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## Takeaways from the Advancing Women Leaders in Energy Internship Program with Georgian Interns Ketiv Tevzadze and Nutsa Meunargia

**November 2023** – In Europe and Eurasia, women are often employed in sectors such as education, health care, social services, and cultural fields, and have a very low representation in the energy industry.<sup>1</sup> The barriers to female leadership in the energy sector derive from both institutional policies and norms – e.g., the lack of gender-responsive policies and protections against discrimination, as well as stereotypes relegating women to certain roles and positions – and the lack professional development opportunities for women to gain the skills necessary to advance into more technical and influential positions. With funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) is working to address this issue through its Advancing Women Leaders in Energy (AWLE) initiative and initiated the AWLE Women in Energy Internship Program in 2023. Ranging from six months to a year in length, these paid internships are designed for young women in Europe and Eurasia who have recently completed degrees in technical fields.

The program aims to foster an interest in energy regulation and help interns gain professional skills that would help them enter careers in the energy sector. The first cohort of interns was placed at the Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission (GNERC) and the National Energy and Utilities Regulatory Commission of Ukraine, and the program is now looking to expand to include additional countries and their respective regulatory commissions.

NARUC connected with two interns placed at GNERC – Ketiv Tevzadze, who worked with GNERC's Electricity Department, and Nutsa Meunargia, who worked with GNERC's Legal Department – to learn about their experiences during the internship program. The following interview allowed us to get a closer look at their takeaways, including valuable lessons they learned, how the program has influenced their potential career paths, and their thoughts on the need for gender and social inclusion in Georgia's energy sector.

### Q&A

*Can you tell us about yourself and your educational background? Why did you choose to participate in the USAID and NARUC AWLE Women in Energy Internship Program?*

**Ketiv** – Prior to the internship, I studied law at the University of Latvia, where I acquired valuable knowledge about the international legal framework related to environmental law. After returning to Georgia, this internship program sounded like a great opportunity to improve my understanding of EU law and the regulatory frameworks, policies, and best practices related to the electricity sector. In fact, it provided me with a chance to work on EU regulation directives as well as attend various training courses and conferences, all of which helped me to delve deeper into my interests.

**Nutsa** – I have just graduated with a bachelor's degree and am currently studying for my master's degree at the Tbilisi State University faculty of law, where I chose the field of private law. When I found out about the USAID and NARUC AWLE Women in Energy Internship Program on social media, I decided to participate. I was interested in the energy sector, and I believe that it is one of the most important sectors in the country. I like that the field is interdisciplinary, and the program is aimed at involving and educating women. Since this field is quite specific and different in terms of legal regulation, I wanted to familiarize myself with current cases, as well as existing national and international legislation and practices.

How has working at GNERC during your internship helped to expand your knowledge of energy regulation?

**Keti** – Performing regulatory affairs in the energy sector is not an easy task. During my internship, I often encountered situations where the interests of different stakeholders and parties needed to be considered. However, I can confirm that working on energy regulation helped me to assess the importance of a balanced regulatory framework. I had the opportunity to participate in various projects related to tariff setting, grid management, and market design, which gave me a thorough perspective on how regulatory decisions impact energy infrastructure and the everyday lives of consumers.

**Nutsa** – Working at GNERC provided me with comprehensive experience working in the energy field. I was actively informed about current legislation, changes that were made or to be made, court practices, and the decisions of the Commission, which gave me a broader view of various issues. In addition, I attended meetings and discussion sessions, made presentations, and worked on various projects, which helped me to develop my knowledge from a practical point of view.

Can you tell us about some of your hands-on training/work in the field and any valuable lessons you learned?

**Keti** – I would like to point out the collaborative working process on Georgia's Grid Operation Rules. During this process, I learned how engineers and lawyers can work together to regulate technical issues lawfully in order to implement technical aspects of grid operation properly, but also to promote important values to ensure the formation of a free market and balance the interests of different parties. On top of that, the topic of renewable energy sources (RES) was extremely interesting, as I was involved in drafting new laws that need to be passed by Georgia in the near future. I participated in discussions about finding ways to attract consumers and businesses with RES. For example, we talked about issuing a Certificate of Origin – which would function to confirm that a certain amount of electricity covered by the certificate was generated from RES<sup>2</sup> – or introducing environmentally friendly facilities to generate electricity and participate in net metering.

**Nutsa** – I had many hands-on experiences throughout the internship program, including working on a joint project with GNERC's Electricity Department to provide information for investors related to connection issues for micro, small, and large power plants. For this project, GNERC's interns in both the Legal and Electricity departments had to work in conditions of constant communication and information exchange, as we actively cooperated with each other and with our respective supervisors to finalize the information that should be uploaded to GNERC's website. Also, to the extent that the issue of renewable energy and its effective implementation in the energy sector is an important challenge and a future goal, I attended meetings with foreign experts who discussed the role of renewable energy and important reservations for the effective implementation of RED II and the EU's clean energy package. I learned a lot from that experience, and it was eye opening for me.<sup>3</sup>

What can you tell us about the skills that you are taking away from the internship?

**Keti** – During my internship, I gained a systematic understanding of industry-specific regulations and compliance standards. This skill has been essential in ensuring that the work I produce is not only efficient, but also in full compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Understanding the regulatory landscape is crucial in many professional fields to avoid legal problems and ensure quality of service as well as the safety of products or services. Additionally, collaborating with a diverse group of colleagues during my internship has taught me the importance of effective teamwork. I have learned how to communicate and collaborate with team members to achieve common goals. I believe that good teamwork is crucial in almost every profession, as working with others can foster innovation and create a more appealing work environment.

**Nutsa** – I gained both theoretical and practical knowledge and experience, so my associated skills are quite different and diverse. Firstly, I would underline the skill of working with documents, such as letters, drafts, and decisions. These tasks helped me to improve my writing skills. Secondly, I would like to mention research skills. During this internship, I had different tasks that required data analysis and research, so I prepared reports and studies. Finally, I researched the experience of Georgia and

other countries with regard to international acts and worked on issues around the implementation of directives, which developed my comparison skills.

How did the internship help you identify or clarify your future career path?

**Keti** – During my internship, I decided to connect my future educational pursuits with the energy field. Specifically, I have just completed my bachelor's studies, and now I would like to apply for an energy-related master's program. This sector demands a greater number of professionals than we currently have in Georgia, as it is evolving rapidly. It is obvious that we lack well-educated professionals, particularly in terms of legal experts in the energy industry.

**Nutsa** – As well as familiarizing myself with specific national and international legislation, researching, and commenting and making notes for legal drafts, I learned about the decisions of the Commission and the court, which helped me to understand my preferences more clearly. I want my career path to be oriented toward decision analysis, decision making, and representation.

What is one piece of advice you would give to other women who are currently participating or may participate in the AWLE internship in the future?

**Keti** – Never be afraid of changes in your life because, on your career path, you will encounter situations in which you may have to decide between a well-known direction or a completely new one. My piece of advice would be to choose a completely new path, as it can expose a whole new world of opportunities to you and help you discover yourself in entirely different dimensions.

**Nutsa** – To all the women who are currently participating in the internship, I would recommend working hard and using the knowledge and experience you will gain while working with your professional colleagues, who are always ready to help. To all the women who may participate in this program in the future, I would say to try your best to participate in this experience with dignity. Be dedicated to showing your skills and abilities because it will be worth it.



Can you please share one reason you think having gender balance will improve the quality of the energy sector in Georgia?

**Keti** – Gender balance in the energy sector is not just about eliminating inequalities but also about ensuring the usage of diverse skills, dedication, and problem-solving abilities of women to improve the quality and effectiveness of the whole energy industry. I believe that by creating a more inclusive and diverse workforce, the energy sector in Georgia can better address challenges and deliver more sustainable and innovative solutions.

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Due to existing stereotypes and stigmas, in the imagination of many, the energy sector may not represent a 'suitable' field of work for women. However, there are so many women with great knowledge and skills who should have a say in this industry.

So, try, work hard, and use your skills, experience, passion, and dedication. You will find many strong women in this sector. Together, you can do anything.

**Nutsa Meunargia**

Intern, Legal Department  
Georgian National Energy and Water Supply  
Regulatory Commission



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**Connections and Next Steps**

With USAID support, NARUC is expanding the Women in Energy Internship program and will continue facilitating more paid internship opportunities for young women of the Europe and Eurasia region. The new cohort of interns is slated to begin in early 2024 and will continue to provide women with the

opportunity to learn more about the energy sector as well as with knowledge and skills that will help shape their careers.

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<sup>1</sup> “Toward Gender Equality in Europe and Eurasia: A Toolkit for Analysis.”

USAID. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/EE-Gender-Analysis-Toolkit-June-2012.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> “Certificates of origin and guarantees of origin as mechanisms to support the production of electricity from renewable energy sources.” Dudkowiak Kopec & Putyra Business Lawyers. <https://www.dudkowiak.com/blog/certificates-of-origin-and-guarantees-of-origin-as-mechanisms-to-support-the-production-of-electricity-from-renewable-energy-sources.html>

<sup>3</sup> RED II raises the EU target for RES consumption by 2030 to 32% and defines a series of sustainability and greenhouse gas emissions criteria as well as renewable energy targets for different countries.