

General Terms of Reference

Introduction

The Policy Group (PG) of MDEP approved formalizing interactions and cooperative arrangements for Issue Specific Working Groups. Participation in such working groups is open to interested regulators who are members of the MDEP, based on a desire for active involvement in the topic and a commitment to provide and share up to date information with MDEP members through meetings and other methods of communication. All relevant information will be incorporated into the MDEP library. IAEA, while not a regulator, is welcome to participate in the working groups. NEA will provide the Technical Secretariat function. The Working Groups will provide progress reports to the Steering Technical Committee.

Based on the PG approval of the Steering Technical Committee (STC) recommendations, initially the following three (3) issue specific groups are being established as part of the next phase of MDEP:

- Vendor Inspection Cooperation.
- Pressure Boundary Codes and Standards
- Digital I&C Standards

Working Group participants shall commit to active contribution to the effort and share information relevant to the specific working group. Participation by member countries has been established and lead countries for each working group have been identified by the STC. Changes in participating countries and/or leading country(s) should be with the acknowledgement of the STC. The establishment of additional working groups can be recommended to the STC for consideration.

As per the PG ToR, national regulatory authorities retain sovereign authority for all licensing and regulatory decisions.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the Issue Specific Working Groups are defined in the MDEP Terms of Reference as follows:

- Increase of knowledge transfer;
- Identify similarities and differences;
- Move towards convergence on regulatory practices;
- Increase stakeholder understanding of regulatory practices;
- Enhance regulatory cooperation; and
- Share developed information by all members through an electronic library.

A significant amount of work has already been accomplished by the members through bilateral agreements and individual regulatory initiatives. It is desirable that the results of all such activity be included into the MDEP electronic library to make the documents available to other MDEP members. Documents containing proprietary information will be considered for placement in the library with access to such information controlled. The organisation and maintenance of the electronic library will be the responsibility of NEA.

Function

While having similar objectives, each of the issue-specific working groups may follow different approaches. The details of each working group's approach should be identified early in the process and incorporated into a Programme Plan. The Programme Plan will identify participants and leads, delineate specific objectives with schedules for achieving results within the two year time frame identified by the Policy Group. Each working group should determine resource needs to meet their goal.

Vendor Inspection Cooperation Programme.

This programme should identify areas of commonality and differences between regulatory practices of member countries in the area of vendor inspection programmes, should identify best practices, and should develop an overall framework and timeline for the conduct of inspections of vendors and a protocol for sharing results among national regulatory bodies. The results of all MDEP-related vendor inspections should be incorporated into the MDEP library.

Pressure Boundary Codes and Standards Programme.

The programme should identify the technical similarities and differences between the major pressure boundary component design codes used in member countries and assess the similarities and differences of these design codes and examine the potential for the convergence of codes. The programme should encourage and facilitate cooperation and convergence of technical requirements among Codes and Standards organisations. In addition, the programme should coordinate and facilitate the efforts of regulatory authorities to endorse, where possible and appropriate, the Codes and Standards of other countries.

Digital I&C Codes and Standards Programme.

The programme should identify areas of greatest importance based on the priorities of member countries regarding standards, regulatory requirements, and regulatory guidance. The programme should identify and document, in the MDEP library, those basic safety principles and concepts where most or all participants currently agree (e.g. need for digital I&C redundancy and diversity, quality controls on hardware and software, testing requirements). This will establish the current level of regulatory convergence in the digital I&C area. The possibility for further convergence of existing standards and guidance should be identified, documented, and discussed with the I&C Codes and

Standards organisations (e.g. IEC, IEEE). The necessary steps to achieve this further convergence should also be identified and reported to the MDEP STC.

Organisation and Implementation

The working groups may at their discretion or through the results of the above discussions set-up smaller sub-groups to address and resolve specific issues in-depth, perform pilot inspections, initiate focused pilot programs to determine feasibility for convergence etc., and report back to the working group. These subgroups will normally work through electronic transmittals, but may call special meetings as necessary. In addition, subgroups addressing issues similar to or the same as the Design Specific Working Groups need to coordinate their work to exchange information and to minimise duplication of work.

The Working Groups will meet at least twice per year and more often if needed.

Communications Plan

The process is designed to allow for the continuous exchange of information amongst member countries. For the purpose of maintaining records of all activities and to assure that all records become part of the electronic library the following guidelines should be adhered to by all members:

1. All meetings will be organised through the NEA Secretariat.
2. All telephone/video conferences will be arranged in a manner that will afford the opportunity for participation by all members and the NEA Secretariat. If the NEA Secretariat cannot participate in such communications a participating member will designate to develop a summary with copies to the Secretariat, each participant and the electronic library.
3. All e-mail exchanges relating to a group's area of focus shall be shared with all members of the group and the Secretariat. The placement of e-mails into the electronic library will be the decision of the group leads.
4. The maintenance and retrieval of information and documents derived from the working group (including subgroups) meetings and discussions will be kept in the MDEP library. Access to these documents may be limited to members of the specific working groups and controlled through assigned passwords.