

PRESS INFORMATION

Biofuel end-users in Central & Eastern Europe discuss challenges

Freiburg, 20 December 2007 – In the second of a series of workshops for biofuel end-users, from, the Biofuel Cities European Partnership brought together 35 stakeholders from Central and Eastern Europe in Sofia, Bulgaria. On the agenda was a discussion of the biofuels for transport sector and a reflection on the challenges facing biofuel end-users in the region, such as overly bureaucratic procedures, lack of institutional support and security of feedstock supply.

Kicking off the workshop were two regional success stories with very different backgrounds. A Czech case study examined the interconnection between agri-industrial feedstock production and end-use, while a Romanian case focused on the use of alternative fuels in the public transport sector. Having been provided with plenty of food for thought, the participants then discussed the challenges and opportunities facing Southern, Central and Eastern European biofuel end-users.

Featuring highly were a number of politically oriented challenges, such as extremely high levels of bureaucracy – many official procedures relating to use of biofuels require simplification. Also mentioned was a perceived lack of political will to develop the sector, despite the European Commission's focus on the 2010 10% volume target. Participants identified potential solutions to this as the development of cross-sectoral think tanks and the proliferation of regional good examples from which beginners in the sector could learn. All present concurred that platforms such as the Biofuel Cities European Partnership are instrumental in communicating key issues and informing legislators and other politicians.

The fact that institutional support is not readily available poses particular challenges. Uncertainty exists on whether new institutions will be created or if existing ones will be expanded upon. This impacts concretely on the issue of quality control, which is also related to the issue of standardisation.

Concerns of a technical nature were voiced regarding the questionable availability of vehicles able to run on transport biofuels. Also the lack of local standardisation for fuel and vehicle engine conversions was cited as a challenge.

As regards the supply of feedstocks, participants concluded that, whenever possible, they should be sourced from the locality. Questions were raised about the development of sustainability criteria, however, as this issue is still being hotly debated in Brussels, no concrete solutions or proposals could be formulated.

End-user workshops provide a valuable opportunity for stakeholders to embark upon a frank exchange of views and make reflections on their situation and potential solutions. The outcome of the workshop was a list of considerations to be taken into account by the biofuels sector. Full details can be obtained in the CEE biofuels end-user workshop report that will be published online in early 2008.

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www.biofuel-cities.eu

Background Information:

The Biofuel Cities European Partnership is a forum for the application of biofuels. Open to all stakeholders in the area of biofuels for vehicles, it offers www.biofuel-cities.eu - a one-stop-shop for information on biofuels application; online facilities, workshops and study tours to exchange and network with your peers and learn from experts; news, publications and tools to provide information, guidance and support.

Biofuel Cities European Partnership participants have full access to all features and participation is free. The Partnership was unofficially launched in July 2007 and more than 850 biofuels professionals and other interested stakeholders have already signed up

The Biofuel Cities European Partnership was created and is managed by the Biofuel Cities project, which aims to demonstrate the broadscale use of new and innovative biofuel technologies. Biofuel Cities covers the complete chain from feedstock to biofuels production, distribution and utilisation in vehicle fleets. The project is co-ordinated by seven partners* that share unique and extensive experiences, not only on biofuels research and application and sustainable mobility, but also on the specific needs of local governments and private enterprise. It is supported by the European Commission under the EU's Sixth Research Framework Programme.

*SenterNovem, Exergia, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, INEM – International Network for Environmental Management, IPIEO – Institute for Fuels and Renewable Energy, NEN – Netherlands Standardisation Institute, VITO - Flemish Institute for Technological Research

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