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Human Resources Departments at Georgian, Moldovan, and Ukrainian Commissions Take Measures to Improve Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



April 2024 – With support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), the Human Resources (HR) departments of the National Agency for Energy Regulation (ANRE) of Moldova, the Georgian National Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission (GNERC), and the National Energy and Utilities Regulatory Commission of Ukraine (NEURC) are improving their HR frameworks to build a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

These commissions are participating in the USAID and NARUC Advancing Women Leaders in Energy (AWLE) initiative, which supports USAID’s U.S.-Europe Energy Bridge goal of promoting energy investment by facilitating greater decision-making power and access to leadership positions for women and people of all identities within the energy field. This in turn strengthens the energy sector through workforce development and builds the capacity of energy institutions by incorporating more diverse viewpoints into regulatory policy and creating a work environment where all employees feel valued.

The AWLE initiative provides training and mentoring to increase gender equality and inclusion in energy sectors across the Europe and Eurasia region. These include providing support for women as well as employees of all identities to gain access and receive training for entry into and advancement within the energy sector; join networks of support that create access to normally closed spaces and provide mentorship opportunities; and benefit from organizational frameworks that support diversity, equity, and inclusion through commission-level Human Resource Working Groups (HR WG).

Over the past six months, the HR WG has identified 33 champions at 11 partnering national regulatory agencies (NRAs) who can advocate for the development of a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace through improved HR policies and procedures. The participating NRAs span nine countries – Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Ukraine. NARUC trained these champions to improve their knowledge and understanding of biases in the workplace; how biases lead to discrimination; and how social norms,

power, and privilege can cause further institutional oppression for certain populations. NARUC also outlined key strategies and steps that each champion can take to advocate for the use of gender-sensitive HR policies and procedures that serve the needs of all staff. The following achievements made by NRAs are a direct result of the topics covered.

Georgia

In November 2023, GNERC approved new onboarding guidelines, which included developing a handbook that helps new employees integrate into their work environment. GNERC also developed a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policy, which it incorporated into the handbook and adopted in December 2023 as part of its legal operating framework. We asked Mr. Irakli Gorduladze, First Deputy Director of the Administrative Department at GNERC, to tell us about GNERC's motivations for developing the policy and what its staff took away from participating in the AWLE training courses.

What was GNERC's motivation for developing a DEI policy?

The "Policy of Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion" is a comprehensive approach to recognizing and respecting differences in the workplace, providing equal opportunities, and creating an environment that promotes and supports the active involvement of all employees in the work of the Commission. We believe that promoting inclusivity, in addition to increasing the awareness of employees about this critical subject, will have a positive impact. Creating a more inclusive workplace will benefit not only the individuals involved, but also the Commission as a whole.

How did GNERC's participation in the AWLE initiative impact the DEI policy?

GNERC's participation and involvement in the AWLE initiative was key to initiating the legal process for the policy's development, as the training we took part in thoroughly defined and explained the essence and meaning of a DEI policy. The new policy contains a comprehensive approach to recognizing and respecting differences in the workplace, providing equal opportunities, and creating an environment that promotes and supports the active involvement of all employees in the work of the Commission.

What kind of impact or change to your commission would you like to see as a result of the DEI policy?

We hope that it will have many positive impacts on the Commission, such as reduced stress and increased work-life balance, self-esteem, loyalty, motivation, and productivity. In summary, we would like it to lead to a range of positive changes for our employees, contributing to their well-being, personal and professional growth, and overall job satisfaction.

Moldova

In December 2023, ANRE amended its Ethics Code to include two new sections: 1) non-discrimination against all identities and 2) workplace mediation procedures. We asked Mrs. Irina Nicolaev, Head of Human Resources at ANRE, to elaborate on the motivation behind and importance of the amendments and how ANRE staff's participation in the AWLE training courses influenced them.

How do the amendments to the Ethics Code incorporate the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion and prevent discrimination and identity-based violence?

The recently included amendments to the ANRE's Ethics Code have been carefully drafted to reflect a more powerful commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, while also serving as a safeguard against discrimination and identity-based violence. Though the previous version of the Ethics Code had measures to respect the legal rights of employees, the recent amendments are more explicit in developing the definition of these vital concepts to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their gender, background, identity, or beliefs, are treated with respect and fairness at their workplace within ANRE.



How did ANRE's participation in the AWLE initiative influence these amendments?

Participating in the training courses on unconscious bias and gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) provided our staff with firsthand insights and understanding about how to revise ethics codes to better address contemporary ethical challenges and promote inclusivity and equity within organizations. The invaluable knowledge gained from these training courses catalyzed a proactive revision of ANRE's Ethics Code, as we wanted to make sure it reflects

evolving societal norms and organizational values around diversity and equity.

What kind of impact or change to your commission would you like to see as a result of these amendments?

We aspire for the amendments to catalyze a culture of inclusivity and fairness within our commission, and to emphasize the importance of having a diverse and respectful work environment. Our aim is to promote greater equity and diversity to enhance effective collaboration and effectiveness across all levels of the organization.

Ukraine

As of February 2024, NEURC has decided to create a commission-level Committee on Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, which will focus initial work on 1) an onboarding manual, 2) a DEI policy, and 3) an organizational gender audit. We asked Ms. Svitlana Kozyrenko, Chief Specialist of Strategic Development and International Coordination at NEURC, to tell us more about the Committee and what NEURC hopes to achieve.

What was NEURC's motivation for developing a Committee on Gender Equality, Diversity, and Social Inclusion?

For NEURC, the decision to develop a Committee on Gender Equality, Diversity, and Social Inclusion has been brewing for a long time. Different obstacles were standing in the way of implementing this idea, primarily the full-scale Russian invasion that began in 2022. Once the Committee is developed, candidates will be elected through voting. Among the potential candidates for the Committee will be the NEURC employees who participated in training courses within the framework of AWLE initiative, as they are excited to put their knowledge into practice.

How did NEURC's participation in the AWLE initiative influence this decision?

For us, the main benefit of participating in the AWLE initiative has been the impetus for NEURC to raise awareness of gender issues among all employees and obtain practical tools to gain the support of top-level management in this regard.

What kind of impact or change to your commission would you like to see as a result of this Committee?

We would like to create a comfortable working environment for all NEURC staff, as we understand it will be beneficial both for them and for NEURC as an organization.

Next Steps

Over the next few months, NARUC will give direct in-depth support to members of the AWLE initiative's HR WG to improve their commissions' policies and procedures as well as their implementation. This support will focus on holding individualized meetings with each commission's champions to support the objectives they have outlined to advocate for a more inclusive workplace and giving guidance on gender-sensitive strategies that they can use to achieve these objectives. Finally, to continue to build knowledge around DEI and GESI, NARUC will meet with the HR WG on a regular

basis and provide members with concrete steps to support diversity, equity, and inclusion at their commissions.

This story is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of NARUC and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Photo 1: Participants discussing training material during a June 2023 training on unconscious bias.

Photo 2: Participants of a January 2024 training on GESI during an interactive exercise.