Geothermal Legislation in Europe

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The IEEA, Altener funded GeoThermal Regulation – Heat (GTR-H (www.gtrh.eu)) project runs from 2006 to 2009 with the aim of identifying and reviewing the regulatory barriers and deficiencies for geothermal heat in unregulated EU countries. The review was designed to develop a template framework for geothermal regulation in the EU which would provide the basis for the development of national framework documents. Four 'target' countries were chosen which had a poorly functioning regulation or no geothermal regulation; Hungary, Ireland, Northern Ireland/UK and Poland. Expertise in four regulated countries France, Germany and Netherlands provided a review of best practice geothermal legislation. The project was designed with a process of discussion and consultation with key target actors and stakeholders at a national level at each stage of review and included a series of study tours to assess the effectiveness of the regulation in each case. The ultimate aim of the project is to increase overall sectoral investment in the exploration and exploitation of geothermal heat across the EU. Of particular note were issues to do with resource ownership/usage, multi resource licensing, limits of geothermal reservoirs, financial barriers and support for geothermal. It has become clear that geothermal regulation in the projects partner countries as well as in the EU-27 and broadly in the international context is influenced predominantly by the preceding natural resources legislation. Following from the national framework documents, guidelines for the establishment a framework document for geothermal regulation in the EU 27 have been developed and disseminated to a broader international audience. The GTR-H project builds on previous EU projects such as K4RES-H in the renewable energy sector.

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