Promoting energy efficiency as a UN Youth Volunteer in Ukraine

For Viktoria Unuchko, her desire to make the world more sustainable and resilient was a strong call to action. Since 2018 she is engaged in a project for energy efficiency with the United Nations Development Programme in Ukraine. Even though the energy sector is considered a male-dominated one, Viktoria contributes successfully to green initiatives as Project Officer. This energized and inspired young woman shares her story.

Viktoria Unuchko started as a UN Youth Volunteer Administrative and Communications Assistant. She supports the Sustainable Development and Environment Portfolio within the UNDP/Global Environment Facility project "Removing barriers to increase investment in energy efficiency in public buildings in Ukraine through the ESCO modality in small and medium-sized cities".

Her day-to-day work includes field missions to small- and medium-sized cities (10,000-50,000 citizens), communications with the city partners, planning of events, information support, logistics and activities and reporting.
It is hard, both emotionally and physically, to go to remote less developed areas and see that people do not have good sanitary conditions and a good level of comfort. However, it motivates me to work harder to make the lives of these people better. --Viktoriia Unuchko, UN Youth Volunteer

Vikoriia continues, "The project’s work helped former deputy principals in public schools, administrative workers and maintenance officers of kindergartens to learn how to perform as energy managers."

"Now, their work includes smart energy management and monitoring, and disseminating this knowledge among their colleagues and pupils. Even simple measures are bringing about an average seven per cent savings in energy annually," Vikoriia says.

The cause

In 2018, UNDP expanded the partnership with private energy service companies (ESCO) to promote energy efficiency in public buildings. Ten cities in Ukraine now use energy management information systems to monitor and analyze energy and water consumption of over 600 public buildings in real-time. This, in turn, has created around 600 new green jobs.

From another perspective, the approximately 2,000 students of six schools and kindergartens in the pilot city in a small city in Ukraine - Dubno - now benefit from more efficient heat and water supply from energy service companies. The city also spends 15 per cent less energy (270 MWh), eliminating 201 metric tons of CO₂ emissions annually.

The aim of the project is to increase investment in energy efficiency in the public sector in Ukraine by removing financial, legal and technical barriers.

As another measure, UNDP created an educational centre on energy efficiency in cooperation with the Kyiv National University. It is expected that annually over 10,000 energy auditors and energy managers will be equipped with knowledge and skills in line with the EU standards. UNDP also launched an Energy Efficiency Helpdesk and a contact centre that provides consultations to over 20 citizens a day.
Viktoriia’s personal interest in sustainability and energy efficiency is also being fostered through her participation in the Young European Ambassadors Initiative (a part of EU Neighbours East). She also leads a group on energy policy and environment, which works in cooperation with energy projects and conducts environmental projects and campaigns in the country.

Viktoriia is pursuing an MA degree in International Relations and Security Studies and her master’s thesis topic is "Energy Security in International Relations". Her motto is "Do not be indifferent. Try. Act. Work. Be the change that you want to see in the world".

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