

Report of Workshop: Outcomes of the project “Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector: Guidelines and Best Practices for MSMEs in delivering energy efficient products and in providing renewable energy equipment”

The workshop “Outcomes of the project “Global Initiative towards post-Covid-19 resurgence of the MSME sector: Guidelines and Best Practices for MSMEs in delivering energy efficient products and in providing renewable energy equipment” was organized by UNECE and held in Yerevan, Armenia and online on 11 March 2022.

The workshop was attended by 60 participants, of which 26 women (both in-person and online). Experts from the following ECE member States participated: Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova (UNECE member States and RPTC programme countries), Germany, and Russian Federation.

The workshop presented findings of the regional and national studies “Guidelines and Best Practices for MSMEs in delivering energy efficient products and in providing renewable energy equipment” and results of the training workshops. It served as a platform for pilot countries and other UNECE member States for exchange of experience and sharing best ways to support MSMEs working in the area of energy efficiency and renewable energy in the current economic and social conditions.

Mr. Oleg Dziubinski, Regional Adviser, UNECE made welcoming remarks and provided an overview of the project and its completed activities.

Mr. Vitaly Bekker, Energy Expert delivered a presentation on the Updated Guidelines and Best Practices for MSMEs in delivering energy efficient products and in providing renewable energy equipment. The study provides analysis of the environment the clean energy MSMEs face as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. It presents examples of best practices in the energy efficiency sector and in the area of renewable energy relevant for MSMEs response to the Covid-19 crisis and post-crisis recovery, as well as case studies on practical measures for MSMEs in getting access to markets, financing, and advanced technologies to MSMEs providing renewable energy equipment. The study provides guidelines to MSMEs on access to financing, markets, and advanced technologies and recommendations to Governments for developing policy guidelines and establishing financial incentives schemes.

The presentation was followed by a panel discussion and exchange of experiences on measures to support MSMEs working in the area of energy efficiency and renewable energy on implementation of recommendations in the current economic climate. It was moderated by Mr. Aleksandar Dukovski, Senior Energy Expert. The following officials and experts participated in the panel discussion: Ms. Tamara Sargsyan, Ministry of Economy of Armenia; Mr. Adrian Bylyku, Director, National Agency for Natural Resources of Albania (AKBN); Ms. Tamar Sabelashvili, Chief Specialist, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Policy and Sustainable Development Department, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Georgia; Mr. Goran Nikolovski, Energy Advisor, Department of Energy, Ministry of Economy, North Macedonia; Mr. Suren Shatvoryan, Energy Expert, Armenia; Mr. Besim Islami, UNECE Consultant, Albania; Mr. George Abulashvili, UNECE Consultant, Georgia; Ms. Tatiana Vedeneva, President, Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Development

(CREED), Kyrgyzstan; Mr. Sashe Panevski, UNECE Consultant, North Macedonia; and Mr. Sergiu Robu, UNECE Consultant, Republic of Moldova.

The panel focused on discussing type of assistance that MSMEs working in the area of energy efficiency and renewable energy need, ways for MSMEs to overcome the challenges after the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as ways for Governments to help these MSMEs in recovering after the Covid-19 pandemic. Nationally customized Guidelines and Best Practices for MSMEs served as a basis for this discussion.

Ms. Tamar Sabelashvili mentioned that Georgia is taking efforts to develop harmonized legislation and is working on implementing legislation embracing all necessary characteristics, including energy packages. Various training programmes are also being prepared, including trainings for installation of PV systems and biomass boilers and trainings for and accreditation of energy auditors. To overcome barriers and challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government presented anti-crisis plan in 2020. The main idea was to initiate social studies for citizens, businesses, utility companies (electricity, gas, etc.) and provide targeted social assistance where needed.

Mr. George Abulashvili added that during Covid-19 crisis the energy consumption in Georgia has changed shifting from the service sector to the private sector. This led to the consumer's reaction in increasing energy efficiency measures and renewable energy self-generation. Government followed with the intervention to subsidise energy. Main reaction from the MSME sector was self-mobilising and grouping by creating associations or clusters. At the same time, MSMEs need to unify forces and combine joint efforts to have an influence on the market in Georgia.

Ms. Tamara Sargsyan indicated that the Government of Armenia has implemented a number of activities, specifically on providing support for the cost of procurement of new equipment; reducing the impact of economic activity on the environment; raising awareness among business representatives on the use of energy in more efficient manner and use of renewable energy. A number of measures dedicated to the support of start-ups and MSMEs were introduced during the Covid-19 crisis. They included trainings and effective use of resources to minimize the impact on the environment

Mr. Suren Shatvoryan stated that MSMEs in Armenia with activities in energy efficiency and renewable energy faced difficulties during Covid-19 crisis. Mr. Shatvoryan also added that about 40 per cent of respondents of the survey with MSMEs indicated that they could receive support from the Government. The respondents also indicated that dilemma for MSMEs was whether to spend efforts to identify possible Government support or to continue business-as-usual (60 per cent of surveyed MSMEs preferred the latter).

Ms. Tatiana Vedeneva indicated that a large number of MSMEs participated in the survey in Kyrgyzstan. The results of the survey showed that MSMEs indicated that laws and by-laws related to energy efficiency are under-developed in the country. This slows down the development of the whole market. Thus, finalization of amendments to the laws and by-laws is needed for MSMEs to operate more effectively. Other requests from MSMEs included assistance in financing, low interest rates and access to loans. Communication between the Government and MSMEs had challenges. Thus, the recommendations for both the Government and MSMEs included streamlining channels of communication connected with green recovery, energy efficiency, and renewable energy.

Mr. Adrian Bylyku indicated that the Government of Albania was much involved in communication with the companies during the health crisis. Measures taken by the Government included payment support and postponement of financial obligations (including Bank of Albania and financial institutions) to support companies.

Mr. Besim Islami added that the Government of Albania supported MSMEs and their workers. Around 200,000 MSME workers received support as well as products to improve energy efficiency, such as windows, boilers, etc. Important work was done to explain to MSMEs how big the market is to reach energy efficiency targets in Albania. The Government also undertook measures to keep energy prices stable for MSMEs and households. At the same time, it is crucial to secure grant financing to support MSMEs, for example, through EBRD and GEF.

Mr. Goran Nikolovski and Mr. Sashe Panevski stated that most of MSMEs in North Macedonia were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Companies needed support through various measures, including access to loans. The Government responded to the demand of the MSMEs. Mr. Panevski indicated that survey analysis of MSMEs showed that long-term change is needed. MSMEs need to implement measures, such as creation of partnerships, increased visibility and adaption of strategy accordingly. The current energy crisis and the increased energy prices also affect MSMEs. Therefore, additional tailored programmes by the Government are needed to support MSMEs.

Mr. Sergiu Robu mentioned that the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic coincided with the drought in the Republic of Moldova, which heavily affected the economy. The Government support during the crisis included a programme for remittances, a programme for growth and internalization, a greening MSMEs programme, the SME guarantee fund, a programme for digitalization of MSMEs, and a 100 million programme for women in business (especially for women leading MSMEs). The Government approved a law to support economy in overcoming the Covid-19 crisis. It included provisions aimed at suspension of audit of financial statements of MSMEs, postponing inspections of MSMEs, VAT reduction to 15 per cent for the hotel and restaurant sector. Further recommended actions to support MSMEs include increasing the value of innovation funds, using preferential loans for energy efficiency, creating partnerships and stable supply chains, engaging in export promotion, helping MSMEs to access external markets, and investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Mr. Aleksandar Dukovski, in his role of the moderator of the panel discussion, concluded that awareness of the existence of support schemes for MSMEs is important and needs to be ensured before introducing additional schemes. Most of the Governments were fast to react to the changing situation and the health crisis. At the same time, the longer-term strategies are required to reduce the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and create more sustainable policies, including for the operations of MSMEs.

Mr. Oleg Dziubinski and Mr. Besim Nebiu, Director, Central and Eastern Europe, Habitat for Humanity International provided closing remarks for the workshop and for the Conference “Unveiling Market Opportunities for Boosting Residential Energy Efficiency and Alleviating Energy Poverty”.

The [news item](#) on this and other workshops in the framework of the Conference is available on the UNECE website. Workshop materials are available at the meeting [webpage](#).