

PRESS RELEASE

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Harmonising Electricity and Gas Standards: INOGATE to focus on the creation of Technical Committees in Partner Countries

Brussels – Ten (10) Partner Countries took part in the Regional Seminar on Harmonisation of Electricity and Gas Standards organised by the INOGATE Technical Secretariat in Brussels on 29-30 January 2013. Participants included representatives of the National Standards Bodies, gas companies and electricity companies from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The purpose of the seminar was to promote the use of harmonised standards, codes and best practices with regard to the equipment and infrastructure used in the electricity and gas sectors.

Since 2008 the INOGATE Programme has been closely working with its Partner Countries to promote harmonisation of electricity and gas standards with the technical standards implemented and used in the European Union. The lack of harmonised standards, codes and practices with regard to the equipment and infrastructure used in the electricity and gas sector has been identified by numerous studies and analyses as one of the main obstacles to closer cooperation between the EU energy markets and those of the INOGATE Partner Countries. To date, INOGATE has facilitated the adoption of 12 gas standards by the Partner Countries through the procedure of inter-state standards of the Euro-Asian Standardisation Council (EASC).

For the majority of Partner Countries, the main bottleneck in this process is still the challenging and time-consuming process of moving from the old Soviet system, based on GOST, to a new system of voluntary standards. The challenges that the National Standardization Bodies are facing in this process are the adoption of the new standards, the amendment of existing Technical Regulations and secondary legislation, as well as the development of new secondary legislation where necessary. Due to limited CEN/CENELEC membership, the National Standards Bodies of Partner Countries face difficulty in obtaining access to the latest European standards adopted or becoming part of their development process. Meanwhile, the energy companies face the challenge of understanding and using a new set of standards.

Why are standards so important for Partner Countries? It is clear that the introduction of international standards can bring multiple benefits such as improved competitiveness, increased efficiency and reduced risks. Standards also help promote new technologies and best practices, spreading innovation and knowledge throughout the market. They promote the interoperability of products and services and in this way, also help increase trade by eliminating technical barriers. Another important dimension of introducing harmonised standards is that they can increase the safety of products, foster the protection of health and the environment and contribute to sustainable growth.

For the next two years, INOGATE will focus intensively on facilitating and building the capacity of Partner Countries to adopt a new approach to the harmonisation of standards. It is important that strong cooperation links are established among the Ministries, the National Standards Bodies and the energy companies. European best practice shows that establishing Technical Committees for Electricity and Gas are instrumental to overcoming the aforementioned challenges. Few Partner Countries currently possess functional technical committees, but many have expressed an interest in establishing them over the course of this project.

The specific target of INOGATE assistance is the creation or restructuring of Technical Committees in the Partner Countries – one for gas and one for electricity in each Partner Country interested in harmonising standards with the EU. In this way, a solid base is set up for future standardisation activities in the field of energy ensuring the sustainability of standardisation activities in Partner Countries.

The regional seminar provided an excellent forum for launching this ambitious two-year intensive work programme. Key note speakers included representatives of CEN-CENELEC¹ and the British Standards Institution (BSI). One of the key outcomes of the seminar was that participants were provided with complete information on the role, management and activities of Technical Committees and as a result, agreed to work with INOGATE in the direction of setting up the relevant Technical Committees.

INO GATE is an EU-funded programme promoting international energy co-operation between the European Union and the Partner Countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. It works to support the EU policy frameworks of the Baku Initiative, the Eastern Partnership – Energy Security Platform, the Energy Community and the Central Asia Development Cooperation.

INO GATE works in four key areas: convergence of energy markets on the basis of the EU principles, enhancing energy security, supporting sustainable energy development, and attracting investment towards energy projects of common and regional interest. INOGATE is one of the longest running EU programmes since 1996.

The full documentation on the regional seminar can be found at the following link:

<http://tinyurl.com/standards-seminar>

For more information contact:

INO GATE Technical Secretariat (Kiev)

tel: +38 044 230 2754

e-mail: secretariat.kiev@inogate.org

www.inogate.org

¹ CEN: the European Committee for Standardization; CENELEC: the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization – more info at <http://www.cencenelec.eu/>