you do not know everything and that you also make mistakes allows the organisation to grow much faster together.”

Filippa Monteiro, Renewable Innovation Unit Manager at GALP, highlighted how innovation depends on leaders being willing to openly acknowledge uncertainty and create settings in which disagreement is not perceived as personal conflict. “One of the most important things is separating criticism of an idea from criticism of a person,” she explained. “When that becomes clear in conversations and feedback, people become much more comfortable contributing and challenging ideas.” Monteiro also considered the importance of leaders openly admitting doubts and limitations. “Sometimes you have to say: ‘I don’t know this’ or ‘I’m not the expert in this subject.’ Many times, we are working with people who are the real experts.” She also shared how important it is to normalise learning from failure, with leaders openly discussing unsuccessful initiatives. “Participating in sessions where leaders present things they tried that did not go well creates an environment where mistakes are understood as part of innovation and learning, not something people need to hide.”

Kim Keats Martínez, partner at Ekon Strategy Consulting, reflected on the importance of creating collaborative environments where different personalities and perspectives can contribute openly. “Some people speak a lot, others stay quiet but have much more to contribute,” he explained. “Inclusive leadership is about listening to everyone before making decisions.” Keats stressed that psychological safety does not mean everyone will agree or that every idea will be implemented, but that people should feel heard and respected throughout the process. He also highlighted the importance of empathy and understanding how different people communicate. “You have to understand the person sitting on the other side of the table,” he said. “Everyone brings different experiences and different ways of seeing problems, and that diversity of perspectives is what ultimately strengthens teams and decision-making.”



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Maria Colom, Senior Director at ENGIE's Client Decarbonization Accelerator, reflected on how diversity only works when people feel psychologically safe enough to participate openly. "You can have a super diverse team, but if there is no psychological safety, that diversity is completely nullified," she said. Colom explained that many organisations still overestimate certainty and categorical communication in meetings, while more reflective or questioning contributions are often overlooked. "'Organisations tend to reward confidence and certainty over doubt," she noted. "But if you do not create that psychological safety, there will be no challenge, no different perspectives, and probably not the best solution either." She also highlighted how communication styles and unconscious bias influence whose voices are heard, especially in highly complex and fast-changing industries like energy.

Closing the discussion, Carmen Madrid, founder of Women in Solar+ Europe and Solar+ Leaders, reflected on the need to move beyond labels and understand inclusion as a collective leadership responsibility across the energy sector. "The energy transition is forcing us to walk paths nobody has walked before. That means we are all going to make mistakes, learn, adapt, and evolve constantly. The most innovative teams are not made of people who think alike, but of people willing to listen to perspectives different from their own. Diverse teams are like a great dish: different ingredients, textures, colours and flavours coming together to create something stronger."

Interested in joining other women industry leaders and experts at Women in Solar+ Europe? Find out more: www.wiseu.network

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