

Saving energy at home - a 'how to' centre for sustainable energy

Through greater awareness of energy efficiency, consumers are empowered to make informed choices to save themselves money and help increase their country's energy security.



Households make up one-third of all energy used in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asian countries; if energy efficiency was fully applied, these countries could reduce their energy use by 30%.

The EU-funded INOGATE Programme is developing sustainable energy information centres in Georgia and Moldova to help consumers like Marina make informed choices about their energy use. The centre will provide information about products that are certified as energy efficient and are harmonised with EU criteria.

Energy prices for consumers remain low across the region due to state subsidies, the cost of energy for countries producing or importing energy are high. Awareness of energy efficiency across the region is low and behavioural change in this area is badly needed. In Moldova, people spend up to 60% of their disposable income on energy during the winter. To help households better manage their, households need more information on how they can be more energy efficient in their daily lives, whether by selecting energy efficient appliances, better home insulation or other behavioural changes. Informed consumers will embrace energy efficiency for the difference it makes to their pockets, but also for the significance it makes to the environment and to the energy security of their country.

“ Before, I had no idea what ‘energy efficiency’ meant – I even did not understand what that really was, but after getting more information I see how great the benefits are: bills get reduced and in the end the country’s budget can use the saved money on other things. Though, it’s hard to make the right decision when changing windows or buying new appliances.

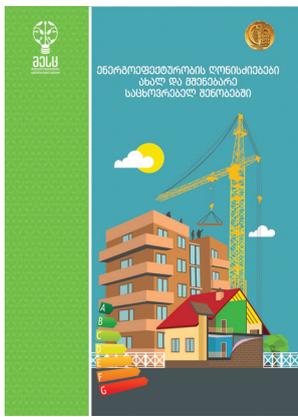
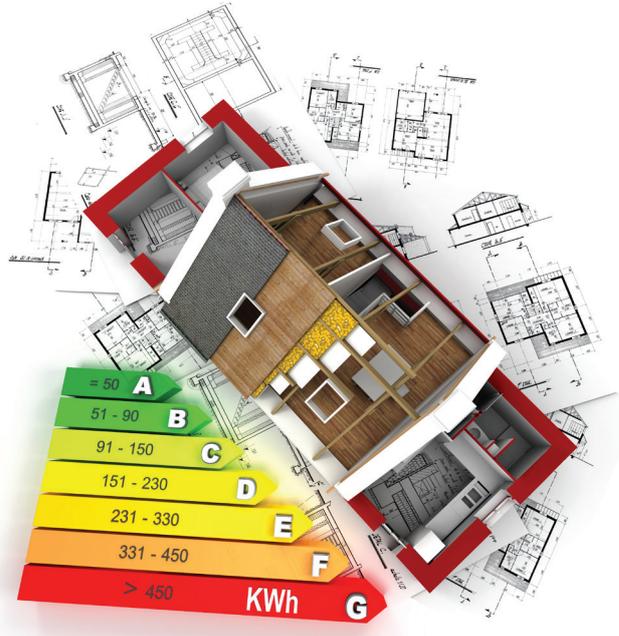
Marina, 67, lives with her son's family in Tbilisi's four-room apartment

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! Today's consumers are ready to make behavioural changes at home and in their lifestyles. Increasing their awareness of energy saving solutions such as A-rated appliances, LED lighting, etc. is a major step in creating a grass-root movement towards energy efficiency. People also need to be informed of government support, especially of any incentives available.

Spotlight on success

Two Sustainable Energy Information Centres are being introduced, one in Tbilisi, **Georgia**, the other in Chisinau, **Moldova**. Both cities are part of the Covenant of Mayors initiative which commits local authorities to reaching the EU 2020 energy and climate goals. Xavier Dubuisson, who has worked with INOGATE to initiate these centres, sees their role as “empowering citizens to reap the benefits of energy efficiency, environmental protection and energy security, for themselves as well as for their country.”



The Georgian centre, housed in the main hall of the Tbilisi City Hall, is an extension of the City Hall services already being provided. “The municipality has established the Sustainable Energy Centre as its key instrument for the implementation of its policies in energy efficiency” says one City Hall employee. It is a

place to spread the word on sustainable energy, helping the public make small, affordable investments in energy efficiency. The main targets are citizens, business people, the staff of Tbilisi City Hall and schoolchildren. “Children have a large contribution to make by becoming advocates for behavioural change in the family and at school”, emphasizes Wolfgang Lutz of INOGATE.

The Tbilisi City Hall welcomes in its building an average of 1,600 visitors daily. The centre aims to reach at least 10% of these, directly face-to-face. Conservatively speaking the Centre will engage with over 40,000 visitors annually. “Our

idea is to make it a user-friendly and inviting place, says Nodar Chichinadze, Head of Economic Policy at Tbilisi City Hall.” We plan a number of events to raise awareness among the population.”

In Moldova, the Chisinau Sustainable Energy Information Centre, housed in the Moldovan Agency of Energy Efficiency, will serve as a hub for a number of initiatives by NGOs, businesses and education institutes, aiming to inform and educate citizens. The centre’s staff will focus on outreach activities and will be equipped with interactive exhibits, demos of sustainable energy products, and lots of information material. The will work closely with the hub members and run regular roadshows to local communities to promote country-wide awareness on energy efficiency. A strong emphasis is also given to the use of social media and digital communication to engage with younger audiences.

The EU-funded INOGATE Programme promotes international energy cooperation between the European Union and the Partner Countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

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