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Press release

New balance group portal comes online

Market area manager (MAM) Gas Connect Austria went live with an online registration platform for Austrian gas market participants on 13 August 2012. Registration is restricted to companies intending to act as balance group representatives. The portal provides a single entry point for the registration process – a condition of active participation in the Austrian gas market. It marks another major step towards the introduction of the new Austrian market rules, due to come into force on 1 January 2013.

In the run-up to the launch of the site Gas Connect Austria held two events to provide in-depth information on the new Austrian market model and the registration process. The events were staged in co-operation with market players Central European Gas Hub, Austrian Gas Grid Management AG (AGGM) and Austrian Gas Clearing and Settlement AG (AGCS), as well as regulator Energie-Control Austria (E-Control).

Moving towards a new gas market model

The Natural Gas Act 2011 and the Gas Market Model Order 2012 require system users to join or establish a balance group. Despite working to a very tight schedule, the MAM has reached one of its key milestones by bringing the new registration platform online. The portal, accessible via www.gasconnect.at, offers all the information and registration options market participants need to act as balance group representatives. It gives them a central location to store their registration details and make the data available to others, and to follow the progress of the registration process. Provided that applicants meet all the conditions for making agreements with contractual partners, including a positive credit check, the site is a fast track to a licence award by E-Control. Once this has been granted, a balance sheet representative can nominate shipments on the Austrian gas transmission network.

IT challenge

Meeting the tight deadline for implementing the online registration platform for balance group representatives was a major challenge. The new Gas Market Model Order was not enacted until late May, leaving only two months to complete the site.

For further information and documents on the new market model visit www.gasconnect.at.

Background information

Gas Connect Austria GmbH

Gas Connect Austria is a wholly owned subsidiary of OMV Gas & Power GmbH. The company, with a head count of about 380, is the independent transmission operator (ITO) that runs Austria's 2,000-kilometre high-pressure gas pipeline network, which has a marketed capacity of some 101 billion cubic metres/year. It operates the physical hub in Baumgarten an der March, near the Slovak border, which is the central crossroads of the Austrian gas grid. The Baumgarten hub receives incoming gas supplies, mostly from Russia, and dispatches them to domestic distribution networks, and to Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Slovenia. As a vital link in Europe's interconnected gas grid, Gas Connect plays a key role in maintaining supply security for Austria and the EU as a whole. About one-third of all Russian exports to Western Europe are handled by the Baumgarten hub. The capacity of Austria's gas infrastructure is steadily being expanded to underpin security of supply.

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