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VIG Group company sets new standards for CSR in Georgia GPI Holding wins accolades for its employment and environmental projects

A highly innovative initiative which gave people the chance to embark on a new career – 89 percent of the new recruits were women – and a project to raise awareness of the need to reduce the number of cars producing harmful pollution: two social projects from a company of Vienna Insurance Group (VIG) in Georgia that impressed the panels for various international prizes, as well as the jury members for the Günter Geyer Award for Social Conscience. GPI Holding received the Günter Geyer Award and prize money of EUR 50,000 in Tbilisi in June 2018.

Jobs for people with limited prospects

“We need you and we have a job for you” was the message that Georgian insurance company GPI Holding wanted to communicate as its employment bus set out on a tour of the country to recruit people to join its field staff two years ago. Perhaps contrary to expectations, the main target group was not young, dynamic men. The results of an employee study had shown that people whose CVs did not match typical job market criteria actually made the best sales staff. It was people aged over 35 with families and older children, and often with no specific training, who turned out to be more successful – in particular women who were looking to start out on a second career or take on a new professional challenge after caring for young children. In Georgia’s still very male-dominated society, women with such ambitions face discrimination. They feel underappreciated and suffer from a lack of confidence despite their strong desire to take on a new job.

600 motivated new recruits

This was the target group that GPI Holding selected for its nationwide recruitment fairs. The initiative was accompanied by an extensive media campaign. *“We were very impressed with the results. Over the last two years GPI Holding has created 600 new field staff positions, and 89 percent of them went to women. 81 percent of these new employees are over 25. The new recruits received six months of paid training. The campaign also sparked a wide-ranging discussion about female employment in Georgia’s male-controlled labour market, and was copied in other sectors. Ultimately, this social initiative paid off for our Group company from a commercial perspective, too. In 2017, sales improved by 45 percent and there was a 50 percent reduction in the staff turnover rate in sales, which is usually high,”* commented Martin Simhandl, CFO of the Vienna Insurance Group and the board member with responsibility for Georgia, on the reasons for awarding first prize to GPI Holding. Simhandl presented the 2017 Günter Geyer Award to the CEO of GPI Holding, Paata Lomadze, and his dedicated team in Tbilisi. The project had already received the Business for Gender Equality award from the American development agency Millennium Challenge.

Tackling air pollution

GPI Holding was also honored with the Günter Geyer Award for an environmental project. Georgia has some of the worst air pollution in the world. Working together with two NGOs and a start-up company, GPI Holding launched a campaign to raise awareness of the problem. It drew people's attention to the high levels of pollution – mainly caused by old cars that produce harmful emissions – with the slogan “Don't be an egoist, be an ECOIST”. Motor insurance is still not a legal requirement in Georgia. The extremely creative campaign highlighted ecological and health issues, and the project made a contribution to directly improving the situation with the introduction of car insurance featuring an eco-discount, as well as a tree-planting initiative. GPI Holding had already won recognition for the project at the CEE CSR Summit in Bratislava.

GPI Holding: the market leader in Georgia

The Vienna Insurance Group entered Georgia in 2006. In 2017, GPI Holding generated premium income of around EUR 35 million, making it the country's number one insurer, with a market share of 23.3 percent. VIG is also represented in Georgia by insurance company IRAO. In 2017 the combined premium income of both companies was EUR 43 million. In the first quarter of 2018, VIG recorded premium income of EUR 15.5 million in Georgia.

The Günter Geyer Award

The annual Günter Geyer Award for Social Conscience is presented to VIG Group companies in recognition of activities which demonstrate outstanding social commitment. An initiative of the main shareholder of the Vienna Insurance Group, Wiener Städtische Versicherungsverein, the awards were launched in 2012. The winners receive a share of the EUR 100,000 prize money, which they are required to invest in further social projects.

Vienna Insurance Group (VIG) is the leading insurance specialist in Austria as well as in Central and Eastern Europe. About 50 companies in 25 countries form a Group with a long-standing tradition, strong brands and close customer relations. VIG has close to 200 years of experience in the insurance business. With more than 25,000 employees, Vienna Insurance Group is the clear market leader in its Austrian and CEE markets. It is therefore excellently positioned to take advantage of the long-term growth opportunities in a region with 180 million people. The listed Vienna Insurance Group is the best-rated company of ATX, the leading index of Vienna Stock Exchange; its share is also listed on the Prague Stock Exchange.

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