

Press release

Twinning project: Austrian regulator cooperates with Macedonian counterpart on institutional issues

Vienna, 25 March 2009 – E-Control, the Austrian energy regulatory authority, and the AEI, the agency for European integration and economic development, have been awarded a Twinning project with the Macedonian regulatory authority ERC. The general objective of this project is an approximation of the Macedonian legislation to the EU energy acquis. More specifically, E-Control and the AEI will cooperate with experts from the Slovenian regulatory authority and other Austrian institutions to achieve, in the course of the next two years, sustainable institutional strengthening of the Macedonian regulator and stronger involvement in the Energy Community of South-East Europe.

Well-functioning SEE energy markets increase security of supply in Austria in the long term

Austria being a small European country, E-Control puts special emphasis on international activities. Austria's official involvement in the South-East Europe process is mirrored at the regulatory level by E-Control's active contribution to the work of the Regulatory Board of the Energy Community of South-East Europe (ECRB). Good contacts with authorities and institutions in this region are of geopolitical importance for Austria. 'The Macedonian regulator is also a member of the ECRB, so there are quite a few overlapping areas of work', says Walter Boltz, managing director of Energie-Control GmbH. 'An institutional strengthening of the Macedonian regulatory authority and a more stable Macedonian energy sector will increase security of supply in South-East Europe, which will in turn have positive effects on Austria', he explains.

Notes:

Twinning is an initiative of the European Commission, established eleven years ago to prepare for EU enlargement. It is an instrument for targeted institutional cooperation that aims to help candidate countries strengthen their administrative and judicial capacity for the implementation of the *acquis communautaire*.

Twinning projects deliver important advances in institution building. Austria has participated very actively in Twinning projects from the start, and has already implemented 222 projects in 26 different countries.

Every EU Member State designates a National Contact Point (NCP) for Twinning projects who serves as a pivot for all communication between the European Commission and the MS and acts as a contact point for other NCPs. Austria considers the EU external aid programmes in general and Twinning in particular to be very important external relations tools; for this reason, the Austrian NCP is part of the Austrian Foreign Ministry.

The **AEI**, the agency for European integration and economic development, has been working as a non-profit networking and incentive platform for Twinning projects since 2003.

Among its members, the AEI counts several Austrian federal ministries and other federal organisations; together with their expert database, where over one thousand experts from all relevant sectors are registered, and the rapidly growing number of successfully completed projects in 19 countries, they have made the AEI one of the leading institutions for Twinning projects in Austria.

For further information, please contact:

E-Control

Bettina Ometzberger

Claudia Riebler

phone +43 1 24 7 24-202

phone +43 1 24 7 24-206