

NEWSLETTER

EU4ENERGY GOVERNANCE PROJECT

(JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

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**ISSUE
#4**

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EU4Energy





Surzhok Inna/ Electricity Expert

ENERGY CONSUMER RIGHTS: PROVIDING CITIZENS WITH MORE OPTIONS AND BETTER PROTECTION IN A COMPETITIVE ENERGY MARKET

With a competitive electricity and gas market, citizens in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine will benefit from lower energy bills and a secure supply of good-quality electricity and gas in their homes. However, some citizens are concerned that in a competitive energy market they will be vulnerable to the profit gains of energy companies, and they will be left unprotected and on their own.

Nothing could be further from the truth! In a competitive energy market, citizens are entitled to consumer rights that will better protect them and give them more options and power in selecting a supplier of their choice. Energy consumer rights are guaranteed under the Third Energy Package, and the countries are obliged to integrate consumer rights in their national legislation.

With the energy sector reforms, new provisions on energy consumer rights are being introduced in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Let's look at some of the key energy consumer rights that will soon be a reality for consumers of the three countries: the right to an electricity connection and choice of supplier, clear data on consumption and transparent service contracts, and protecting the rights of energy consumers.

#1 - The right to an electricity connection and a choice of supplier

All citizens have the right to a connection with the local electricity network, regardless of where they live – in a large city, a small town, or a rural village.

The network operator is responsible for making the connection, and operating and maintaining the distribution lines that will bring the electricity into your home – regardless of which supplier you select to provide you with electricity services. The National Regulatory Authority of your country is responsible for ensuring that this process is being followed.

Consumers are free to choose any electricity and gas supplier that provides services in their area. This is probably the most well-known fact to most citizens of the benefits of a competitive energy market. Consumers can also switch suppliers if they are not happy with the services or if they found better prices. The energy consumer protection legislation in your country will ensure that you can switch suppliers easily and quickly, provided that you respect the notice period and the agreed minimum duration of your contract.

- You cannot be charged for switching suppliers.
- The change in supplier must be completed within the time period foreseen in your country's legislation.
- Energy suppliers cannot impose any unfair conditions in the service contract that would prevent you from switching suppliers.
- The previous supplier must provide you with a final closing of the account within the specified time period foreseen in your country's legislation.
- You are not obligated to have the same supplier for electricity and gas services.

#2 – Clear data on consumption and transparent service contracts

Consumers have the right to access accurate information on their energy consumption which must be provided by the energy supplier at no additional cost. Clear information on your consumption will allow you to manage your energy usage and cost more effectively:

- You will have a better understanding of your energy usage and you will be in a better position to implement energy efficiency measures that will help you lower your energy consumption.
- You can check your energy bills so you are sure you are paying for energy used at the agreed prices in your service contract.
- You have accurate information on energy usage and prices so you can easily compare offers from other energy suppliers.

The energy consumer protection legislation in your country will ensure that data on consumption is provided to you under the following conditions:

- You cannot be charged for data on your energy consumption.
- The data on your energy consumption must be provided in your energy bill, clearly indicating the billing period, and you must be charged according to this consumption.
- Energy bills must be sent on a regular basis so you can easily manage your energy usage.
- If you have a smart meter installed in your home, you have the right to access data on the history of your energy consumption (i.e. by day, week, or month).

So you are now ready to sign your contract with your new energy supplier...but wait, there is still more to know! Consumers also have the right to receive transparent information on their service contract before signing with a supplier. The contract must be clear and understandable without excessive documentation or other conditions that impose a barrier to signing the contract.

Before you pick-up your pen, here is what you should look for before signing an energy service contract.

Minimum information: Make sure that the following minimum information is included in your service contract:

- The type of supply that is being provided and the quality.
- Information on price tariffs and maintenance charges.
- Under what conditions and how are price tariffs changed.
- The contract duration and conditions for renewal, withdrawal and termination.
- What compensation is offered if the supplier does not meet their obligations.
- How to make a complaint and how disputes are handled.

Changes in prices: It is important that you know as a consumer under what conditions prices are changed and according to what method. Your energy service contract should clearly state the following information regarding price changes which are your guaranteed rights as an energy consumer:

- The contract should clearly state if price changes are permitted, and if so under what conditions and according to what method prices are changed.
- The energy supplier must inform you in advance and provide sufficient notice before changing prices.
- You are not obliged to accept the price changes and you are free to end your contract.

Right of withdrawal: even if you concluded your contract outside of the energy supplier's office – that is in your home, work place or by telephone, or the Internet, then you have the right of withdrawal. This means that if you change your mind after signing the contract, you have 14 days from the day you concluded the contract to withdraw. The right of withdrawal should be clearly stated in your contract.

#3 – Protecting the rights of consumers

Energy consumer rights must be protected by the national legislation and certain mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that consumers can obtain quickly and easily information on their rights and how to resolve complaints and disputes with suppliers:

- Each country has a single point of contact where consumers can receive information about their rights and what to do in case of a complaint or dispute with a supplier.
- Your energy supplier has to include in your

contract information on how you can file a complaint.

- If your energy supplier does not reply to your complaint, you have the right to send your complaint to an independent body, such as an energy ombudsman or a consumer body, for an out-of-court settlement.

EU4Energy Governance project and consumer protection



The EU4Energy Governance project provides support to Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine in preparing the relevant legislation for energy consumer rights as part of a reformed and competitive energy market. Work has been carried out in transposing the legislation from the Third Energy Package into the national legislation of the three countries, which include all the requirements for energy consumer rights.

A competitive energy market offers citizens the opportunity to choose their energy supplier, and better plan and make decisions about their energy consumption and energy efficiency measures they can implement in their homes. The legal framework, when in place, will ensure consumer protection rights that are specific to energy services and that consumers are not left unprotected in a competitive market!



How does energy efficiency in buildings benefit Georgian citizens?

9 August 2019



The EU4Energy Governance project is helping Georgia adopt a new draft law on energy performance in buildings, while also offering advice on building regulations. As a result, citizens will reap the benefits of energy-efficient homes and reduced energy bills.

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New regulation to protect vulnerable customers

12 September 2019



Energy Community Secretariat experts together with government representatives and other key stakeholders recently met to discuss a new regulation that will help to alleviate energy poverty in Georgia by ensuring that all citizens can adequately cover their household electricity and gas bills.

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New regulations for heating and air conditioning inspections in the pipeline

1 October 2019



The EU4Energy Governance Project is helping Georgia to develop regulations and guidelines for the inspection of its heating and air conditioning systems. The regulations will ensure that inspections are carried out regularly, thereby ensuring the energy efficiency of buildings and the safety of citizens.

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New terms and conditions for Georgia's electricity contracts

8 October 2019



The EU4Energy Governance project is helping Georgia develop new terms and conditions for direct contracts on the sale and purchase of electricity, to contribute towards the creation of a liberalized electricity market in Georgia in accordance with its obligations under the Energy Community Treaty.

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Energy Community provides training on new energy performance tool in Tbilisi

14 November 2019



In November, the Energy Community Secretariat met with key energy stakeholders in Tbilisi in order to train them on how to use a new tool for calculating the energy performance of buildings. The innovative excel tool was developed under the EU4Energy Governance project.

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EU4Energy to identify investment solutions for the renovation of residential and commercial buildings

15 July 2019



On 15 July, Energy Community experts and government representatives met in Chisinau with the aim of supporting Moldova in preparing a strategy and roadmap for securing investments to renovate and upgrade existing buildings, making them more energy efficient.

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New policy brief on Moldova's electricity market reform

29 July 2019



The EU4Energy Governance project has published a policy brief on the urgent need for electricity market reform in Moldova. The project also issued a number of key recommendations, which should be followed through on during the reform process.

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EU4Energy to develop transitional balancing mechanism

9 September 2019



On 9 September, Energy Community Secretariat experts together with representatives from the National Agency for Energy Regulation of the Republic of Moldova (ANRE) and other stakeholders held a kick-off meeting on developing a transitional balancing mechanism for Moldova.

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EU4Energy to set up new electricity procurement procedures

9 September 2019



The first stakeholder meeting on updating of the current electricity procurement procedures in Moldova has taken place in Chisinau. Energy Community Secretariat experts, representatives of the National Agency for Energy Regulation of the Republic of Moldova (ANRE) and other stakeholders will together review the regulatory framework and draft new procurement procedures and framework contracts in order to establish an efficient process for electricity procurement in Moldova. An assessment of the potential for an online electricity procurement system will also be developed.

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Ukraine and Moldova agree to enhance cooperation in gas supply security

13 December 2019



At the 17th meeting of the Energy Community Ministerial Council in Chisinau, Moldova and Ukraine signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance their cooperation in the security of gas supply. This collaboration comes as a direct result of the Energy Community and EU4Energy's efforts to strengthen energy security across the region.

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EU4Energy provides natural gas market rules training to key players

27 November 2019



On 26 & 27 November 2019, the Energy Community Secretariat held a two-day workshop for natural gas market stakeholders in Chisinau. The training focused specifically on the country's natural gas market rules, which are currently undergoing a public consultation.

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Electricity market rules workshop takes place in Moldova

19 November 2019



On 19 November, the Energy Community Secretariat held a two-day workshop focusing on Moldova's electricity market reform. Tailored to local authorities and key market players, the workshop offered guidance on daily electricity market operations, specific laws and procedures related to the electricity market.

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Ukraine to set out buildings' renovation strategy

19 July 2019



The EU4Energy Governance project is helping Ukraine to develop a long-term strategy for mobilising investments to be used in the renovation of both residential and commercial buildings, boosting their energy efficiency.

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EU4Energy to help Moldova and Ukraine improve their cross-border trade mechanisms

19 September 2019



On 19 September, a kick-off meeting of a technical assistance project aimed at improving inter-transmission system operator cross-border trade mechanisms between Moldova and Ukraine took place. The project is part of EU4Energy's support for electricity market reforms in Ukraine and Moldova.

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Improving cross-border energy exchange between Ukraine and Moldova

29 October 2019



At a workshop in Kyiv, Energy Community Secretariat experts examined how best to deal with so-called unintentional deviations between the Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova power systems. At the meeting, national regulatory authorities and transmission system operators from both countries discussed the regulatory requirements for the settlement of the unintended exchanges, which should be in line with current practice in EU Member States. They also looked at potential ways of settling these deviations between power systems.

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Smart metering coming soon to Ukraine

7 November 2019



In November, the first stakeholder meeting of the upcoming smart meter rollout in Ukraine took place under the framework of the EU4Energy project. Smart meters measure the exact use of gas and electricity by consumers, improving energy use, while reducing costs and emissions.

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HIGH-LEVEL POLICY TALKS

“Coal Regions in Transition and the Energy Community” under the spotlight

16 September 2019



Held in Warsaw on 13 September, a high-level policy event entitled Coal Regions in Transition and the Energy Community attracted some 80 key players from the energy sector. The event was co-organised by the European Commission, World Bank, the Energy Community Secretariat (with the support of the EU4Energy Governance project) and the College of Europe under the auspices of the COP24 Polish Presidency.

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EU4Energy Governance project: the latest implementation results

KEY FACTS & FIGURES | July 2019 - January 2020

	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine	Total
REGULATORY DRAFTS PREPARED	1	1	4	6
WORKING GROUPS ESTABLISHED	3	4	3	10
WORKSHOPS AND MEETINGS ORGANISED	9	12	12	33
OFFICIALS TRAINED	77	142	90	309

EU4Energy updates



View our latest leaflets, to find out more about our work in providing support and assistance to Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine in implementing necessary energy sector reforms that will change the energy landscape of the countries. With such rules and regulations in place, consumers, businesses and industry can expect the following benefits:

- Lower energy bills
- Improved reliability and safety of energy supply
- Improved quality of service
- Reduced environmental damage
- Reduced energy poverty

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EU4Energy Governance Project

The EU4Energy Governance Project is a technical assistance project funded by the European Union, under the EU4Energy Initiative. It targets policy makers working in the energy sector of Eastern Partner countries and helps them strengthen their legislative and regulatory frameworks as well as identify investment opportunities in key energy infrastructure projects. Within this project, the Energy Community Secretariat is delivering technical assistance to three Eastern Partner countries Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine that are members of the Energy Community. Regional activities of the project also involve Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus.

The EU4Energy Initiative covers all EU support to improve energy supply, security and connectivity, as well as to promote energy efficiency and the use of renewables in the Eastern Partner countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It does this by financing projects and programmes that help to reform energy markets and to reduce national energy dependence and consumption. Over the longer term, this makes energy supply more reliable, transparent and affordable, thus reducing energy poverty and energy bills for both citizens and the private sector.

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All articles in this newsletter have a corresponding article with more information which can be found in the news section of the EU4Energy sub-site:
<https://www.energy-community.org/regionalinitiatives/EU4Energy/news.html>

This newsletter has been produced with the assistance of the European Union in the framework of the EU4Energy Initiative. The contents are the sole responsibility of the Energy Community Secretariat and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

Funded by the European Union under the EU4Energy Initiative.