The Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Belarus organized a successful one day information session on the INOGATE programme

On 6 December 2007, the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Belarus held a one-day information session in Minsk on the enhanced energy cooperation between the EU, the Littoral States of the Black and Caspian Seas and their neighbouring countries, which is being supported by the INOGATE Programme.

The information event was organized by the Country Coordinator, Mr. Michaduk, Deputy Minister of Energy of the Republic of Belarus, with the support of the INOGATE Technical Secretariat. The head of operations of the Ministry of Energy, Mr. Kozlo, as well as heads of departments of the Ministry of Industry and Energy, Mr Burkin and Mr. Kirilenko participated in the event.

The information session was attended by about 30 participants - representatives from the Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Economy, the Standardization bodies, Tacis coordinating unit, Consultants from ongoing INOGATE projects, high officials from Oil, Gas and Electricity companies in Belarus and from other associations involved in the energy sector.

The event was opened by the Deputy Minister of Energy, Mr. Michaduk, who underlined the importance of energy cooperation with the EU, as well as of the INOGATE programme and invited all participants to contribute to this event. He stressed that the agreements reached in the Astana conference are of high importance to Belarus. The newly issued energy strategy paper is fully supported by the objectives and the priorities underlined in the Astana declaration. It is now important to mobilize efforts and to meet the set objectives efficiently.

Mr. Michaduk also presented a historical review from the Baku Conference to the Astana Ministerial Conference, the objectives of the Astana Declaration, the main topics of the agreed Energy Road Map and the priorities of Belarus in all the cooperation areas (market convergence, safety & security, sustainable development and investments). He also outlined the actions taken in Belarus to achieve the objectives set out in the Astana Declaration.

INOGATE representative Mr. Nikos Tsakalidis held a presentation on the INOGATE work programme, focusing on the following topics:

- INOGATE Programme - new context and main objectives
- Work Programme for 2007-2008 - activities performed and planned
- The roles of the stakeholders in this initiative (Ministry of Energy, Country Coordinator, Working Group Members, regulators, energy companies, energy agencies and international financial institutions)
- EU support to the partner countries for regional cooperation, policy and institutional reform, including ongoing and upcoming technical assistance projects
- Additional support provided through other programmes
A short presentation of the ongoing regional INOGATE project “Development of Maintenance Excellence in NIS Gas Companies” was held by Mr. Makarian – consultant of the project.

Other participants also held presentations:
- Ms. Ostrovskai, head of operations of the Ministry of Economy.
- Mr. Zubkovski, Deputy Chief Engineer, Belenergo
- Mr. Vasilchenkov, Deputy General Director, Dispatch Electrical Network
- Mr. Dmitrakovich, Deputy General Director, Strategia
- Mr. Annuk, Deputy General Director, Beltransgas

They presented the current activities of their organizations focused on regional energy issues.

During and after the presentations a number of questions were raised regarding the structure of the INOGATE programme, details of upcoming and ongoing technical assistance projects, information on how INOGATE could provide support to Belarus to achieve the objectives set by the new energy strategy paper of Belarus, that mentions specific priority directions in the energy sector (i.e. increase the transit role of the country for oil & gas, development of the renewable sources, development of new power stations, and attraction of foreign investments) and how INOGATE could help Belarus to attract foreign investors. INOGATE representatives responded to these questions and explained how any interested party (Ministry, company, institution or association) can benefit from EU technical assistance.

The participants were also interested in the market convergence process and in the forthcoming 3rd Ministerial Conference. INOGATE representatives described the main steps and key issues of the market convergence process.

It was also explained how INOGATE monitors the measures taken by the partner countries in relation to the objectives set out in the Astana Declaration. The participants were informed that a Monitoring Report will be produced for submission to the Ministers before the 3rd Ministerial Conference.

The participants put forward a number of proposals and suggestions, in particular it was suggested that more active involvement of local experts is needed during the implementation of the projects. Following to the Deputy Minister’s mention in his speech that there is an increased interest of foreign investors from China, Russia, Venezuela, Mr. Kuzmich, General Director of ZAO “Belfreshenergo” proposed an evaluation of the investment climate of the Belarusian energy sector, as well as of the neighboring countries to be performed. It was suggested that the EC consider this issue when developing new projects.

The INOGATE representatives provided the participants with relevant contact information, as well as with advice on where the participants could find and download additional information on the INOGATE website. All participants expressed their gratitude for the organization of this information session and proposed to hold similar events in the future to update the stakeholders on the activities of the INOGATE programme.

The Country Coordinator and the INOGATE representatives thanked all participants for their attendance and their active participation in this information event.