International Standards and Technical Regulations Program
What is the International Standards and Technical Regulations (ISTR) Program?

The International Standards and Technical Regulations program is a 3-year project financed by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The focus of the program is to build awareness among companies about international standards and technical regulations and provide both companies and local business services providers with a range of topical training and consulting services relevant to specific industries.

The program covers the four Southeast European countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Serbia and Montenegro (S&CG).

The Importance of International Standards and Technical Regulations

Companies in the region face steep challenges in meeting most international and EU technical requirements which must be satisfied if domestic products are to be exported to international and EU markets. The lack of understanding about the nature and scope of regulatory barriers, as well as resources required to meet specific standards and certification requirements, are perceived by regional companies as key non-tariff barriers to reaching these lucrative markets.

ISTR allow companies to create and apply standards when developing new products. This then allows the business to:

- Increase speed to market
- Shape a new market
- Create interoperability
- Focus development on most valuable areas
Why is ISTR important for your company?

- It is required by your partners
- It improves/increases competitiveness of your products on domestic and international markets
- It increases trust/confidence by your customers
- It improves the health status of the population
- It reduces spoilage and product loss
- It provides for a more efficient institutional control

The IFC managed Southeast Europe ISTR Project

In an effort to maximize the impact of technical assistance interventions, the IFC’s regional technical assistance facility (PEP SE) is looking to focus on several key sectors which offer the greatest potential for growth, export, employment and investment.

Its target sectors in the region therefore are:

i) food processing and retail
ii) construction/building materials
iii) general manufacturing (i.e. wood and furniture, white goods appliances, electronics etc).
How is the IFC ISTR Project structured

The Program is structured in three levels to address the most pressing knowledge and resource gap among companies in the region:

1. **Public awareness campaign** which will cover most relevant EU legislation and regulations, sector-specific standards and conditions for export promotion. The campaign will be carried out through awareness building workshops, seminars and publications with an intent to provide outreach to 1800 target companies in the region.

2. **Topical trainings for export-oriented companies** where 600 regional companies will receive trainings on crucial procedures that need to be put in place in order to satisfy specific technical requirements in their respective sub-sectors.

3. **In company interventions** are aimed to address the individual needs of export-oriented companies in the region by providing technical assistance with the implementation of standards/certificates.

Extensive in-company interventions will be provided to companies during the course of the project. Companies suitable for in-company training and consulting interventions will be selected from industries with a strong growth and export potential and prospect of contributing to the economic prosperity of a Southeast European region or countries. In addition, companies must show firm understanding and willingness for the implementation of a sector specific International standard and demonstrate the capacity to absorb technical assistance.
What types of companies qualify for IFC’s ISTR Program?

The following companies will be eligible to join the program:

- Medium to large company
- Growth oriented
- Export or want to export to the EU and other markets
- Want to improve management systems
- Want to improve operations
- Willing to co-sponsor the implementation

What are the costs for our services?

Training and consulting will include a fee that will help cover a part of project’s costs. IFC charges fees for services to ensure that:

(i) demand for high-quality local services is created and sustained;
(ii) clients demonstrate commitment and willingness.

The costs of every individual consulting and training intervention will be agreed upon with the client and will depend on the volume of work provided.
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About IFC

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) is the private sector arm of the World Bank Group and is headquartered in Washington, D.C. IFC finances private sector investments in the developing world, mobilizes capital in the international financial markets, helps clients improve social and environmental sustainability, and provides technical assistance and advice to governments and businesses. From its founding in 1956 through FY 05, IFC has committed more than $49 billion of its own funds and arranged $24 billion in syndications for 3,319 companies in 140 developing countries. IFC’s worldwide committed portfolio as of FY 05 was $19.3 billion for its own account and $5.3 billion held for participants in loan syndications.

IFC’s Mission Statement

“To promote sustainable private sector investment in developing countries, helping to reduce poverty and improve people’s lives”

About Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has the overall responsibility for foreign policy, trade policy and aid-related relations between Norway and developing countries and between Norway and international organizations.

The main goal of Norwegian development cooperation is to contribute towards lasting improvements in economic, social and political conditions for the populations of developing countries. Norwegian government’s aid policy aims at strengthening the developing countries’ own ability to solve their poverty problems and to promote economically and environmentally sustainable development.

The scope for the assistance to the countries in Southeast Europe is to support the governments’ decisions of integration with European and North-Atlantic structures. The priorities are to strengthen the democratic institutions, support economic and political reforms, support business development, enhance respect of the Human Rights, fight against corruption and crime and improve the regional cooperation.
Please contact us for further information:

For further details or information on the International Technical Standards and Regulations Project in Southeast Europe, please visit www.ifc.org/pepse, email: pepse@ifc.org or contact IFC directly at our offices:

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