

JUST TRANSITION CASE STUDY

ENERGY EFFICIENT CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP



Building Inclusive Green Skills and Energy Efficiency Markets in Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine

Programme: RECONOMY
(HELVETAS / Sida)

Countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine (Eastern Partnership)

Sector: Energy Efficiency /
Construction and
Renovation

Market actors and partners: Women's Energy Club Ukraine (WECU); National Polytechnic University of Armenia (NPUA); Women in Climate and Energy (WiCE Armenia); Labor Intermediation and Private Sector Partners

Intervention Period:
2021-2025

JT Dimensions: Social Inclusion, Skills Development, Sector Transformation

CONTEXT AND JUST TRANSITION RELEVANCE

The Construction and building sectors across the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region face significant structural challenges, including aging building stock, low energy efficiency standards, limited enforcement of regulations, and shortages of qualified professionals in energy-efficient construction and renovation. At the same time, increasing alignment with the European Green Deal, rising energy costs, and growing energy security concerns have accelerated demand for greener buildings, energy-efficient renovation, and low-carbon construction services across countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. These pressures intensified following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which disrupted labor markets, supply chains, and energy systems across the region while increasing reconstruction and energy resilience needs. In Ukraine particularly, reconstruction efforts created an urgent need for modern, energy-efficient building solutions and a workforce capable of supporting green recovery processes. Despite growing market demand, the sector remained constrained by weak linkages between training institutions

and companies, limited labor intermediation systems, and insufficient practical skills aligned with emerging energy-efficiency markets. These challenges also carried important Just Transition implications. Women remain underrepresented in construction and energy-related occupations, while youth, displaced populations, and low-skilled workers often face barriers to accessing emerging green jobs. In Ukraine, the war further reshaped labor market dynamics, as large numbers of men were mobilized into military service, increasing the importance of women's participation in sectors traditionally dominated by men, including energy and construction-related fields. Without targeted interventions, the transition toward greener construction markets risked excluding vulnerable groups from the benefits of economic transformation. RECONOMY therefore positioned the EECR portfolio as both a green transition and inclusion intervention, aiming to strengthen market systems for energy-efficient construction while improving access to skills, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities for women and other disadvantaged groups.



JUST TRANSITION ACTIVITIES

RECONOMY implemented the EECR portfolio through a combination of skills development, labor intermediation, institutional strengthening, and ecosystem support interventions targeting key constraints in the energy-efficiency market systems in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

1. Building Green Skills and Institutional Capacity

A central component of the intervention focused on strengthening the supply of market-relevant skills for the energy-efficiency sector. In Armenia, RECONOMY partnered with the National Polytechnic University of Armenia (NPUA) to develop and institutionalize training modules for energy auditors and energy-efficient construction practices. The intervention aimed to strengthen the university's capacity to deliver practical, industry-relevant training linked to emerging labor market demand in the energy-efficiency sector.

2. Increasing Women's Participation in the Energy Sector

In Ukraine and Armenia, RECONOMY supported women-focused initiatives to increase female participation and leadership in energy-efficiency and climate-related sectors. Through collaboration with the Women's Energy Club Ukraine (WECU) and Women in Climate and Energy initiatives in Armenia, the intervention supported networking, mentoring, skills development, and entrepreneurship opportunities for women in sectors traditionally dominated by men. In Ukraine, these activities took on added significance as wartime conditions accelerated the need for

women to enter and lead in technical and energy-related fields. WECU developed and delivered an HR Excellence training programme for HR managers across Ukraine's energy sector, building company capacity for inclusive recruitment, gender-responsive HR policies, and the active promotion of women into leadership and technical roles. Complementing these country-level efforts, RECONOMY supported the establishment of a regional network connecting women's energy associations across Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine. With all three countries progressing along comparable EU accession pathways, the network provides a platform for coordinated advocacy, joint grant applications, and harmonised engagement with European institutions on gender-responsive energy transition policies.





3. Strengthening Labor Intermediation and Market Linkages

The intervention also worked to improve labor intermediation systems connecting trained workers with companies operating in the energy-efficiency and construction sectors. In Armenia RECONOMY partnered with labor intermediation actors such as Job.am to improve visibility of green and energy-efficiency related employment opportunities and facilitate matching between trained workers and employers. Job.am did not only include filters related to the green economy, but also added categories that are related to reaching vulnerable groups and fostering inclusivity. These efforts were complemented by collaboration with NPUA, which aimed to align training curricula more closely with private sector demand for energy auditors and energy-efficiency specialists. Across the portfolio, engagement with companies and sector-based actor helped strengthen recruitment pathways,

facilitate matching between employers and skilled workers, and strengthen companies' access to qualified labor for emerging green economy needs.

4. Supporting Systemic Change in the EE Ecosystem

Beyond direct training activities, RECONOMY engaged with universities, companies, and sector actors to strengthen the broader enabling environment for energy-efficient construction and renovation. The intervention sought to improve cooperation between training institutions and employers, increase recognition of energy-efficiency skills, and stimulate longer-term market demand for green construction services. While Just Transition was not always explicitly framed as a standalone objective, principles related to inclusion, green jobs, workforce transition, and equitable participation were embedded across the portfolio design and implementation.

KEY RESULTS

2,063

People with new or improved employment opportunities across the EE

1,259

People reporting increased income

5

Improved skills and knowledge initiatives developed in the EE sector

5

Countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine engaged through EECR portfolio

SCALING AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION

1. Anchor training provision within formal educational institutions.

The integration of energy-efficiency and energy-auditing modules into NPUA provides a replicable model that could be actively expanded to other educational institutions across the EaP region. Institutionalized training, where universities own and sustain the curricula independently, is an important step towards lasting impact. EU accession pressure, rising energy costs, and the scale of Ukraine's reconstruction needs will sustain demand for qualified energy-efficiency professionals; the priority is to ensure that supply keeps pace without depending on donor funded programmes and to assure access for vulnerable groups.

2. Further promote women's professional pathways in the energy sector.

The foundations laid through the Women's Energy Club of Ukraine and women-focused climate and energy initiatives in Armenia point to where targeted further investment can generate significant returns. Wartime labour market shifts in Ukraine have created structural openings for women in technical and energy-related roles that did not previously exist. Capitalizing on this window by strengthening mentoring structures, professional visibility, and sector-level recognition for women practitioners can lead to long-term change. Scaling inclusive participation will require making gender a design principle of future interventions and tracking long-term career outcomes alongside immediate training numbers.



3. Institutionalise the regional women's network as a self-sustaining advocacy structure.

The emerging regional network of women's energy associations across Armenia, Moldova, and Ukraine represents a strategic opportunity to consolidate and scale the gender inclusion gains achieved under RECONOMY. With a governance structure, shared vision, and financial sustainability model under development, the network is positioned to sustain cross-border peer exchange and advocate collectively for gender-responsive policies in the energy transition. Because all three countries are at comparable stages of EU accession, the network offers a ready-made channel for harmonised engagement with European institutions on energy transition priorities.

4. Driving inclusive green transition through systemic consolidation

The emerging ecosystem of universities, women-led organizations, private companies, and labor intermediation actors remains at an early-stage and will require continued institutional and policy support to sustain inclusive green transition outcomes. Advancing enforcement of certification requirements, strengthen investment in green innovation markets, and improving coordination between training systems and employers will be critical for ensuring that the expansion of the energy-efficiency sector translates into stable and accessible employment opportunities. From a JT perspective, improved measurement of long-term employment outcomes and job quality will also be essential. While the intervention generated evidence on participation and skills development, there is still limited information on whether workers, particularly women and vulnerable groups, are securing stable, fairly paid, and decent employment within the energy-efficiency sector. Without stronger evidence on economic fairness and inclusion outcomes, it will remain difficult to assess whether the benefits of the green transition are being distributed equitably or to build the case for sustained investment in inclusive green labor markets.

