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ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE EVN MACEDONIA, NORTH MACEDONIA

USAID is proud to work with EVN Macedonia in their commitment to improve gender equality in the energy sector as part of their path to long-term success.

When women serve as policymakers, executives, employees, and entrepreneurs, evidence shows that energy and water policies are more effective, utility products have higher sales rates, and yield higher returns on equity and investment. **USAID's Engendering Utilities program seeks to strengthen the energy and water sectors by increasing the professional participation of women.** EVN Macedonia is working with USAID through the Engendering Utilities program to collaboratively design and implement tailored interventions to improve gender equality outcomes and meet business goals.

After the privatization of North Macedonia's state-owned power company, EVN Macedonia emerged in 2006.¹ The utility's main activity is power distribution and supply for over 800,000 customers in Macedonia.² Currently, there are more than 1,800 professionals employed at EVN Macedonia, of which approximately 21 percent are women. **EVN Macedonia is committed to increasing their gender balance and encouraging more women to enter the electricity sector. The utility will focus on implementing various activities such as a company-wide onboarding program, and a mentoring program for female employees.**

PHOTO: EVN MACEDONIA

NORTH MACEDONIA'S ENERGY SECTOR

In the mid-2000s, North Macedonia's state-owned power company was unbundled into separate generation, transmission, and distribution utilities. The Austrian company EVN took over distribution responsibilities in 2006, while two state-owned companies remain responsible for generation and transmission. More recently, North Macedonia has focused on opening the electricity market for private investment, as well as domestic and international gas pipeline networks.³ North Macedonia relies predominantly on fossil fuels and hydropower and is dependent on electricity imports. The electric power generation capacity in the country consists of two thermal power plants and eight large and several small hydropower plants. Under the National Renewable Energy Action Plan, the country plans to reach a renewable energy target of 28 percent by 2020.⁴

GENDER EQUALITY IN NORTH MACEDONIA

North Macedonia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Optional Protocol in 1994. The country has adopted several laws and mechanisms to advance gender equality such as the Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men. Despite significant legal changes, gender gaps and inequalities continue across the country.⁵

In North Macedonia, 45 percent of middle income women participate in the labor market, compared to 76 percent of men. Most women work in services (60 percent) and industry (25 percent).⁶ However, almost 26 percent of firms in North Macedonia have female top managers, compared to a regional average of only 19 percent.⁷ Nevertheless, the gender pay gap in North Macedonia is the highest among the Central Eastern European countries and was estimated to be between 25 and 27.3 percent in 2006.⁸

Women in North Macedonia are strongly affected by domestic and gender-based violence.⁹ Three out of five women (60 percent) think that violence against women is common, and nearly three in ten think that it is very common. Furthermore, 14 percent of women say they have experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15 at the hands of a partner or non-partner.¹⁰

GENDER EQUALITY IN ACTION

EVN Macedonia has worked with USAID's Engendering Utilities program since 2016 to develop and implement a tailored action plan to incorporate gender equity into its business practices. Data collected and analyzed through Engendering Utilities showed that prior to participating in the program, women were underrepresented in most jobs within the company despite informal efforts by the utility to monitor gender outcomes. Findings also illustrated disparities in employment outcomes and in the way the utility ran its business, both of which ultimately impacted women's ability to fully participate in the company. Specifically, only 22 percent of top- and mid-level managers were women. Further, there were no formal programs to attract or promote women.

The action plan included targeted interventions, such as the institution of a competency-based hiring selection processes to reduce gender bias, the implementation of a dual-career promotion path to ensure equal access for women, and the establishment of gender-equitable succession planning and job candidate selection processes. EVN Macedonia also created mentorship programs to encourage the professional development of its female employees, as well as activities that engage young women. EVN's 20-20-20 Project is a training and mentorship program that aims to fight stereotypes in the workplace

and awards scholarships to high-performing electrical engineering students. With support from USAID, the company organized North Macedonia's first-ever "Bring Your Child to Work Day" in 2016 and continued the event with self-funding ever since. Data shows that this activity increased employee engagement.

Since 2017, EVN Macedonia has funded and organized a national Women in Energy Conference with the aim of bringing together women and men with different backgrounds in the energy sector and raising national and regional awareness about the importance of gender equity in the power sector.



PHOTO: EVN MACEDONIA

EVN Macedonia's HR specialists also took part in Engendering Utilities' customized Gender Equity Executive Leadership (GEELP) program, in partnership with Georgetown University. The program's capstone project required participants to address methods to integrate gender equity into the HR employee lifecycle and utilize advanced change management approaches to maximize their company's cultural evolution. Participants then presented their recommendations to the utility's top leadership. The executive course was complemented by customized expert coaching, as well as the development of a global employee life cycle best practices framework and an equity scorecard to document lessons learned and track progress. This approach provided a model applicable to other corporate settings. The EVN Team successfully graduated from the GEELP program in 2018.

IMPACT

EVN Macedonia's participation in the Engendering Utilities program has resulted in significant and substantial progress toward a gender-equitable future for the company including the following:

- EVN drafted an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy in 2017.
- Between 2015 and 2017, the number of female employees increased by almost 3 percent.
- HR compliance and recruiting practices now include using disaggregated data as a factor in decision-making and conducting corporate-sponsored forums and community initiatives that promote women's economic empowerment.
- EVN Macedonia provides scholarships to electrical engineering students who earn high grades. Two out of every three students who receive this support are young women.
- New payroll and administration practices include salary data analysis as well as periodically conducted benefits data analysis to identify and address inequities.
- EVN continued to conduct a variety of outreach activities at vocational schools and engineering faculties, which lead to positive impacts: the female participation in the young engineer's program "Next generation of EVN" increased from 38 percent to 62 percent between 2018 and 2019.
- In 2019, EVN hosted a "Bring Your Child to Work Day" for around 140 employee children with interesting games and experiments to learn about energy.
- The EVN Leadership Training aims at increasing awareness and skills of the Heads of Departments to handle problems of discrimination, bullying, and harassment which may occur at a workplace.
- EVN Macedonia continues to host the "Women in INdustry" Conference since 2017.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I learned [through the participation in the Engendering Utilities program that] gender equity is win-win, not a zero-sum game: collaboration and peer learning accelerate progress, benchmarks, and frameworks— both qualitative and quantitative—keep us on the right track, and engendering is a man’s business as well.”

- Aneta Petrovska-Rusamaroski, Head of Human Resources and Organization, EVN Macedonia

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NOTES

1 International Trade Administration. (2019). North Macedonia - Energy. Retrieved from <https://www.export.gov/article?id=North-Macedonia-Energy>

2 Information provided by utility.

3 International Trade Administration. (2019). North Macedonia - Energy. Retrieved from <https://www.export.gov/article?id=North-Macedonia-Energy>

4 CEE Bankwatch Network. (n.d.). The energy sector in Macedonia. Retrieved from <https://bankwatch.org/beyond-coal/the-energy-sector-in-macedonia>

5 UN Women. (n.d.). North Macedonia. Retrieved from <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/north-macedonia>

6 World Bank. (n.d.). Gender Data Portal. Retrieved from <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/north-macedonia>

7 USAID. IDEA Country Dashboard. Retrieved from <https://idea.usaid.gov/cd/north-macedonia/gender>

8 ILO. (2012). The gender pay gap in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---sro-budapest/documents/publication/wcms_180637.pdf

9 UN Women. (n.d.). North Macedonia. Retrieved from <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/north-macedonia>

10 OSCE. (2019). OSCE-led survey on violence on women: North Macedonia results report. Retrieved from <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/419264?download=true>