

IncoNet Eastern Partnership STI Policy Stakeholders Conference on Energy Minsk, 12-13 October 2015

Press – release

On October 12-13, 2015, Minsk hosted the Policy Stakeholders Conference on the European Union - Eastern Partnership Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation in addressing Energy, one of the major events within the EU project “Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation Network for Eastern Partnership Countries” (IncoNet EaP). The project's objective is to increase dialogue between the EU and EaP countries in science, technology and innovation (STI) policies in three societal challenges, namely: climate change and natural resources, energy and health.

The main aim of the Policy Stakeholders Conference is to bring together policy makers, representatives of the research community and the private sector to address specific problems that countries in the region face and that are of mutual interest and benefit, as well as to take stock and showcase best practices regarding EU-EaP scientific cooperation, discuss concrete innovation cooperation projects, and promote international collaboration, networking, matchmaking. In addition the Conference provides the opportunity for bringing together a good number of projects from the region as best practise examples with the aim to create synergies among them for future cooperation activities in H2020 and beyond.

Being the second event of this type after the first conference in Yerevan, Armenia (May 2014) which focused on Climate Change, it has opened a series of events within the 20th Belarusian Energy and Ecology Forum, the largest international event in the country in energy.

The Conference was organized by the three IncoNet EaP partners –

- Regional Centre for Information and Scientific Development, Budapest, Hungary
- Centre for Regional and International Studies and the Promotion of STI, Athens, Greece
- Belarusian Institute of System Analysis and Information Support of Scientific and Technical Sphere.

The event was administratively supported by the State Committee for Science and Technology and Department for Energy Efficiency of the Republic of Belarus.

The Conference brought together 128 experts. They represented 81 organizations from 15 European countries, including 6 EaP ones: Austria, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Hungary, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Moldova, Poland, France, Turkey, Switzerland, Ukraine, a number of international organizations (organizations of the UN family, the Central European Initiative, the Energy Charter, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), as well as from the European Commission and the European energy-related technological and innovation platforms. Participants represented public policy coordination bodies in the field of research, innovation, energy and international STI cooperation at national and EU level, international organizations, major international projects in the energy



sector, as well as the civil society organizations, research community and business. One third of the participants were women.

The welcome speeches were provided by Mr. Alexander Shumilin, Chairman of the State Committee for Science and Technology of the Republic of Belarus and Mr. Andrei Minenkov, Head of the Unit of foreign economic relations and S&T policy of the Department for Energy Efficiency of the Republic of Belarus. Dr. George Bonas, Executive Director of the Center for Regional and International Studies and the promotion of STI (Greece), the scientific coordinator of the IncoNet EaP project introduced the goals of the Conference as part of the project activities.

The business agenda was opened by Dr. Karina Firkavichiute, representative of the Directorate General for Research and Innovation, European Commission with a report on the main directions of research funded by the EU and the tools to support them. The next participants presented the current international strategies, initiatives and programs operating in the EU member states, associated countries and in the Eastern Partnership region, starting with the United Nations multilateral initiatives and major projects funded by the EU and ending with bilateral projects between the EU and the Eastern Partnership, as well as national programs in the Eastern Europe. The second part of the Conference was devoted to discussing the problems of innovation activity in the EaP countries and the promising areas of cooperation with the European Union.

By the end of 2015, the Conference recommendations will be developed to enhance the EU – EaP STI cooperation in the energy sector. They will be proposed for inclusion in the existing and emerging programs and instruments to the European Commission, other interested organizations, international donors and national governments in the EU member states and countries of the Eastern Partnership.

Presentations and photos of the Conference are available at the following web-sites:

<http://www.inco-eap.net/>

<http://www.increast.eu/>

<http://www.scienceportal.org.by/>

