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Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6)

Twenty-seventh session

Geneva, 28 (pm) - 30 November 2017

Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda

Sectoral projects

Progress report on the Sectoral Initiative on Pipelines Safety

Submitted by the Rapporteur¹

Mandate

The Working Party noted information on regulatory cooperation provided by the delegates and adopted the reports of the four sectoral initiatives and requested them to report at the 2017 session.

Summary

Accidents at international pipelines threaten the lives of people and pose a risk to the environment, cause serious loss and hostility towards the construction of pipelines. However, if pipelines were designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with the relevant norms and standards, they could be effective and environmentally friendly means of transport and distribution of energy.

This document contains information on the purpose of the sectoral initiative and its recent activities and plans. It is submitted to the Working Party for discussion and adoption.

¹ At its eighteenth session, the Working Party asked the secretariat to provide annual updates on the work of all the sectoral initiatives (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2008/18, para. 63).



Proposed decision

The Working Party adopts the report on the Sectoral initiative on Pipelines Safety (SIPS). It mandates the Secretariat to continue to report on its development and implementation. It further requests the secretariat, resources permitting, to assist in maintaining and developing contacts with Governments to promote the project.

I. Project objective and key deliverables

1. The initiative aims at developing a common regulatory framework for the sector of safety of pipelines, taking into account the provisions of the "International model" as contained in Recommendation L. The common regulatory framework currently under development will aim at harmonizing regulatory requirements but at the same time allow for national differences.
2. The harmonization of requirements will be based on justifiable scientific and technical provisions aimed at reducing possible risk and ensuring safety during construction and operation of pipelines.
3. In order to achieve harmonization regulators need to work closely with industry and independent third parties (conformity assessment bodies) who have the necessary technical expertise that is continuously updated with technological progress in the sector.
4. The initiative aims to highlight the risks that arise at different stages of the life cycle of pipeline systems. It also defines a set of security requirements for transboundary pipelines based on standards to be used to establish conformity with these requirements. These requirements should take into account different geographical and climatic conditions and terrain in order to ensure optimum protection against risks while avoiding excessive costs.
5. In particular the sectoral initiative is aimed at the design and development of the overall regulatory framework in the field of construction and design of main pipelines.

II. Main achievements of the Initiative until 2017

6. The sectoral initiative started its work in 2007. At the request of the Working Party (see para. 62 of the report of the session from 2008) a questionnaire was developed by interested delegations. The responses to the questionnaire were received from Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Kazakhstan and Turkey. The aim of this questionnaire was to document the existing normative practices in this area. The questionnaire and the compiled responses were discussed by the Bureau of the Working Party and were presented at the 19th Annual session of the Working Party.
7. The questionnaire was updated by the project team in 2015 and is available on the website <http://www.unece.org/trade/wp6/sectoralinitiatives/pipelinesafety/sips.html> of the initiative.

III. Meetings and awareness-raising activities in 2017

8. Information on the initiative was presented at an International Conference on "Welding: Standardization and Conformity Assessment" in April 2017 in Moscow. Over 100 people attended the event from five countries. The meeting took note of the progress of the initiative and to invite interested experts to participate in its work.

9. A discussion about the questionnaire on pipeline safety took place during the meeting with API (American Petroleum Institute) in May 2017 in St. Petersburg. The aim of the discussion was to involve American organizations in this work.

IV. Deliverables for the annual session

10. The sectoral initiative aims to develop not only a reference legal framework in this sector, but also to develop a recommendation on the organization of cooperation and information exchange in this critical area in Europe.

11. The first questionnaire on regulatory and security aspects of the sector, sent to the UNECE member countries in 2007, revealed differences and interpretations of the rules and regulations in the security of pipeline systems, especially in the area of transboundary and reverse agreements, since this practice has not been used frequently.

12. Currently, policy priorities in this sector are moving towards policy and regulatory frameworks that guarantee the security of pipeline supply as a whole. This is forcing the initiative to completely rethink the priorities of its work and widen its scope.

13. An important point of reference in reorganizing the work of the sectoral initiative will be the study "Quo Vadis EU Gas Market Regulatory Framework - Study on Gas Market Design for Europe", which was published by the European Commission in June 2017 (see: <http://ec.europa.eu/energy/en/studies/study-quo-vadis-gas-market-regulatory-framework>).

V. Responsibility for the continuation of the work

14. The current Coordinator of the Sectoral Initiative is Mr Roman Samsonov.

VI. Role of the secretariat

15. The secretariat will continue supporting the work of the Initiative by trying to raise funds for the proposed project, servicing its meetings (prepare the invitations, agendas, preparing supporting documents and reports) and keeping the website up to date. The secretariat could assist the Convener in maintaining and developing contacts with the counterparts of the Initiative in national Governments and regional groups, as well as contributing to awareness-raising activities.
