

and equipped with modern technology. Both the Czech and Slovak Republics are under pressure to stop burning low-grade lignite because of the ensuing environmental damage.

In Hungary, construction of a large power station has been on hold since the mid-80s, as no decision regarding generation technology has been made. It has been suggested that the best technical and economical solution would be nuclear power, an area where Canadian expertise is well established. All countries in the region currently operate nuclear power plants. All are of Soviet design, except for a plant built by Westinghouse in Slovenia.

Opportunities and Constraints

The Czech Republic demonstrates great interest in co-generation, and numerous medium-sized firms are in need of modernizing their energy plants. Energy conservation technologies and equipment, and alternate sources of energy offer good market potential.

Public tenders will be issued within the next two years to attract foreign investment in eight joint stock companies that distribute electricity. It should be noted, however, that investors can possess only a minority stake in association with municipalities, which will retain partial ownership.

Slovenia offers excellent business opportunities as the government plans for the expansion and reconstruction of hydro-electric power stations. There is

demand for a number of small- and medium-sized hydroelectric power plants as well. Controlling the pollution from thermal power plants will require new investment. Slovenia is eager to commence construction of underground storage areas for natural gas, as well to increase the capacity of its "commercial" and "strategic" stocks of crude oil. Slovenia is also looking to upgrade its Westinghouse PWR nuclear power plant in Krsko, to extend its working life.

A common trait of these countries is the dominance of European companies with strong financial backing, including significant EU soft financing, working with local partners to establish market presence. Bureaucratic delays and slow, highly politicized decision-making processes are common.

Objectives

- to promote awareness of opportunities in these countries, and encourage Canadians to capture a portion of these markets; and
- to invite local government and company officials to visit Canadian power plants so as to inform them of the benefits of Canadian power equipment and technology.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Overview

For the past two years, the